

---

## **Election outcomes and political challenges in Slovakia today**

### *MIREES' Open Lecture*

---

The MIREES program (Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe) offers an opportunity to take part in seminars on relevant issues in Eastern European politics and cultures. On 21<sup>st</sup> of May, we had the pleasure to attend the Open Lecture on the “Election outcomes and political challenges in Slovakia today” held by Professor Struhár from the Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín in Slovakia. He introduced the political situation of Slovakia in a historical perspective. After giving some brief statistics about Slovakia<sup>1</sup>, he dealt with topics such as parliamentary elections in 2012 and the increase of independent candidates. The conservative and anti-corruption political party “Ordinary People and Independent Personalities” (Obyčajní Ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti) founded by Igor Matovič, split up in 2011 from the liberal party “Freedom and Solidarity” (Sloboda a Solidarita) to establish itself as an independent party. In 2012 parliamentary election, it presented a personal and separate list, gaining 8.55% of the total vote and 16 seats.

In Slovakia it is not possible to participate in the elections as a candidate without having established a party. Therefore Matovič established something similar to a party but he did not want to call it independent. Professor Struhár underlined that this was the first time that the attitudes concerning the populist parties were changing in Slovakia. Another related phenomenon concerns the personality of Marian Kotleba. Being a radical leader, he founded the extreme-right political party called “People's Party - Our Slovakia” (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko). The ideology of the party is very close to a Fascist or Nazi one. He is known for having been hostile towards Romani people living in Slovakia – for instance, he demolished some buildings where Romani people were living. Despite that, in 2013 he became the president of the Banská Bystrica Region with 20% of vote, defeating Vladimir Manka. How can this be possible? As professor Struhar explained, people who voted him in Banská Bystrica, were radicals and extremists and supported him as an independent candidate in order to let him lead the region in a self-governing way. Here again there is a remarkable change in people’s voting behavior.

Finally, the conclusive part of the discussion was meant to present the situation of independent candidates during the election year 2014. Did the influence of independent or anti-establishment representatives increase? The two strong candidates were Robert Fico from the social democratic

---

<sup>1</sup> Slovakia is placed in the 7<sup>th</sup> position in the ranking for what concerns the income equality (Gini-index) (as heritage of the Communism) and in the 46<sup>th</sup> for the happiness.

political party SMER who was Prime Minister from 2006 to 2010 and regained the same position in 2012. During the presidential election in 2014, the candidature of Robert Fico with his 14 candidates was approved. But, he obtained only 41% of the vote, being in this way defeated by Andrej Kiska (who gained around 59% of vote). The shared opinion about the victory of Kiska (the fourth president of Slovakia) was that people who voted him had more trust in independent candidates than partisan ones. Furthermore, Kiska conducted a political campaign against Fico, obtaining votes from Slovaks who did not support the political party of Fico. Indeed, the political party SMER, did not represent something new and was a disappointment for people. As a consequence, it is a natural behavior to vote for opposition (represented by the independent candidate Kiska in this case). Opposite to Fico, Kiska is known to be more critical towards Russia and to be oriented in political decisions towards the EU instead. The opposition was also represented by other parties and by another independent candidate Radoslav Procházka. But while Kiska had no experience with any party previously, presenting himself always as an independent candidate, Procházka had been a member of KDH, the Christian Democratic Movement, obtaining indeed the vote of catholic people.

Professor Struhár concluded by claiming that independent candidates are gaining more support from people and that in the present moment the Slovak people are proud of their president, who has recently founded the non-profit charitable organization “Dobrý anjel” (good angel). The last topic concerned the communist parties in Slovakia and Czech Republic. After Second World War, the communist party in Czech Republic was stronger than in Slovakia, where conservative or more fascism-oriented parties existed. If we compare Czech Republic and Slovakia, we realize that Slovakia is a more conservative and religious country (quite similar to Poland) in comparison to Czech Republic. Therefore, Slovak communist party was not as successful as the Czech one.

This Open lecture was a great opportunity for MIREES students to learn more about the independent parties in Slovakia, and to compare the experience in independent political parties of their own country with the Slovak one.

*edited by Dr Elsa Pacella  
MIREES' student, University of Bologna, Forlì-Campus  
Project manager of ACS (Slovak Cultural Association), Forlì*