

STANISLAV BROUČEK a kol.:
Migrace z České republiky po roce
1989 v základních tematických
okruzích (Migration from the
Czech Republic after 1989 in Basic
Thematic Areas)

*Prague, Institute of Ethnology, Academy
of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2017,
298 p.*

In recent years, the migration phenomenon has been increasingly pushed to the centre of attention of not only politicians and experts from various scientific disciplines, but of society as a whole. The general interest is primarily in the consequence of the “fear from migrants”. This is due to the fact that large masses of people are arriving (legally, but mainly illegally) to the European Union Member States. The team of authors (Veronika Beranská, Hana Červinková, Anežka Jiráková, Zdeněk Uherek), led by compiler and author of the major part of the book Stanislav Brouček, tackles the less explored, yet potentially equally important “other side of the coin”. In their monograph *Migrace z České republiky po roce 1989 v základních tematických okruzích* (Migration from the Czech Republic after 1989 in Basic Thematic Areas), they focus on the causes of departure from the Czech Republic abroad.

The project and the publication were produced on the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. As it turned out, the first problem that the researchers were facing was that the project sponsor did not specify whether they were to deal only with the population movement abroad or also with the social mobility factor. In the latter case, they would require other research procedures. In the end, the

authors chose a pragmatic solution: “Hence, this publication does not deal exclusively with social mobility (such research, accompanied by staying with migrants, would require more time and finance), though it seeks to grasp the value changes in migrants” (p. 15).

The monograph is divided into 12 chapters (including foreword and annexes). The first parts provide a description of the current state of the Czech diaspora and analyse the legislative approaches and the state policies in the inter-war period (emigration) and in 1948 – 1989 (exile). It should be borne in mind at this point that the different parts of this diaspora live dispersed almost all over the world. They differ not only in their geographical environment, but also in their historic background and the motives for leaving their home country. In spite of this diverse nature, what is common to the Czech (and the Slovak) diaspora is the persisting awareness of its common Czechoslovak origin: “The split of the republic was and still is a live topic for all countrymen” (p. 21). The only exceptions in this regard are Slovak separatists. (Slovak realities can be found at several places. The book includes a separate chapter on the Slovak diaspora policy).

The publication observes a number of issues. I do not consider it necessary to comment in detail on all relevant sources, interesting information or ideas for thinking. I would only note that, apart from their own research, the authors also used (not only) the statistics from the ministry of foreign affairs and other state institutions, worked with press releases and built on their findings from Facebook or internet communication. The book chapters cover complex phenomena (migration trends, the formation of

identities abroad, etc.), but also seemingly marginal phenomena (the teaching of Czech, the actions of some countries against emigrants in their territories). In the chapter On the Profile and Conditions of a Czech Foreign Migrant after 1989, the authors produced a generational description of this group, while emphasising generation Y. They also observed the activities of migration agencies, the forms of organised recruitment, the au-pair phenomenon or student migration. This material suggests that qualified experts (especially doctors and nurses), as well as (seasonal or long-term) wage-earners have the biggest chance to succeed on the global labour market.

The consequences of past migrations as well as recent labour migration include the formation of Czech communities abroad. The authors compare their situation in the neighbouring countries (Austria, Germany), in Scandinavia, overseas and in some EU Member States (mainly France and the United Kingdom). Particularly interesting is the analysis of the motives behind why people consider or do not consider returning from France to their home country. Their return is supported by personal reasons (family, social and cultural). The opposite decision, taken by the majority from the sample, bears a warning signal. The most common arguments why people prefer staying abroad include the political situation, corruption and bureaucracy in the Czech Republic. From this perspective, the finding that complements the above information is important. The analysis of the Facebook communication showed that most respondents (78% of the sample) are indifferent about the Czech state being interested in them and in their problems... It is apparent, though, that the purpose is not their isolation from their home country. In all the countries referred to in the study, Czech migrants use various forms of mutual contacts and communication. From the future perspective, it is essential how the competent institution would cope with this fact.

The chapter based on Facebook and internet discussions offers other interesting and important findings, as well. Its first part “maps topics which are of interest to countrymen working in an on-line environment”,



while the other part focuses on “...an analysis of the reactions of foreign Czechs through the Facebook page of the project Analysis of the Migration of Czech Citizens after 1989”, and presents the results of the questionnaire survey (p. 161).

The monograph brings more than just a body of knowledge. Potential followers can be helped by the fact that the authors’ team did not conceal any complications that appeared in the course of the research or in the process of evaluation of the results and of the ways of addressing them.

In the final chapter, S. Brouček offers a summary of the theme and proposals for general principles to deal with the issues mentioned in the study. He expressed his conviction that the state must deal with external migration on a permanent basis, as one-time support of projects cannot bring the desired results. He is critical about the current approach of the state authorities, and emphasises the need to adopt a political decision about whether the Czech Republic has (or feels) the necessity to build new forms of institutionalised relationships towards the Czech diaspora.

The monograph *Migration from the Czech Republic after 1989* offers information and suggestions which are interesting both to official institutions and the scientific community. Hopefully, they will not get lost and will become an inspiration for the work of the

competent authorities and expert teams in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia and in other countries.

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HELENA TUŽINSKÁ,
LUBICA VOĽANSKÁ (Eds.):
*In_akosti slovenské. Z rozprávání
cudzincov (Slovakia: In_different?
As Told by Foreigners)*
*Bratislava, Centre for the Research
of Ethnicity and Culture, 2016, 62 p.*

Thanks to the media, the migration waves that surged in the past two years got closer to the public, which resulted in many (often unfounded) fears leading to the need to answer a number of questions on one hand, and to the need to support the newcomers in seeing the country, situations and behaviour of its people from the perspective of the cultural context in which they found themselves on the other hand. This is the foundation of the book *Slovakia: In_different? As Told by Foreigners* which aims to enable both new arrivals and old-established residents alike to look at ordinary situations from different perspectives and in more details.

The book was published by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture in the framework of the project *Intercultural Guide to Lives in Slovakia*, which is financed from the Research towards Humanity programme administered by the *Open Society Foundation*. In addition to the Slovak version that I held, there are also versions in English, Arabic and Russian. The choice of these languages complies with the main target group – third-country nationals.

The team of authors (Elena G. Kriglerová, Miroslava Hlinčíková, Alena Chudžíková, Jana Kadlečíková, Helena Tužinská, Lubica Voľanská) prepared this book on the basis of material collected from more than fifty foreigners who were asked about their perception of life in Slovakia, thanks

to which they managed to present what people in Slovakia considered common in a broader perspective and with a certain distance. You can therefore find in this book mostly direct statements from partners in conversation, complemented with the authors' comments aimed to "pick up" useful information which can be later used in any context. The structure of the chapters according to the initial words copies the scenario by which the authors conducted the interviews. The eleven chapters are as follows:

- *On Trusting and Checking* (Elena G. Kriglerová and Alena Chudžíková)
- *On the Perception of Space* (Miroslava Hlinčíková)
- *On the Perception of Time* (Miroslava Hlinčíková)
- *On Rules* (Helena Tužinská)
- *On Communication* (Helena Tužinská)
- *On Working and Saving* (Jana Kadlečíková)
- *On Families and Private Life* (Lubica Voľanská)
- *On Making Friends* (Lubica Voľanská)
- *On Visiting* (Alena Chudžíková)
- *On Considerateness* (Helena Tužinská)
- *On Blinkers* (Helena Tužinská)

These eleven chapters represent areas "in which there is evidence in Slovakia of prevailing tendencies for certain situations to be dealt with in certain ways".¹ I appreciate the "confession" of the authors that the text they produced was created on the basis of specific materials which are not objective and which take into account the specific situation of the foreigners (work, duration and purpose of their stay, their social and economic conditions, family, etc.) who acted as partners in creating the text. I also appreciate the practical advice on different topics on the page margins. However, I consider the statement "*Slovaks give the impression of being very reserved, but in reality this is true only in the beginning. Sometimes it suffices for the foreigner to take the first step, since the Slovaks, because of caution or low self-esteem, will not take it themselves. They appreciate it if the*

¹ Tužinská, Voľanská (2016: 12).



foreigner uses a few words, for example a greeting, in Slovak. At that moment the ice begins to melt”² too generalising; in this particular case, I would prefer to leave it out or use a concrete example corresponding to what the authors wanted to tell in terms of meaning. This statement also assumes guaranteed success, which can be misleading. Also, the statement “trust is gained by mutuality” is in my opinion vague and slippery, as mutuality (whatever thought by the authors) is not necessarily the only path to gaining trust.

The different chapters nicely open and outline the topics that arose from their work with the partners in research, and the book as a whole can be a useful “welcome gift” for anybody willing to get familiar with Slovakia’s cultural context. I see its main benefits in two areas: firstly, it brings a broader perspective of the things which may seem to us as people who were born and grew up in Slovakia as natural in this cultural context, and we thus do not see their background, as often pointed out in this book. For example, the publication highlights our historical context – the socialist regime which can (still) be the origin of

mistrust that is largely present in Slovak society. Secondly, it is beneficial to foreigners who can learn more, thanks to this book, about the Slovak cultural context in which they have found themselves, and not only understand certain situations and behaviour, but also get a “manual” on how to behave in these situations.

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KATARÍNA POPELKOVÁ a kol.:
Čo je sviatok v 21. storočí
na Slovensku? (What Is a Holiday
in Slovakia in the 21st Century?)
Ethnological Studies 21, Bratislava,
Institute of Ethnology SAS 2014, 320 p.

The book of the team of authors Zuzana Beňušková, Monika Vrzgulová, Juraj Zajonc and editor Katarína Popelková, leader of the VEGA project *Ritual behaviour as a strategic tool for group identification: The social and cultural context of contemporary holidays in Slovakia* (conducted in 2011–2014), focused on themes which are highly topical in the expert and the public discourse alike. The authors felt for many years the need to bring information about the contemporary ritual practices and answer the simple, yet not easy questions: What does holiday mean to the contemporary inhabitants of Slovakia? How do they spend their holidays? What role is played by contemporary holidays? What can we learn about the Slovak society through holidays?

This extensive book has a logical structure: it consists of the *Introduction*, four

2 Kriglerová & Chudžíková, in: Tužinská, Voľanská (2016: 21).

chapters and the *Conclusion* in Slovak, German and English language. The book includes colour and black-and-white pictures, visual information about the holidays described in the publication, as well as common supplements: bibliography; register of names, items and locations, and brief details of the authors.

In her *Introduction*, Katarína Popelková clearly explained the project objectives. The authors explored holidays as social phenomena and sought to find out their reactions to the transformations of society at a specific moment in history, and in a specific space. Apart from well-known and long celebrated events, they also concentrated on new holidays. I appreciate that K. Popelková described in detail the theoretical and methodological project background and explained the basic terms – holiday, ritual and ritualisation – used in the book. She also mentioned the increase in the number of holidays over recent decades. People still seek to search for opportunities to celebrate (maybe contrary to the expectations of some social prognoses). She also stated that in spite of the growing number of holidays this phenomenon is accompanied by its increasingly individual perception. We could have the impression that it is the manifestation of one of the modernisation processes – individualisation. Certainly, neither individualisation nor other modernisation processes can be seen as linear and evolutionary changes, as they can comprise recurrent and complementary processes (Martin, 1999). This is one of the aspects that open broad possibilities for the research on the transformations of holidays in the future. As proven by the researchers' results, the ritual activities were largely influenced by the transition period after 1989 marked by the new economic and social conditions, as well as the sharp increase in the number of information sources with a rich offer for celebrating holidays. And at times when people enjoy a variety of opportunities and the unification pressures are weakened, attention can be paid to the other side of the same coin. To what extent do people return to the older holiday practices or artefacts that had been suppressed or forgotten for various reasons? Why do they do it and who does it? Can we observe recurrent processes in today's ritual activities?

The book opens with the chapter by K. Popelková *Why do we have holiday legislation?* I consider it a good entry into the topic. At the beginning of this chapter, the author presents the holiday calendar of the Slovak Republic with the dates considered public holidays and days of remembrance. The Act on Holidays was passed back in the first year of existence of the Slovak Republic in autumn 1993, which suggests the importance the state power representatives attributed to it. K. Popelková was exploring the contents and meanings ascribed to holidays by politicians when they adopted the act and other pieces of legislation. She identified many identical as well as contradictory meanings of holidays across the political spectrum. She also pointed out that it is still possible to observe the influence of churches on the choice of holidays and their functions, which is an important finding regarding the influence of these institutions on the contemporary society. She also mapped the ways and the means by which the state power disseminates the specific interpretations and symbols of holidays. She dealt with the instruments of the state's symbolic violence in advocating public representations and thus contributed to the detailing of Bourdieu's concepts (Bourdieu, 1998: 69 and n.). The results of her research are supported by the changes in the content of holidays in a relatively short, yet politically turbulent period of two decades, characterised by the major changes in Slovakia's political orientation and in the style of the public discourse and execution of power. At the same time, the gathered information suggests the wide dispersion of opinions on holidays and celebrations among the contemporary population.

Each of the next chapters deals with a specific holiday in the form of case studies which we can read as examples of historical and political holidays – celebration of the Slovak National Uprising; church, family and social holiday – Christmas; and finally, Halloween as a new type of holiday.

In the chapter on the Slovak National Uprising, Monika Vrzgulová analysed the legislative process of recognising this historic event as state holiday. She subsequently focused on the main objective of her work

– an analysis of the widespread representations of this holiday. She described the creation of different pictures about the Uprising after the political changes in 1989 and the changes in these pictures. She concisely described the segmentation of the representations into two lines. The first one was the representation of the Uprising as a historic event which brought Slovakia back into the group of European countries fighting against the Nazi Germany. The other one was the interpretation of the Uprising as a coup against the nation and the state, leading Slovakia into the arms of the Communist regime. M. Vrzgulová linked both lines and their different variants to the changing political establishments that held the power and the means for disseminating “their” ideas about the Uprising. The author managed to confirm the initial theses of the study according to which the representations of a certain event in history are first of all a means for politicians to explain their own political attitudes and justify their specific actions and aims. Among other things, she highlighted the role of celebrations in supporting the existing order of society, considered one of the basic functions of ritual practices at least since the works by Émile Durkheim (1912).

Zuzana Beňušková focused her attention on Christmas as a complex of the most ancient customs in Europe that acquired different forms, contents and interpretations throughout centuries. She aimed to describe the current forms of Christmas in Slovakia and the ways people celebrate and understand them. The author’s ethnographic research includes the period from the turn of the 20th and 21st century until 2013. Along with describing the current holidays, she also observed the changes in their contents and functions. She therefore compared the current state with the situation in other periods, for example, with the form of Christmas in the 2nd half of the 20th century – during the socialist period in Slovakia. She finally aimed to grasp the holiday practices and attributes through several dichotomies: “sacred – profane; tradition – innovation; rural – urban; institutional – private; formal – informal; commercial – civil; global – local; majority – minority” (p. 114). Most of these dichotomies are common in ethnological



works, and are therefore understandable to the reader. Yet the pairs “institutional – private” and “commercial – civil” are not so common and therefore need clarification. The vagueness of these terms is also due to their use in the text. In the final summary, the author mentions the pair “private – public” together with “formal – informal”, leaving out the term “institutional”. She summarises the commercial aspects of Christmas, however, without explaining how the commercial aspects relate to the civil ones (p. 158). In general, Z. Beňušková fulfilled her objectives. She offered detailed descriptions of the current forms of Christmas and clarified the complexity and the wide extent of this holiday. Through specific examples she highlighted the changes that took place in the past decades and confirmed the stability of the basic structure and functions of the Christmas holiday and relatively minimum shifts in them. The gathered material thus provides a good starting point for further analyses of changes in this holiday in the future, inspired by the theoretical views of Jens Kreinath (2004) and other authors.

The fourth chapter by Juraj Zajonc deals with Halloween as a relatively new phenom-

enon, raising ambivalent reactions in Slovakia. I agree that Halloween is a good subject of research, as it provides the possibility to observe the spread of this holiday “here and now”. It also enables exploring how Halloween is becoming part of other holidays and how it follows up on older cultural expressions. Last but not least, the researcher can search for answers to questions about what attitudes people have towards this new holiday, which groups celebrate it and which ones refuse it, and what representations they have in connection with Halloween. In the introductory part, the author offers information about the origins of this holiday in the British Islands, its transfer into North America and spread back in Europe. He subsequently describes the penetration of Halloween in Slovakia after 1989. Highly valuable, in my opinion, is the empirical data on the relation of the oldest Halloween attribute (carved pumpkin illuminated by a candle inside) to the oldest tradition in our territory. J. Zajonc also captured information about the food, costumes and masks and their possible relation to more ancient cultural phenomena. The author depicted the different forms of Halloween and its links to other holidays. He also showed the wide range of the Halloween representations in contemporary society and the role of churches and other institutions in spreading or suppressing this holiday. This chapter provides a differentiated picture of this new holiday based on precisely analysed empirical materials.

In the *Conclusion*, Katarína Popelková and Juraj Zajonc summarised the results of all the chapters. They showed what can be learnt about the contemporary Slovak

society based on the research of holidays. They analysed the similarities and differences between the holidays that they examined and their relation to the state, churches and the economy, but also with regard to the differentiated population groups – actors of holidays. They described the wide variety of people’s representations linked to the given holidays, holiday practices, symbols and attributes. I would conclude that the book represents a very good contribution to the study of the meaning of holidays in modern society.

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