

# Unexpected Rise of Christian Nationalist Party in Slovakia

**IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COMMUNIST COLLAPSE** of 1989, Slovakia, like other Eastern European countries, fell under the sway of aggressive secularism, the dominance of foreign investors, and the political, social-cultural, and economic rhetoric of neoliberalism, which favors deregulation, privatization, multiculturalism, social austerity (a shrunken state role in alleviating poverty) and tolerance of LGBT and other aberrant moral-cultural values at odds with the traditional family oriented values. Such values are considered retrogressive by neoliberal progressives who clamor for tolerance of everything but traditional Christian values that they associate with tyranny, patriarchy, and fascism.

Cardinal Glemp the primate of Poland at the time of the communist collapse in 1989 had premonitions of the future challenges that would come from neoliberalism – materialism of a Western sort:

*“We have withstood the onslaught of Atheistic Materialism, Marxism is dead; however I am not sure that we can withstand the onslaught of Western Materialism.”*

The challenge foreseen by Cardinal Glemp certainly came to Eastern Europe (and also to Africa, Asia, and Latin America). Under the guise of liberal toleration and the rhetoric of prosperity, it sunk deeply into the soil of Slovakia. However, like the proverbial seed (Matthew 13: 5-7) that was planted on unprepared rocky ground it came up quickly, but because it lacked fertile soil its fruits were scorched or choked by the thorns of concupiscence and greed.

*Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it.*

Consequently, the abundance promised was never forthcoming. However, there are signs of forthcoming political change indicate a departure from the neoliberal paradigm toward something new .

## **Signs of Political Change – Politics in Slovakia**

Unlike the American two party winner take all system, Slovakia, like other European countries has a system of “proportional representation”. This means that the percent of votes a party receives in an election determines the percent of seats they receive in parliament. Since the political landscape in most European countries is dotted with numerous political parties sometimes reaching as many as fifty, it is difficult to ever garner 51% of the vote and thus the government is composed of coalition governments made up of competing but ideologically aligned (or politically aligned) parties. In such a system, any party with 15% of the seats is considered a major party. The party with the largest number of seats is usually recognized as the party from which the Prime Minister is drawn.

In Slovakia, Prime Minister Robert Fico’s social-democratic party “SMER” controls 33% of the seats (in 2012 it held an overwhelming 44% of the seats); the other 67% are shared among nine other parties. Slovakia, like other European countries has surprisingly spawned a new grass roots Christian and Euro-skeptic political party. The “**People’s Party**” or “**Our Slovakia**” recently received 14 of the 150 contested seats or 8% the vote. The other pro-Christian party, the **Slovak National Party** (SNP) won 8.6% of the seats in parliament.

The nascent *Our Slovakia Party* is headed by Marian Kotleba, who is opposed to further integration with the European Union and is skeptical about NATO membership; he has referred to NATO as a “terrorist organization”. According to Kotleba, the national election

*“Is the beginning of a new era for Slovakia. And as a result, we will save the country from where it was heading.” By this he was referring to the Western liberal agenda imposed after the collapse of communism, which favored foreign investment and liberal values over the interests the Slovakian people and their traditional Christian culture.*

Kotleba, although maligned as a “Fascist” by Western pundits, rejects the Nazi label and suspects that it arises from his campaign against ingrained political and economic corruption and the *kulturkampf* against Christian values pursued by ideologues, who favors a neo-liberal agenda contrary to Slovakia’s indigenous patrimony. Not surprisingly, he also favors Slovakia’s economic independence as indicated by advocacy of a national currency and Slovakia’s exit from the Eurozone.



Marian Kotleba with Carmelite Priests in Slovakia

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nge, he finds support among the poor, marginalized, and young voters who are increasingly vocal and desirous for political and economic change that favors the broader common good.

The neoliberals promised to integrate the country with Europe, which at the time was attractive due to the European opposition to communism from which the countries of Eastern Europe were newly emerging. In reality this translated into the heavy burden of neoliberal reforms. When Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004, the road to economic, political and cultural serfdom under the banner of neoliberalism went into full swing.

Under a regiment of neoliberal structural reform whatever paltry compensation workers had grown accustomed to under the previous regime was removed. Instead, unemployed and underemployed workers were now blamed for their own impoverishment due to laziness, apathy, lack of proper education or moral ineptitude. In short, they were blamed rather than assisted by a new neoliberal state that busied itself with cronyism and increasing investment opportunities for foreign corporations and financial institutions. As in Poland and elsewhere, unemployment and inflation soared as a result of implementing market oriented neoliberal policies.

The so-called neoliberal "Shock Therapy" was considered a necessary part of healing the dying economy. As a result of economic austerity resulting from *planned* shocking of the Slovakian economy and dominating its political landscape, the ever-growing economic fallout resulting from the therapy was excused by its ideological proponents and those on their payroll. It was not indicative, they said, of failed neoliberal policies but was to be attributed to the personal failure of the workers.

Nonetheless, overtime, the pull of a deregulated economy, the promise of state subsidies to foreign corporations, low wages accepted by Slovakian laborers, and falling property prices lured Western dollars. This infusion of foreign

capital led to partial respite as Slovakia became a hub of auto production. Because the neoliberal rational calculus depends upon financial (rather than human) calculations necessary to attract and maintain foreign investment, wages remained low, unemployment high, health care abysmal and government social assistance minimal. These economic trends were exacerbated by cultural degradation and a systematic attack on traditional values via public education, the mass media, and foreign agents working to instill a liberal worldview throughout Slovakia.

As a result of these economic, political and social failures, the liberal agenda, so successful in the twentieth and early twenty first century has begun to collapse. Workers and astute politicians are waking up to the fact that liberalism, contrary to its promises, has exacerbated rather than improved the situation. Cultural degradation on top of psychological and social trauma, caused by economic prosperity for a few and impoverishment for many, has proven to be the straw that is breaking the neoliberal back. People are increasingly fed up with the whole liberal agenda and are seeing through the thin veneer of rhetoric daily fed to the lot of wary workers whose difficult living circumstances are clearing their vision and contributing to a closer affinity with the church as it had in Poland where the church became the hub of opposition to the communist regime.

These mounting pressures reached a head in 2012 when the "Gorilla Scandal" shook the people of Slovakia from their slumber and awoke them to the reality of pervasive political corruption that surpassed the evils of communism. People took to the streets all over Slovakia with a call for "REAL democracy", that is democracy rooted in the dignity of the human person, every human person.

However, no one seemed to have the cure or a hand strong enough to promote real positive change throughout the country. Nonetheless, positive change is occurring. The

neoliberal parties dedicated to the European Union, toleration of moral aberrations contrary to the natural and divine law, economic austerity, economic models that result in wealth for a few but not wide-spread prosperity for many, are being robustly challenged. In the place of old political parties new ideas and new parties wary of the EU, sick of “political correctness” and rooted in human dignity and traditional Christian values are surfacing in Slovakia as they are throughout Europe and the world.

Uniting under the banner “*We are reclaiming our country,*” Civic Resistance groups in Slovakia are clamoring for change. Their voice is resonating throughout the country where it sounds something like this:

*Following the collapse of communism, the state was grabbed by a new regime of corrupt politicians and corporate oligarchs who were given a license to engage in theft of public property. Under the guise of “democracy” they have lied to the people and enriched themselves.*

Of course people who say such things are a threat to a well controlled social system built on liberal values. Consequently, they are often branded as lunatics, Nazis, Fascist, etc. by the neoliberal press supported by neoliberal political cronies. Unwelcome and thus lacking a seat in the Ministry of Propaganda, Civic Resistance found a viable outlet in the social media from which they were able to successfully promote the candidacy of Marian Kotleba as Governor of the Banska Bystricia region in Southeast Slovakia.

Their dedication paid off. In 2013 the People’s Party supported Kotleba for Regional Governor. They promoted him as an honest political maverick dedicated to social justice and able to challenge financial institutions that feed on the people’s ignorance and their need for money, to challenge corporate multinationals who siphon off profits instead of

investing them in higher wages, who expatriate profits to foreign shores after abusing the environment and failing to contribute to the social needs of the host country and they promoted Kotleba as a person able to challenge corrupt politicians who permit their country's natural resources and cultural legacy to be looted by neoliberal oligarchs and robber barons.

Kotleba's candidacy was cemented when the EU began to issue quotas for refugees from the Middle East. At this point Brussels was denounced as dictatorial; the People's Party's desire for traditional national values gained momentum by a perceived threat of an army of refugees who, under the banner of EU tolerance, would subject a Christian nation to foreign and often antithetical Islamic values. Because similar arguments could be heard in Russia, Poland and Hungary, the momentum for a Christian consensus among Slavic nations continues to grow to the chagrin of neocons and neoliberals.

The People's Party provides Slovakia with a voice for the majority that had been seduced by the subtle caress of liberalism. The caress of liberalism has turned into a calloused hand felt by many. Increasingly frustrated by economic inequality, the moral program of liberalism along with political correctness and an inability of politicians to defended the common good have led to a point of critical mass – average people are waking up and beginning to see through the propaganda and ideological warfare waged upon them and are beginning to coalesce.

## **What Direction Will Slovakia Take**

Slovakia is experiencing a social-political-economic-moral crisis similar to other European nations and to other nations around the globe subject to the neoliberal agenda resulting in a culture of death. As in these other places (such as

Nigeria, Philippines, Brazil, Hungary, Poland to name a few), Slovakia will predictably turn away from its neoliberal romance turned sour with the West. Unless neoliberalism adopts a more friendly face and permits sovereign nations to decide their own directions and to participate fairly in the international arena, unless it permits traditional and Christian values and innovative economic and political models rooted in those values to come to the fore, it will continue to fade into the past. Either way, liberalism seems done. It is failing and these countries provide ample evidence of its failure. If liberalism adopts a more friendly face and permits new economic and political models as well as the protection of traditional moral values it is no longer liberalism. If it fails to do these things, it is simply going to exhort its own demise.

Basically, liberalism is dead, but it refuses to admit its demise and has therefore become a warmonger using threats of military force to impose its agenda throughout the world.

It believes so greatly in its liberal cause, that it is willing to adopt any means to bring them to fruition. It believes, as did one of its founding patriarchs, Jean Jacques Rousseau that people must be "forced to be free."

*"In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will (majority consensus) shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free."*

This is the sentiment of neocons and liberals in America today – it is the voice trying to dominate the American landscape and the voice driving American foreign policy in such places as Slovakia. It is a voice at odds with the Christian faith and the authentic dignity of the human person made to the image of the Holy Trinity. Is there any greater danger in the

world today?