

ELECTION PROGRAM OF POLITICAL PARTY KOTLEBA – PEOPLE'S PARTY OUR SLOVAKIA

Miroslav Rádek^{1*}

¹ Ss. Trenčín University of Alexander Dubček in Trenčín, Department of Political Science, Študentská 2, 974 01, Trenčín, Slovak Republic.

*Corresponding author E-mail address: miroslav.radek@tnuni.sk

Abstract

Conference paper Election Program of the Political Party Kotleba - People's Party Our Slovakia is focused on the analysis of election programs for parliamentary elections 2006 to 2016. Kotleba - People's Party Our Slovakia joined these elections under different names and in different organizational form and partly changed content of its electoral program. The results of the parliamentary elections also brought significantly different support for this political party. Therefore, the paper tries to find a link between election programs and its election profit in the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2016.

Keywords: political party, Kotleba people's party, political party, elections, parliament, election program

1 Introduction

The rise of radical and anti-system moods in the public over the past decade puts policy experts in a position to answer the question of their causes. In this period, the electoral support for political parties and movements that had been on the periphery of society and power had risen. The subject of this paper is the election programs of the political party Kotleba - The People's Party Our Slovakia, which is also profiled by them as a far-right political party. The basic method to be used in this paper is the content analysis of its electoral programs for the parliamentary elections 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2016. Given the political circumstances of this period, the contribution will be divided into three main chapters, with the two separate chapters. The electoral programs 2010 and 2012 will be included in one chapter for their content. The aim of the paper is to find out to what extent the election programs of the political party Kotleba - People's Party Our Slovakia (PP-OS) had an impact on its election support in these parliamentary elections.

2 Election program PP-OS 2006

In this section we will present the topics that dominated the program of the political party Slovak Community - National Party (currently Kotleba - LSNS) before the unsuccessful parliamentary elections in 2006, 2010 and 2012. While in the first elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic the party focused mainly on environmental protection, in others it focused on the revival of the Slovak nation. According to the party's representatives, the people were damned and therefore it was necessary to raise the nation again. The party called the pre-election program a "folk program". At the beginning of the document, it defined the main goal, in which it talks about the creation of a Slovak state, which would be based on the principle of professions and would support traditional cultural, social and Christian values (PP-OS, 2006). The program consisted of 16 pages.

The dominant theme of the party's election program in 2006 was the professing of ideas presented by Slovak personalities. Priority was given to historical figures, including Ľudovít Štúr, Svetozár Hurban Vajanský and Andrej Hlinka. They chose these personalities mainly because, according to the party's representatives, they fought for the national rights of the Slovak nation. In their rhetoric there is a regular reference to representatives of Slovak history. They often declare their rightfulness, infallibility, or opinions that are out of context many times to best serve the party's intentions. The folk program referred to the rhetoric of particular political leaders, philosophers and writers, including Jozef Tiso, who was the president of the Slovak state or his interior minister, Alexander Mach. The party sought to create a state based on a national principle. The pre-election program also referred to the statements of the aforementioned Štúr and Vajanský, who dedicated their lives to the fight for the rights of the Slovaks.

Other topics that the political party dealt with in the pre-election period were closely linked to the highlighting of Slovak personalities. They supported the Slovak nation in all its forms and focused on its protection. The Slovak state, which led, for example, by celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the state in 1939, also emphasized President Tiso. It is this point that has become one of the most controversial and the proclamation of the professional principle has enabled the dissolution of this party. The Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic banned the party in 2006. Slovak Community talked about the current Slovak Republic as a Slovak state, which basically meant that it referred to the period during second World War.

Another priority issue dealt with by the party's representatives was the rejection of the then government and the political leaders who represented the traditional movements in the political spectrum. Israel and Zionism, which the party rejected, were largely criticized (PP-OS, 2006). They relied on the conspiracy theories of Zionist lobbying behind the instability in the world (PP-OS, 2006). The then government and politicians in parliament considered the Slovak Community to be dangerous, due to the fragmentation of the state and the rhetoric of the Slovaks towards themselves. Proof is also the article published in *Prúty*. In it, the party wrote: "The current government policy is in stark contrast to the Štúr ideals, as the political system of parliamentary democracy does not serve the nation, but the interests of politicians and their benefactors who seek material goods" the criticism focused on the Hungarian minority, homosexually oriented people and the Roma.

The threat lies not only within the Slovak Republic, where Slovaks are threatened by minorities of different ethnicities and orientations, and external factors, such as transnational structures such as the European Union and NATO, are a threatening element. In its program, the party focuses exclusively on improving the conditions for Slovaks, and this is also indicated by the titles of the program chapters called "Supporting the Traditional Slovak Family" (PP-OS Program 2006).

As part of the parliamentary elections in 2006, the political party Slovak Community focused on 5 themes: highlighting the Slovak nation and Slovak historical figures who fought for the rights of the nation, protecting the Slovak nation in terms of external and internal threats, referring to the Slovak state's tradition President Joseph Tiso, criticizing the then government and political leaders and rejecting Israel's policy and criticizing the creation of a Jewish state.

3 Election program PP-OS 2010 and 2012

Political party election programs were almost identical in 2010 and 2012. The same themes resonated in the economic area, within the rule of law, the education sector, defense policy, the welfare state, and attitudes towards the European Union. In this, their pre-election strategy relied heavily on a negative attitude towards the Roma ethnic group, a sharp criticism of the then political environment and political leaders who represented traditional systemic political entities. Much of the pre-election rivalry has focused on fighting the enemies that the party saw in other minorities. Not only were various ethnic groups criticized, but so were political rivals and traditional media. As in 2006, in the next two parliamentary elections, the national political sentiment, the protection of the Slovak nation, which is threatened by anyone who does not recognize its thinking and ideology, was the basic political argument. In 2010, the party's election program was named "14 steps for the future of Slovakia and our children". In the elections two years later, the party presented itself under a program called "The Ten Commandments the People's Party of Our Slovakia to Eliminate the Consequences of Crimes Committed by Politicians After November 1989 and the Establishment of Social Justice". The programs were presented in 14 points, but this time more briefly on 10 pages. As in the 2006 parliamentary electoral program, a large part of the program corresponded to the highlighting of the Slovak nation, its protection from external factors and criticism of minorities and the Roma ethnic group. Again, the criticism of politicians from traditional political parties dominated.

Already during this period, the issue of favoring Roma citizens against (decent) citizens came to the forefront of electoral preferences. In their speeches, they stressed that "parasites" would no longer be more helped and free to receive social security (the PP-OS Election Program, 2010 and 2012). A new proposal for the prison and criminal system was a variation in the program compared to the previous electoral program. It was supposed to make everyone think individually about being an honest citizen or criminal. In all their statements, they encountered the Roma and, despite the increase in defense budgets, this minority is increasingly violent and the number of people at risk is increasing every day (Our Slovakia, 2011). On the basis of the above, it was the intention of the party to create a militia to enable decent citizens to actively protect the lives of themselves and their loved ones. At the same time, the term "Gypsy extremists" was introduced into their rhetoric, which the party began to use because of the state's long-standing unsuccessful situation, which failed to mitigate the attacks of inadaptable Roma on decent people (Slovak Community 2011). They regularly published their aversion to the Roma on social networks.

In addition to Roma fellow citizens, government and opposition leaders who failed to protect Slovak citizens from attacks by "Gypsy extremists" did not avoid significant criticism. Party officials have argued that politicians advocate only their own interests and, after getting their mandate, do not respond to citizens' suggestions and represent only the will of higher groups. In the run-up to the 2012 elections, the PP-OS also published the *Our Slovakia* magazine, where attention was focused mainly on the inside of the political spectrum. They criticized the parliamentary parties, which they described as sacks, bringing new ways to steal the state budget and destroy Slovak autonomy. Criticism and insults were not avoided by any of the then parties in Parliament (Our Slovakia, web).

In public statements, the party has often divided the society to us and others or groups of honest and corrupt people. At the same time, they considered themselves the savior of the nation, who alone can help Slovakia to make positive

changes. Referring to the low standard of living of some groups of citizens, it said that the "others" rob citizens and have created a business from the political scene (Our Slovakia, web).

Furthermore, the party reserved itself significantly to the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and raised national interests above Brussels regulations, while also calling for the reintroduction of the Slovak koruna as currency. The European project, according to the party, has destroyed the original concept of Europe and all those who expressed the EU's support betrayed their own country because they agree to surrender their own sovereignty and freedom to the hands of a higher structure. A positive attitude towards the European structure is even worse choice for the nation's interest than the heated Hungarian nationalism.

The attitude towards NATO was as negative as to the EU, as the party considered it a terrorist organization (Election Program 2012). Even journalists who were ordered to work for the customer did not avoid criticism. Social policy reform should have been visible in the principle of merit, eliminating the benefits of social welfare recipients, and working for all citizens. At the same time, they planned to reduce their retirement age to 60 years. They again published their criticism on social networks (Election Program 2012).

In 2010, in particular, the following topics resonated in the election program of the PP-OS: criticism of the Roma and their designation as parasites of the social system, criticism of the activities of current political officials, the demand for the protection of their own nation in all areas of public life, appeals to former representatives of the Slovak state, Joseph Tiso, the introduction of militia to protect oneself and his loved ones.

4 Results of failed elections 2006, 2010, 2012

The Slovak Community and subsequently the PP-OS applied for a parliamentary mandate in three consecutive parliamentary elections in which it failed. In 2006, the party candidating on the Slovak People's Party candidate list, ended up with 3815 voters casting votes for it, representing 0,16% of the valid votes. By the 2010 election, the party had its own list of candidates and the members had collected 30,000 votes more than in the previous elections, which, however, is 1,33%. This election result was also not enough to enter parliament. In the last unsuccessful elections in 2012, the party, like two years ago, won 1,58 % support from voters. It should be noted that this was the only political party that did not appear in parliament, and whose electoral result increased compared to previous elections.

In the timeframe discussed, party support has changed significantly across regions. In 2006, the party won the most votes in Bratislava, Trnava and Banská Bystrica regions. The lowest support was recorded in Prešov and Košice regions. In the next two elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2010 and 2012, electoral results within the regions changed significantly. The most numerous recorded support was in the Banská Bystrica region, where Marian Kotleba, chairman of the party, was a chairman of the regional selfgovernment. The lowest, on the contrary, in the Bratislava and Trnava regions, where in the previous period the SNS received numerous support. One of the reasons for this change may be the composition within the party, its activities and the themes it has put in the foreground in its statements. While the national interest was appealed to in 2006, in the next two terms, the party focused on criticizing the Roma minority.

The party also tactically organized events in villages where coexistence with Roma is bad. There are several reasons why the party in the first three parliamentary elections could not have succeeded. Consequently, according to Mudde in the political spectrum, the party can be identified to the far right, as national interest, xenophobia, the rule of law and national chauvinism (Mudde 2000) were largely in their pre-election programs. The party bases its criticism on the social minorities and the external enemies of the nation (nationalism). PP-OS manifested hatred towards the Roma minority, on which they also built their election campaigns (xenophobia). The requirement for a militia and a strong nation is supported by the rule of law, in which political leaders would be responsible for their decisions. National chauvinism is noticeable in dividing the nation into us and others who parasitize the system and thus harm decent citizens.

In the program statements before the elections, to which the party was particularly concerned, criticism without relevant proposals and solutions to the criticized areas. If a concrete goal was also presented, the solutions were mere slogans without presenting the necessary measures to change. In the event that the PP-OS proposed a specific change, it was not possible put the proposal into practice effectively. On the example from 2010, when the party declared the restoration of food and energy self-sufficiency or on another from 2012, when they demanded the prevention of the buying of Slovak land by foreign investors, it can be seen that it is rather a criticism of the then situation and pointing out the mistakes of others without further developing the issue.

5 Election program PP-OS 2016

In the 2016 parliamentary elections, the political party Kotleba - People's Party Our Slovakia presented a program that was built on ten basic points. At the beginning of the program, the party declares that it "is trying to prevent further theft of Slovakia by politicians and parasites".

The first point is about stopping corruption and stealing money from the state budget. The party criticizes the fact that decent families live in poverty and the reason is political leaders who, instead of helping ordinary people, steal taxpayers' finances. They consider privatization of key businesses by foreign investors to be a crime, which has caused a decline in living standards. Therefore, the PP-OS wants to balance the state budget, investigate privatization and return the stolen businesses to the state. The political responsibility of politicians will be introduced, the number of deputies of the National Council will be reduced to 100, political parties will not be financed by the state, deputies of the National Council will be responsible to the people, their salary will be reduced to a minimum and a 15% tax will be introduced.

The next section deals with the people of the Roma ethnic group. The party claims to "make order with parasites in the settlements." Citizens of the Slovak Republic are threatened, attacked and raped by the Roma while the government protects them. An example of extremism of ethnicity is the fire of Krásná Hôrka castle. Because of politicians' inactivity, "Gypsy terror" has spread across Slovakia, and the party is not afraid to hit the police and militia. The PP-OS in its program presents harsher prison sentences for the perpetrators, or the destruction of illegal buildings in the settlements.

As part of social policy, the party presented itself by introducing a social system based on the merit principle. It gives an example of an injustice with the Roma who are subsidized by the state for free. It is therefore essential that there is a change in the redistribution of social benefits. Work would be offered to everyone (working in the construction of roads, housing units, repairs of state buildings) and those who would refuse it would automatically lose their entitlement to contributions. Retirement age will decrease and decent families will be entitled to rental apartments. Young people would benefit from loans and maternity benefits.

One of the strongest points in the pre-election program concerned the migration crisis. The party criticized that not only Slovakia does not know how to deal with the Roma, but to our territory come illegal immigrants who are not interested in adapting to our culture and traditions, they are potential criminals, aggressors and reject Christianity. The party rejects any financial endowment of Islamic immigrants at the expense of our nation. The motto against migration policy is "We will not give our Fatherland we will defend". It is necessary to introduce the protection of Slovakia's borders, which would be provided by military forces. Rejected would be all immigrants, and those who are already on our territory will be expelled.

The fifth point of the program was dedicated to health. Therefore, it is necessary to cancel all private companies that provide health insurance and that exploit clients because they do not pay for standard medical services. One state insurance company would be introduced, health care free of charge would be renewed and refusal of vaccination would not be penalized.

PP-OS is also in favor of restoring the country's food self-sufficiency, which was supposed to be in Slovakia in the past, but today it is destroyed. Despite the fertile soils available to Slovakia, low-quality foodstuffs are imported into counters. Young entrepreneurs will benefit from conditions and domestic farmers, not multinationals, will be supported. The Slovak land will not be sold out to foreigners and the party is also against TTIP.

The party is represented by professing traditional values. It builds on Christianity and rejects modern consumerism and liberalism. They stand for a traditional family that can only be made up of a man and a woman. He criticizes the broadcast of perversions in the media that degenerate the young generation. Therefore, the control of the content of private media should be introduced. It should also be prohibited to operate slot machines. Adoption of children by "perversions" would also not be allowed, meaning the party is thinking of gay couples.

The eighth point deals with the creation of the Slovak army. The party is supporting the withdrawal from the North Atlantic international structures. Indeed, NATO is just a tool to promote US interests, and despite the fact that we are making considerable contributions to its budget, the current state of the Slovak army is disastrous. Slovak soldiers should be withdrawn from foreign missions, the arms industry will resume, voluntary military service, air defense and Slovakia will become a neutral state.

In addition to NATO, PP-OS criticizes European Union membership. It considers the "Dictation of Brussels" to be a negative, that is, the regulations that we must accept and thus lose our sovereignty. The EU bullies the Slovak nation with its laws. The EU funds are, according to the party, only a symbol that brings a sense of benefit from membership, but 80% of the funds from our funds come from our Treasury. That is why the PP-OS wants to introduce the Slovak crown and wants to focus on parties other than the West.

Point 10 deals with environmental protection. Slovakia is in danger and our nature is devastated by mining companies. Therefore, the party wants to promote renewable fuels such as CNG or LPG, increase sanctions for nature destruction and restore Slovak forests (Election Program, 2016).

The whole program can be summarized in 5 points: stopping privatization and nationalization of investments, immigrant hatred, militia and anti-Roma rhetoric, NATO withdrawal and EU referendum, media control and vaccinations.

There is a need to try to explain what was the reason for the unexpected success of the PP-OS political party. The first and main phenomenon is the chairman of the movement Marián Kotleba. The chairman with extremist speeches, whose statements suggest hints to fascism, learned from his previous political presentation and changed his strategy. After his party was banned by the Supreme Court in 2006, it was necessary to create new statutes and an electoral program. Although extremist statements were not eliminated from rhetoric and still used expressive names as "gypsy parasites," he put more emphasis on not going beyond the law.

Although the elections in 2010 and 2012 brought a debacle, the elections in 2013 for the first time shocked the public, with a profit of 71 thousand votes for Kotleba, which made him the chairman of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region. In 2016, he received some 210,000 votes in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Kotleba also addressed his voters by building himself into the position of an exemplary Christian - a Catholic who professes traditional Slovak values. These were also visible in the program.

Another aspect is that the Slovak Republic has since its inception failed to effectively solve the problem with the Roma minority. The PP-OS program also addressed this issue in several points and offered solutions that should serve to address the increase in Roma segregation and tension in specific regions.

6 Conclusion

The original program of the political party Kotleba - People's Party Our Slovakia focused on national, social and environmental aspects. It is the same combination as the NSDAP in the 1920s and 1930s. Kotleba - PP-OS interpreted this political agenda as a state of impoverishment of the Slovak people by domestic and foreign enemies. It identified the home enemy in the Roma and considered the foreign enemies to be NATO, the US and to lesser extent the EU. Slovakia is an unambiguous vassal in the optics of the political party Kotleba PP-OS and at the same time that is the primary cause of social problems in Slovakia. This political rhetoric was included in all electoral programs. It rejected the ESM, which was part of the solution to the Greek financial crisis. As this issue resonated even before the 2012 elections (this was also the reason for the fall of the government of Iveta Radičová), it can be considered a reason for a slight increase in its voter popularity. Subsequently, in 2015 came the so-called migration crisis that the European Commission wanted to address by a system of quotas allowing the redistribution of migrants, especially from the Middle East and North Africa, to the member states of the European Union. Kotleba - PP-OS responded to the situation by resolutely rejecting such an approach to migration, which made it a parliamentary political party after the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2016. In conclusion, it can be stated that the election programs of the People's Party of Slovakia were not the primary reason for its election success due to their consistency. Its electoral support was primarily made possible by the economic and political crises of the European Union.

References:

- [1] MILO, D.: Rasistický extrémizmus v Slovenskej Republike. Bratislava: Ľudia proti rasizmu 2005, 121 s. ISBN: 80 – 89149 – 03 – 0.
- [2] MUDDE, C. 2000. The ideology of the extreme right. Manchester University Press. 225 s. ISBN 978-0719057939
- [3] NAŠE SLOVENSKO. 2011. Internetová stránka politickej strany Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete <<http://naseslovensko.net/>>
- [4] NAŠE SLOVENSKO. Facebooková stránka politickej strany ĽSNS [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Na%C5%A1e-Slovensko/259879027298?fref=ts>>
- [5] NARIADENIE MINISTERSTVA VNÚTRA SR č. 27/2001 o postupe v oblasti boja s extrémizmom a o zriadení monitorovacieho strediska rasizmu a xenofóbie.
- [6] SLOVENSKÁ POSPOLITOSŤ. 2006. Prúty 10. č. 16 [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete: <<http://www.pospolitost.org/SP/tlacoviny/pruty/pruty-16.pdf>>
- [7] SLOVENSKÁ POSPOLITOSŤ. 2006. Prúty 10. č. 17 [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete: <<http://www.pospolitost.org/SP/tlacoviny/pruty/pruty-17.pdf>>
- [8] SLOVENSKÁ POSPOLITOSŤ. 2006. Prúty 10. č. 18 [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete: <<http://www.pospolitost.org/SP/tlacoviny/pruty/pruty18.pdf>>
- [9] SLOVENSKÁ POSPOLITOSŤ. 2011. Zavádzame pojem „cigánski extrémisti“ 17 [online] [cit. 16-04-2018]. Dostupné na internete: <<http://pospolitost.wordpress.com/2011/01/19/zavadzame-pojem-ciganski-extremisti/>>