

Summary Evaluation Report
Findings from the Quantitative Survey of the Project:
Tearing Down the Myths about Socialism and the Welfare State
(Bratislava, May 2018)

The quantitative survey conducted as a part of the Tearing Down the Myths about Socialism and the Welfare State project is linked to the January qualitative survey, in which we identified associations that the Slovak people attached with the era of socialism between 1948-1989 as well as associations with the role of state. The aim of the representative quantitative survey was to validate to what extent are the myths about Socialism and the role of the state present in Slovak population and its specific categories. During the evaluation of socialism, positive associations (myths) are the strongest among older population, but they are strongly present among younger generation as well. Especially younger people wouldn't exchange the present for the socialism. Most of the respondents are identifying with large government interference and myths, which are linked to Welfare State at the same time.

The survey conducted by the FOCUS agency in April 2018 on a sample of 1046 respondents older than 15 years is part of the *Tearing Down the Myths about Socialism and the Welfare State* research project, which is conducted by the Conservative Institute of M. R. Štefánik with the support of John Templeton Foundation. The results of this survey will be the base for a complex study of the socialism experience of Slovakia from the years from 1948 till 1989.

1. Associations and memories of socialism

Respondents spontaneously connected socialism mainly with guarantees: specifically, with the guarantee of work for all (20% of respondents) and social guarantees – “*cheap housing, social security*”, “*help from the state for citizens*” (16%), on the other hand with totality as well - with repressing of civil and human rights (18%).

The most valued aspects of life before 1989 by respondents are employment and social guarantees (23%). They mentioned calmer life and less stress as positives of life in socialism (14%), better interpersonal relationships and morality (11%) and economic prosperity and welfare (11%).

They view the possibilities to travel and free movement as the most positive aspect of present life as opposed to socialism (39% of respondents), freedom and democracy (26%) and plenitude of products and services (13%). On the contrary, almost fifth of the respondents think that the present life is not better in anything, as opposed to life before 1989, or they view it negatively (18%).

Results shows that there are still more of those who think that life was better during socialism in Slovakia and that people had better lives than now. Such association was declared by 43% of respondents, whilst 20% stated that “life was much better then than now” and 23% stated that “life was somewhat better than now”. Only 32% think that people are living better lives now than in socialism (Figure 1).

Opinions on these questions are strongly related to age. While in the group of 18-24 years old, only 18% think that life was better before 1989 and 37% thinks that the present life is better, in the age group of 65 years and above, 73% of respondents think that life during socialism was better and only 14% think that the present life is better.

More than one third of respondents (39%) would prefer social market economy where state is to an extent influencing the economy, 31% would prefer free market economy with minimal interference from state and only 17% would prefer socialist economy. Support of economy type is again strongly related to age and socialist economy is preferred by older people.

Although more respondents think that life was better during socialism than it is now, going back to socialist economy would want fewer than fifth of them. There is a mix of sentimental optimism about socialism with awareness of the advantages of market economy, however with significant interference from state, in minds of large part of Slovak population.

2. Evaluation of socialism statements

In the second part of the survey the respondents expressed their opinion on variety of 21 statements (myths) about socialism. At least half of the respondents identified with most of them. From this point of view positive memories (even myths) are prevailing in the minds of the population.

Most of the respondents agreed with following statements about socialism:

"People were helping each other more, there was more solidarity among them and they were more close." (overall agreement 81%). Most of the respondents agreed, in all age groups, education groups and as well those who identified themselves as 'right-wing' and who were labeled 'right-wing' according to their answers.

"It was more safe during socialism and violent criminality was lower." (79%); Respondents of all demographic groups agreed with this statement, apart from those who were identified as 'right-wing'.

"Thanks to planned economy, there was enough useful work for all and therefore there was no unemployment." (77%); Again most of the respondents identified with this statement, apart from small group of evidently 'right-wing'.

"Food in stores had higher quality and was healthier than today." (71%); In case of this statement the group of young people from 15 to 18 years and from 19 to 25 years weren't agreeing in majority and among the evidently 'right-wing' respondents disagreement was more common.

"Socialism led people to more moral behavior." (71%); In this case it was again shown more division based on age and right-left economy, where majority of agreement was from older people and 'left-wing' respondents.

"Socialism was more socially just, because everyone was awarded based on the outcome of their work and there weren't such differences in income." (69%); Majority of people agreed.

Only in case of three statements about socialism disagreement outweighs the agreement:

"Before 1989 socialist democracy existed, elections were free and democratic." (overall disagreement 52%); Majority of support was given by unqualified and manually working and half of the respondents of age 65 and higher agreed.

"Vacations by the sea were more accessible for more people than today." (60%); This statement had major support only in group of respondents who prefer the return to the socialistic economy from before 1989.

"Average person, if they wanted, could travel freely to anywhere abroad." (71%). Most of the group who prefer the return to socialistic economy disagreed with this statement.

The positive assessment of the statement (myths) about socialism is present among respondents, mainly in socio-economic questions (less in questions regarding freedom and democracy) and this applies to all groups regardless education, work or political orientation.

3. Opinions about the role of the state

In the survey we have focused on finding support of myths, which are connected with welfare state. The highest rate of affirmative attitudes regarding state intervention were found in health, education, labor legislation, social care and standard of living areas.

As many as 87% respondents agree with the opinion that *“health is not a product and therefore the state needs to guarantee, finance and provide free healthcare for all.”* (87%)

Second strongly affirmed statement is that *“paid higher education would prevent poor people to study at universities and colleges and therefore the state should guarantee free education from elementary schools till university.”* As many as 81% of respondents agree with that statement. This statement had strong support across all age, education and other groups, including right-left political-economy spectrum.

Approximately three quarters of respondents agree with statement that *“If labor law didn’t protect employees from the whims of employers, employees would have worse working conditions, they would lose their jobs more easily and unemployment would be higher.”* (77%) and with statement that *“without state and guaranteed social aid would mean living in poverty for a large part of society.”* (74%). Also in this case the agreeing respondents were from all demographic groups.

With statement that *“people in developed countries have higher standard of living, because the government is more significantly redistributing the wealth from wealthier to more poor more effectively.”* agree 71% of respondents. Most of respondents agree, with exception of small group of mostly ‘right-wing’ respondents, where ‘only’ half agrees with the statement.

With the statement that *“People are not willing enough to voluntarily help people in need, therefore the state must take care of them through the social system”* agree 69% of respondents. Same amount of affirmation has the statement that *“minimum wage helps people with low qualification”*. Most respondents from across the demographic groups agree with both statements.

One of the ten test statements in this chapter, with which the majority of respondents did not agree, was about the state intervention in favor of refugees With the statement *“the state should help people from other countries that come to Slovakia as refugees”* agree only 32%. On the other hand, as many as 63% disagree. More affirmative position was shown only in a group of respondents whom we labeled as ‘right-wing’ (51% agree) and ‘center-right’ (50%) in regard to economy questions.

The view of the majority of the respondents on the role of the state can be evaluated as strongly collectivistic, statist or socialistic also with respondents who identified themselves as ‘center’ or even ‘right-wing’, or at voters of political parties, which defined themselves as ‘right-wing’ or ‘center-right’ and pro-market.

4. Right-left classification in economy matters

We were looking for the political-values classification in economy matters based on self-identification as well as based on answers on pair of questions.

Based on the combination of statements in connection with level of state intervention in economy matters respondents were classified to economy orientation: ‘left-wing’, ‘center-left’, ‘center’, ‘center-right’ and ‘right-wing’.

We can regard 32% of respondents as ‘left-wing’, 23% as ‘center-left’, 34% as ‘center’, and only 7% were classified as ‘center-right’ and 4% as ‘right-wing’ respondents. It was possible to observe the growth of left oriented tendencies with higher age.

The highest level of approval had the statement *“State should strongly protect employees from employers”* 76% agreed. On the other hand, its counterpart *“Employers should have more freedom in*

decisions about working conditions and employee remuneration” ‘only’ 12% of the respondents agreed.

The second highest level of approval had statement *“State should ensure that everyone has work and decent standard of living”* was 68%, while with the statement *“Each individual should ensure their own work and standard of living”* agreed ‘only’ 16% of respondents.

In both cases mentioned earlier respondents from all demographic groups agreed with the first from the pair of the statements, with exception of those, who we classified as ‘right-wing’ or ‘center-right’.

The only case from the 7 pairs of statement, where more respondents agreed with more ‘right-wing’ alternative was the statement *“Private property is untouchable and any interference to it should be applicable only in exceptional cases”* - with this statement agrees approximately half of the respondents (46%). On the other hand, with its counterpart *“In public interest it is possible to restrict private property, public interest should come first before private interest”* agrees only 27%.

The respondents who consider themselves as ‘left-wing’ were, based on their attitude, classified to following types: 64% ‘left-wing’, 27% ‘center’ and 9% as ‘right-wing’. In this group there is a relatively high correlation between self-definition and classification based on the answers on questions related to state intervention.

The respondents who consider themselves as ‘center’ were, based on their attitude, classified to following types: 54% ‘left-wing’, 37% ‘center’ and 9% as ‘right-wing’. In this group there is a relatively small correlation between self-definition and classification based on the answers on questions related to state intervention. Most of the respondents who consider themselves as ‘center’ had more of a ‘left’ economy opinions.

The respondents who consider themselves as ‘right-wing’ were, based on their attitude, classified to following types: 44% are ‘left-wing’, 37% are ‘center’ and 19% are ‘right-wing’. Also in this case there is a low correlation. In this group the self-definition is corresponding with the answers to statements the least. High number of respondents who self-identify as ‘right-wing’ economy oriented have more ‘left-wing’ or non-decided opinions on topics than anticipated.

Respondents who couldn’t self-identify to any of the categories in relation with questions about economy orientation were classified into following categories: 62% are ‘left-wing’, 31% are ‘center’ and 8% are ‘right-wing’.

We have found contradiction at large group of the respondents between how they self-identify in economy matters and how we have classified them based on their answers to questions related to state intervention, market and personal responsibility. According to our classification were respondents in reality more ‘left-wing’ than they self-identified. For example, almost half of the respondents, who identified as ‘right-wing’ preferred higher government intervention in economy and social affairs.

There is overall positive approach to socialism among citizens of Slovak Republic even though only small part of the population wishes the return to socialist economy. Most of them prefer strong welfare state (they believe in myths about welfare state) and they do not trust in market solutions. Most of the citizens have overall ‘left-wing’ opinions, although significant part of respondents self-identifies as ‘center’ or even ‘right-wing’.

About the project

The quantitative survey conducted by FOCUS was a part of the “Tearing the Myths about Socialism and the Welfare State” project run by The Conservative Institute of M. R. Štefánik supported by The John Templeton Foundation.

The objective of the project is to confront myths about socialism and the welfare state that linger in the consciousness of people in Slovakia with reality. Within the project were implemented first qualitative survey and representative quantitative survey. The project will include a study focused on in-depth analysis of the socialist society in Czechoslovakia over the years 1948 to 1989, as well as further research, analyses, discussions, and educational activities.

This release was created based on The FOCUS Agency's Final Report from Quantitative Survey (April 2018) by:

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