

tioned, but his ideas are not used by Novák (the ideas of the 'plebeian function' of the Communist Party, even if Maurice Duverger criticised it, and the mentioned concept of 'imperfect pluralism'). Another interesting aspect is the author's use of the opinion poll, perhaps only for a French reader, which is rather unexpected due to problems of reliability. The 1997 French legislative elections (after the dissolution of the *Assemblée nationale*) highlights the problems connected with its use (in fact, Novák himself sometimes seems wary).

The question of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia is evidently one of the more important. Classified by the author, as "one of the more dogmatic in the world", this party is evidently one of the poles of the Czech party system, which shapes its character polarised in Sartori's sense, and which therefore blocks the evolution of the Czech system into a two parties and a half system ('German model'). But what is to be done with it? Is it really necessary for this party to disappear (at least from Parliament)?

At the end of the book can be found the author's idea of the type of party system in Czech Republic. Using models, particularly of Jean Blondel, Giovanni Sartori and Maurice Duverger, and writing about the forming or emerging Czech party system, Novák presents his answer to the questions of "bipolar or multipolar", "polarised or not". His answer is that

the system is rather bipolar (the parties can be classified on a left/right continuum), and very fragmented. Even though the number of political parties has decreased, the system always corresponds to an extreme multipartism, which fits with, in the sense of Giovanni Sartori, a very polarised model that refers to a great ideological distance between the parties (even if this seems to have closed somewhat in 1998 because of the failure of the Republican Party). There is also no more a dominant party.

Novák presents three possible party systems for the future: polarised pluralism, multipartism with a dominant party, and (an extrapolation from the tendencies of the system) the two parties and a half system. The results of the most recent elections and the probable evolution of the electoral system, of which Miroslav Novák is a great advocate, points to a strengthening in the prospects of the third alternative.

This book of Miroslav Novák's is very interesting, in spite of the points it overlooks, and, its occasional over-complexity (the evolution of Civic Forum is sometimes difficult to follow), and seems destined for a public that has a basic grasp of modern Czech history. Nevertheless, it is recommended reading for anyone interested in Czech political life and the Czech transformation.

Michel Perottino

### **Histoire des idées politiques de l'Europe centrale**

Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, collection Politique d'aujourd'hui 1998, 604 p.

*Histoire des idées politiques de l'Europe centrale* (The History of Political Ideas in Central Europe) is a compendium of political history and the history of political ideas edited by two French specialists. Chantal Delsol teaches Polish literature and civilisation, and is also director of the European research team at the University of Marne-la Vallée in France. Michel Maslowski also teaches Polish literature and civilisation and is a co-director of the intercultural research team on Central and

Eastern Europe at the University of Nancy in France.

This book is interesting insofar that it is the first publication which attempts to present Central-European political ideas in such detail (in greater breadth than, for example, Bernard Michel's book *La Mémoire de Prague*, published in 1986), and is comparable to many of the books on the history of political ideas in 'Europe', meaning Western Europe. This work is more for French readers (or rather French-speaking readers, or even western readers), than for a East-central European readership. Nevertheless, a Czech, Polish or a Hungarian reader would no doubt be interested by the development of ideas of other countries of the region, and perhaps how the Western reader

will be informed about this theme. It is because the Western reader is not so well-informed as to the political ideas developed in the region that this book fills a gap in this area.

The book is divided into four parts. The first contains five articles and an introduction on "Medieval intellectual traditions from their origins in the 15th century". The second part introduces "Political liberties" in the 16th and 17th centuries (ten articles and an introduction). The third concerns "Questions of identity" in the 18th and 19th centuries (nine articles and an introduction), and the final part deals with "The great modern streams" of the 19th and 20th centuries (seventeen texts). Thirty-six writers (including the two editors) of various nationalities contributed to this compendium, hailing from Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and France. The plurality of approaches they employ make it difficult to classify these four parts, even if the more homogeneous is the first one. In other respects, the studies are also global approaches to the great questions (for example, nationalism, conservative thought, etc.) than more detailed studies (the European thought of Jan Patočka, István Bethlen and Hungarian conservatism, etc.).

The subject chosen is very broad indeed, but the concept of 'Central Europe', even if there is an attempt at explanation (Chantal Delsol in the introduction "Europe of the centre-East" [Europe du Centre-Est]), raises certain expectations that go unfulfilled. The first is that we might expect a more global and unifying vision of the political ideas of Central Europe. For the French or Western reader, the notion of 'Central Europe' is more accepted than 'East-central Europe' (as opposed to 'Eastern, Central and Balkan Europe'), and more precise than the 'Other Europe'. But, in fact, what is Central Europe, and is Austria in or out of this area? It appears fleetingly, and only indirectly, in the course of a few articles in the book. Four countries seem to comprise the Central Europe of the editors (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic [the Czech lands] and Romania), but sometimes Slovakia makes an appearance (has the split of Czechoslovakia already thrown this country into Eastern

Europe?), and, more curiously, Belorussia and Ukraine.

This collection presents two kinds of problem. The first is that the subject chosen is very large and therefore difficult to summarise in 'just' 600 pages. Nevertheless it is the first book on this subject that details this very broad theme in a such way. The second is perhaps more crucial: the manner chosen to present this topic, a compendium, has its advantages, but also its inconveniences, particularly the heterogeneousness, even if the classification into four parts seems to reduce this problem.

Another uncertainty that lies heavy on this book is that we find no answer to the question of the political ideas of Central Europe (for example, Coudenhove-Kalergi), and nothing about the Central-European idea of Europe (even if there is an article about J. A. Komenský). The questions of Central-European Marxism inspired only two Polish authors. The answer to the question of relationships between the state and political ideas (particularly in the sense of state-building) is just evoked. Another deficiency lies in the absence of study about the political ideas of the dissent in the different countries despite the appearance of several dissidents (Michnik, Havel), with the exception of Jan Sokol's study on Jan Patočka. In this way, the book is perhaps more of a *morceaux choisis* than a broad perspective of the whole history of political ideas of Central Europe. But this is the quantitative limit of just one volume. It could also be mentioned that in the article of Miloš Havelka (on Czech liberalism and realism) the title of Masaryk's book *Světová revoluce*, has been translated directly from Czech into French, while the French title is *La Résurrection d'un Etat* (the English version is *The Making of a State. Memories and Observations. 1914-1918*).

Nevertheless, this book represents a great step forward in the knowledge of the diversity of Central-European political ideas, and we can hope that it is just a first step toward a better knowledge of the political ideas and thus identity of this region in France.

Michel Perottino