

GELNAROVÁ, JITKA. ÚTĚK NEBO INVAZE?

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Jitka Gelnarová's book *Útěk, nebo Invaze? Migrační krize na politických transparentech* ('*Escape or Invasion? The Migration Crisis on Political Banners*') was published in 2018 as a kind of looking back at the media and social storm caused by increased migration to Europe, especially as a result of the war in Syria, which swept through the Czech public space in 2015–2016. The wave of migration can be examined from countless perspectives, Gelnarová chose a completely specific perspective — she views the 'migration crisis' through banners appearing at demonstrations for or against migration. In the introductory chapter of the book, Gelnarová explains the importance of this view not only in terms of social memory (i.e. the preservation of given visual materials in museum collections), but also in terms of the possibility of analysing completely authentic expressions of demonstrators' attitudes: "*Banners provide us with valuable information about who the demonstrators are or how they define themselves (and also others). At the same time, they suggest a lot about the connections and hierarchies between them*" (p. 9). Gelnarová devotes a substantial part of the publication to the analysis of how the demonstrators define themselves and their opponents using messages on banners; on the other hand, she almost omits the connections and hierarchy within the groups or the analysis of who took part in demonstrations, who organized them or what the attendance of protests was. We can only learn when the protests took place, what their name was and who convened them. Gelnarová leaves the closer acquaintance with the organizers or the course of each individual demonstration to the reader. Although Gelnarová states in the introduction that it can be deduced from the form of banners whether the demonstrating group is organized and hierarchized or not, she does not work with this indicator further. The focus of her interest is the banner as such, its symbolism and message. In terms of methodology, Gelnarová relies on the analysis of discourse (Norman Fairclough's concept is most visible in her work) and the analysis of iconography according to Panofski (here she focuses mainly on the intertextual references the demonstrators visually express on banners).

The analytical part of the book is divided into three logical and internally coherent units, named 'Dispute over Event', 'Dispute over Identity' and 'Dispute over Values'. The word 'dispute' is crucial for the entire book because all materials are presented from the point of view of contrasts. One group describes migration as a (controlled) invasion of Islam as a dehumanized ideology and complements its texts with images of historical Turks or crossed-out mosques on its banners in contrast to the depiction of migrants as fleeing families with children (the depiction of a child is an appeal to solidarity) and the emphasis on the fact that migrants are also humans.

The most comprehensive and at the same time the most elaborate part of the book is the middle chapter entitled 'Dispute over Identity', where Gelnarová presents the ways in which demonstrators define themselves and their 'opponents'. It shows how groups fulfil concepts such as Czechness or European values, but also how they work with the 'labels' assigned to them by the other group. To be Czech for one means to defend one's homeland against the arrival of a foreign element, while the one who considers it Czech to open the borders and help those in need suddenly becomes 'the other'. What is treason for some is a human duty for others. Gelnarová shows that



both groups tend to exclude 'the other' from the space they inadvertently share. We can see a banner with the inscription '*Layabouts from cafes to fields and factories*' on the one hand, and '*We don't want Nazis in the Czech Republic*' on the other hand. The groups use banners to engage in dialogue, trying to come to terms with the other party's labels, justifying their attitudes and presenting themselves.

In the last chapter, Gelnarová discusses the 'Dispute over Values', which is closely related to the identities from the previous chapter. She again notices how banner creators work with concepts but emphasizes the content they give them. With the help of banners, we can find out how the same concept can be filled with different content and thus create completely opposite poles. Thus, for one group, the concept of solidarity means solidarity across borders, ethnicities and religions, for the other, solidarity is ruled out by receiving refugees because this puts 'our' people at risk. Similarly, Gelnarová represents the opposition's attitude to the concept of human rights, with '*Islam — a political ideology aimed at suppressing human rights and freedoms [...]*' on the banners, and '*Human Rights for All*' on the other side. Interestingly, Gelnarová points out that women's rights are used on anti-migration banners as an argument against the Muslim religion, which oppresses women in their eyes, while there is an appeal to protect 'our' women and their freedom from the dangers of Islamic oppression. On the contrary, the concept of feminism as an ideology appears on banners in demonstrations in support of refugees.

From the material that Gelnarová collected, we can relatively easily reconstruct the main themes of the migration crisis, its main political actors (especially on the side of its opponents) and finally the image of those holding the banners in their hands. In her book, Jitka Gelnarová, by analysing banners from demonstrations, brings a new approach to the study of important social phenomena, which the 'dispute over the migration crisis' undoubtedly is. In one of the few existing theoretical analyses of a political poster, Gary Yanker¹ states that a political banner is the primary medium that survived the advent of radio, television, today we could say that it also survived the advent of social media, where it was given the opportunity for a new life. In her book, Gelnarová proves that banners are able to tell their own stories. They say a lot about their creators, their views of the world in a concise and condensed form, but often accurately and effectively. However, it should be added that Gelnarová assumes that her readers are familiar with the context in which this 'poster battle' takes place, that they are aware of the characteristics of the main actors and the political situation in the Czech Republic at that time in general. The book is a remarkable addition to the mosaic of studies² that have tried and are trying to unravel what happened in Czech society around 2015.

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1 G. YANKER, *The political poster: A worldwide phenomenon*. World Affairs, Vol. 133, No. 3 (December 1970), pp. 215–223.

2 E.g., O. STUHLÍK, P. KRČÁL, *Surfování na migrační vlně v době populismu: Sekuritizace migrace ze strany poslanců Parlamentu české republiky*, Acta Politologica. Vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 1–17.; M. TKACZYK, P. POSPĚCH, J. MACEK, *Analýza mediálního pokrytí uprchlické krize. Výzkumná zpráva*, Masarykova univerzita, 2015; Š. VYMĚTAL, A. ŠÍCHOVÁ, *Uprchlíci ze Sýrie, kulturní a psychosociální aspekty*, Odbor bezpečnostní politiky a prevence kriminality MV ČR, Praha, 2015.