

UPF-Slovakia lecture: The power of the media to shape public opinion

Milos Klas
March 30, 2017



Bratislava, Slovakia—The power of the media to shape public opinion was the topic of a lecture held by UPF-Slovakia.

The meeting, held on March 30, 2017, at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, was co-hosted by the academic think tank Futurology Association in Slovakia, which is part of the Association of Slovak Scientific and Technological Societies.

The lecture was advertised cost-free by the Syndicate of Slovak Journalists. In addition, UPF sent invitations to all the members of the Slovak National Assembly. Unfortunately, a debate prevented parliamentarians from attending, but some of them sent wishes for success. UPF announced the event on Facebook, and within a short time approximately 1,200 viewers had been counted.

The approximately three dozen attendees included seasoned reporters, one editor-in-chief and the vice dean of the faculty. The national radio station RTVS recorded the lecture to be broadcast.

UPF-Slovakia Secretary General Milos Klas began the meeting by introducing UPF and its website and outlining the basic UPF principles.

Barbara Grabner, an experienced journalist and press speaker from Austria, gave the presentation. Her lecture was based on the Spiral of Silence theory developed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Another source she used was the book *Bias* by American journalist Bernard Goldberg, which shows how the media elite in the United States slants the news.

Extensive research has proven that the majority of journalists prefer leftist or liberal views or sources, and that television teams employ certain camera techniques to manipulate the picture, Mrs. Grabner said. Therefore, it is difficult or even impossible to discern fact from fiction. Many top papers regularly copy articles from The Washington Post, The New York Times, Newsweek magazine, etc., she said. “The readers have no idea about this widespread practice and think they are reading carefully researched firsthand news,” Mrs. Grabner said.



One of the most troublesome aspects is that people understand events and circumstances mainly through artificial impressions produced by the media. “These pictures in our heads should make complicated matters simple and easy to understand for everyone, but often they evoke prejudices and stigmatization,” Mrs. Grabner said.

Secondly, from the huge amount of news which is available daily, editors and publishers select the stories that they want to be read. “Vivid examples are the biased reports during the [United States] presidential election, when the media elite painted a rather grim picture of candidate Donald Trump,” she said. Of course, this statement caught the audience’s attention and raised questions. The lecturer replied, “Do we really know Donald Trump? We just have pictures and statements provided by a hostile media.”

The head of the Futurology Association was very satisfied about the outcome of the session and said that he surely will invite UPF to give a presentation about a related topic.