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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY TRANSFORMATION OF SLOVAK SOCIETY

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The article presents a survey of the socio-historical development of Slovak society in the 20th century from three points of view: 1. Slovak society as an ethnic-national entity; 2. Slovak society as a civic society; 3. Slovak society as a denominationally divided society. The process of modernization together with dramatic political changes produced a deep change in Slovak society from a largely patriarchally-agrarian at the beginning to a modern industrial one at the end of the 20th century.

If we are to talk of Slovak society we must first define the concept. Since 1993 Slovakia has existed as an independent State. Between 1968 and 1993 Slovakia, as a state, was a part of the Czechoslovak federation. Before that, during World War II (1939-1945) Slovakia was a formally independent country. After 1918 Slovakia was an administrative unit within Czechoslovakia. The delineation of Slovakia as a territory, goes back to the Middle Ages. The territory of present-day Slovakia was a part of the Hungarian State. As a territory Slovakia also existed in various Slovak memoranda, which from 1848 demanded Slovak territorial and cultural autonomy within Hungary.[1] Until 1918, these Slovak demands for autonomy were not put into practice by the Hungarian government.

Therefore, before 1918, one can only talk of the Slovak society as a Slovak ethnic-national society within the Hungarian State. With the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 Slovak society underwent a transformation. A Slovak territory delineated by borders emerged. A portion of the Slovak population remained outside of these borders and national minority groups made their appearance in the Slovak territory. After 1918, one can talk more precisely of a society in Slovakia as there was a marked difference between the destinies of Slovak society within Slovakia's borders and those outside the borders. At the turn of the century,

[1] Bokes, F.: *Dokumenty k slovenskému národnému hnutiu v rokoch 1848-1914* (Documents to Slovak national movement 1848-1914), vols 1-4, Bratislava 1962-1972.

Slovak society was also established overseas in North America. In 1938, after the Vienna arbitration Slovakia's borders were altered, bringing changes in its social structure and ethnic-national composition.

Hence, when talking of Slovak society one has to keep in mind all of these political and social transformations that the society has undergone. In many respects, these are highly topical issues today, because what is happening today in Slovakia, cannot be thoroughly understood without an understanding of the development of Slovak society.

So, to get a picture of the condition in which Slovak society entered the 20th century, it has to be analysed at three levels: a) as a civic society, b) as an ethnic-national society and c) as a denominationally divided society.

At the turn of the century, civic society in Western Europe had developed to a high degree of organization. At the same time, there also existed a marked difference between the Western European and Eastern European societies. The two empires of Central Europe, Germany and Austria-Hungary, were a transition area between the West and the East, not only in the territorial-geographical sense, but also as far as the organizational forms of the society were concerned. In both of these countries, the state was a very powerful and vital component of the society's organization, but some features and indications of a civic organization also emerged.

The traditions of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on human individuality, distinctiveness and individual freedoms, and the traditons of the French Revolution[2] and the mid-19th century revolutions in Europe were still very much alive and accounted for the numerous active movements in society. The people of Central Europe were awakening to a new self-awareness. At times, however, it was but a reflection of external influences, mainly on a superficial level.

The process of arising of civic society was taking place predominatly in Hungarian towns. At the turn of the 20th century the town's people were changing into a modern cultured people, aware of their dignity. This change, not only included the bourgoisie and intelligentsia, but also included for the first time lower middleclass citizens, trademen, craftsmen and even included labourers. Numerous social clubs arosed in the towns and, to some extent, in the rural areas, too.[3]

The creating process of a civic society was substantially more developed in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In Hungary, this process was hampered by a strongly centralized state government. The Hungarian state took

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[2] Šimončič, J.: *Ohlasy francúzskej revolúcie na Slovensku* (The reception of the French revolution in Slovakia), Košice 1982.

[3] Mannová, E.: *Prehľad vývoja spolkového hnutia na Slovensku z aspektu formovania občianskej spoločnosti* (The survey of the development of the club-movement in Slovakia from the standpoint of the civil society formation). In: Občianska spoločnosť. Problémy a perspektívy v ČSFR (Civil society. Problems and Perspectives in the ČSFR), Bratislava 1991, pp. 71-79.

pride in giving a liberal appearance, when, in reality, it was a centrally organized state, with an unusually well-established and hierarchically-arranged state power structure. The manifestations of liberalism remained only on a superficial level and did not affect daily life. A centralisticly-built-and controlled state hampered the development of a civic society.

Because Slovak society was based on peasants, it lacked the inner strength to resolutely defy the centralistic state. The main cause for this weakness was an internally impaired and distorted class structure within the Slovak society. Among the peasants, there existed a small group of wealthy farmers. However, the majority of Slovak peasants lived on the edge of poverty. This was one of the primary reasons for the large overseas emigration of Slovaks.[4] By the end of the 19th century a Slovak proletariat had appeared. Only a part of these labourers represented the classical proletariat residing in towns. In the early 20th century, the majority of Slovak labourers were included in the category of "metal-peasants". This term means that they worked in town factories, while living in the countryside, where they owned small farms.

It was from these labourers and peasants that the modest stratum of the Slovak intellectual elite emerged and continuously reproduced. Early in the 19th century this intellectual elite was for the most part clerical, and priests maintained a wide representation. By the beginning of the 20th century priests were no longer a majority in the intelligentsia, but they were relatively strong in comparison to the other Central European countries. Before the outbreak of World War I among the Protestants clergy a kind of family tradition of education began (e.g. the Hurbans, Hodžas),[5] however, it failed to spread widely. The Catholic intelligentsia came almost exclusively from the labourers and peasants. Because of its roots, the Slovak intelligentsia clearly demonstrated democratic tendencies and exhibited deep social feelings. However, the Slovak national movement was limited by the fact, that they seldom occupied high posts in the Hungarian state.

In the early 20th century small groups of industrial and banking entrepreneurs emerged in Slovak society. However, these groups were very weak and rarely controlled large amounts of capital.

The nobility, who were of Slovak origin, at all levels of the hierarchy was de-Slovakized. As the multi-ethnic Hungarian state gradually changed into a single-national Magyar state, the nobility of each ethnic group, whose interests were closely linked with the state, was gradually Magyarized. In the second half of the 19th century the Slovaks were claiming, that their nobility had been turned into a "dry twig" on the nation's tree.

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[4] *Slovenské vysťahovalectvo. Dokumenty* (Slovak emigration. Documents), vols 1-4. Ed. by F. Bielik, E. Rákoš, Bratislava, Martin 1969–1985.

[5] Hučko, J.: *Slovenská inteligencia v prvej polovici 19. storočia* (The Slovak intelligentsia in the first half of the 19th century). In: Liptov 10, 1989, pp. 11-18.

This distorted structure of Slovak society was the result of the centralistic Hungarian state. This state, based on the idea of the uniform political Hungarian nation systematically de-nationalized the higher and middle social strata of not only the Slovaks, but also Croats, Serbs, Rumanians and Germans. The state created cultural, political and economic conditions so that it was in the interests of the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the state officials to adopt Magyar nationality. To retain Slovak nationality, one was required to sacrifice daily and voluntarily place oneself in a disadvantageous social position. These distortions of the social composition of the Slovak society obstructed its natural social development and its natural differentiation.

Despite this unfortunate situation a differentiation of opinions and politics, albeit small, formed in Slovak society. The streams of European political thinking and European cultural activities were greatly reflected in the differentiation of these Slovak opinions. Slovak society did not remain isolated from the world, despite the fact that a large part of the society still clung to patriarchal and feudal traditions. Marx's works, and the works of other theoreticians of the working class, were disseminated among the labourers. The Slovak intelligentsia was even introduced to Darwin's theory of evolution and to some extent, the modern streams of Europe were also reflected in Slovak literary and artistic creations.[6]

Politically, Slovak society became differentiated into five major streams. The first stream was represented by the Slovak National Party, headquartered in Turč. Sv. Martin. It was conservative and focused on tzarist Russia. However, due to the unique Slovak situation, one cannot talk of conservativism in the western sense as linked with the high social strata. The second stream was that of the Catholics. It culminated in the establishment of its own political people's party. On one hand, this Catholic stream was distinctly democratic and closely linked with the life of Slovak peasants. However, on the other hand its ties with Catholicism instigated conservative views. The third stream was represented by the "progressionists". These progressionists were predominatly young members of the liberally oriented intelligentsia. They were adherents to the philosophy and the policy of T.G. Masaryk, a professor at Charles University on Prague. Apart from these three streams based on the national principle, there were also movements having a social basis. At the beginning of the 20th century, the young journalist Milan Hodža, laid down the foundations of Slovak agrarian policy. At the time, these foundations leaned largely on theory, because Hodža pursued the idea, that Slovak peasants created the basis of the nation. And, Hodža said, in a democratic system, the peasants should represent an indispensable political force. For these reasons, the agrarian stream had distinctly democratic features and was engaged in the struggle for universal suffrage.[7] Near the close of the 19th century Slovak workers also became politically organized. Their initial step was to gain membership in the All-Hungarian Worker's

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[6] See: *Dejiny Slovenska* (History of Slovakia), vol. IV, Bratislava 1986, pp. 335-391.

[7] Hodža, M.: *Federation in Central Europe*, London 1942.

Party from which they attempted to gain their independence in 1905. In the long run, however, this attempt was only partially successful. Slovak labourers had maintained a certain degree of autonomy within the framework of the All-Hungarian Workers Party. This further enabled them to participate in the struggle for an independent Czecho-Slovak state.

The differentiations within the Slovak society did not run deep. Their self-defence reflexes hampered the growth of wider differentiation. When the Hungarian state power pursued the policy of de-nationalization, the Slovaks, had to unite in order to defend themselves against Magyarization. Therefore, in the struggle against a commom threat, the Slovak forces were united in a single national bloc, who otherwise were in constant conflict and had fiery disputes in the press. On the eve of World War I, union of the Slovaks into one national bloc was to formally culminate with the establishment of the Slovak National Council. The foundation act was planned for August 1914. The outbreak of the war delayed the plan. The unification efforts materialized during the war, when all of the forces, ranging from the Martin conservatives to the social democrats, joined in the struggle for an independent Czecho-Slovak state. This point, a kind of traditional need for national unity kept recurring in Slovak politics. Even after the establishment of Czecho-Slovakia. Slovak unity became and official ideology of the Slovak Ľudáks during World War II. The urge to maintain the Slovak nation's unity occasionally emerges even today. This is a remnant of the old and historically-encoded self-defence reflex which remains active, even when there is no common foe.

The Slovaks as a national society have been a frequent topic of historical research. This is quite understandable, because this national issue has been frequently discussed in the press and because the majority of political problems in both Hungary and Austria-Hungary manifested themselves as ethnic-national issues. Especially pressing was this issue of unequal rights among ethnic-nations which could not develop their national identity fully. The Slovaks were included among these nations.

The Slovaks were not only inhabitants, but also active creators of pre-1918 Hungary. So, naturally, they considered the Hungarian state to be their own state.[8] The gradual split between the Slovaks and the Hungarian state began in the early years of 19th century and was simultaneous with the process of changing Hungary into a Magyar state. Originally, Hungary was a multi-ethnic state. The effort to change this state into a single, i.e. Magyar nation, following the concept of a uniform political Hungarian nation, resulted in resistance from the non-Magyar nations. The idea of a uniform Hungarian (i.e. Magyar) nation was basically a political, etatist idea. In practice however, it was implementated through systematic language and cultural de-nationalization and its main efforts were aimed against the Slovak intel-

[8] Kováč, D.: *Die Slowakei als ein Teil von Ungarn*. In: R. Aspelagh, H. Renner, H. van der Meulen (Eds): *Im historischen Würgegriff*, Baden-Baden 1994, pp. 21-30.

ligentsia and the middle-social strata. These were the strata leading, directing and representing the Slovak nation. Without these social strata the Slovak people could not fully become a nation. The Hungarian government focused on eliminating the Slovak system of education. In the early 20th century, the Slovaks were even deprived of the opportunity to send their children to receive a basic Slovak education. The existence of the national Slovak community was jeopardized, because they lacked the opportunity to acquire education in their mother tongue.

Despite these unfavourable circumstances, the process of the national consciousness-awakening was progressing among the Slovaks. They did not give up their political agenda in spite of failing to achieve their basic language claims in the Hungarian State. The political agenda of the Slovaks had always been rooted within Hungary (with a few exceptions, such as the 1848-49 revolution). The basis of the Slovak political agenda was a demand for Slovak cultural and territorial autonomy within Hungary. This agenda of autonomy was the basis of the most significant 19th century Slovak memoranda. They were manifested in two documents: The claims of the Slovak Nation of 1848, and the second was The Memorandum of the Slovak Nation of 1861.[9] In the early 20th century the Slovak National Party based its activity on this demand. The Slovaks manifested their inner split from Hungary as the international situation changed with the outbreak of World War I. They join in the resistance against Austria-Hungary and in the struggle for an independent Czecho-Slovak state.[10]

At that time denominationally the Slovaks were divided into two large groups. More than two-thirds of Slovaks were Catholics. Lutheran Protestants of the Augsburg Confession were the second largest group. They represented slightly over one-fourth of the population. Aside from these, there were also smaller denominational groups, the Calvinists and the Uniates. The Jews rarely claimed to be Slovaks. In the early 20th century, there were also groups of free-thinkers among the Slovaks who did not identify themselves with any of the afore mentioned denominations.

Basically, it was the Catholics-Lutheran denominational division which proved vital for the historical destiny of the Slovaks. This division has been important in the development of the Slovak national issue in as far back as the late 18th century. This process is historically referred to as the Slovak national "revival". Slovak Protestants spoke Czech as their liturgical language. The Protestant community strongly emphasized the closeness of the Slovaks to the Czechs. The Protestants were more adherents to the idea of a uniform Czechoslovak nation. The Catholics, on the other hand, with Latin as their liturgical language, preached in Slovak dialects. Consequently, there was rooted in the Catholics, the idea of creating and codifying a literary Slovak language. This materialized in the late 18th century. The Protestant com-

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[9] Bokes, F.: op. cit., vol. 1.

[10] Hronský, M.: *Slovensko pri vzniku Československa* (Slovakia by the emerging of the Czechoslovakia), Bratislava 1988.

munity in the Slovak movement did not adopt this codification. Only in the mid-19th century, when the spreading of the national movement among the people proved vital, did part of the Protestant community realize that this was not possible without having a literary Slovak language. Ľudovít Štúr and his co-workers codified the literary Slovak language in 1843. Even after this codification, the denominational differences remained, with the Catholic wing placing a heavier emphasis on Slovak sovereignty. Some remnants of these differences have persisted throughout the 20th century, with a part of the Protestant intelligentsia advocating the idea of a uniform Czechoslovak nation.[11]

Aside from these three fundamental levels, Slovak society can also be analysed in other areas (educational levels, town-village comparisons, comparison among several Slovak regions). None of these acted in isolation. The particular levels overlapped, creating a relatively complex system of social functioning. We have already mentioned the mutual relationship between the denomination of an individual and his national identity. Other issues, too, were affected by similar relations. State centralism in Hungary obstructed the advancement of a national society and its progression to a civic society. On the one hand, the distorted social structure was a consequence of national oppression, and on the other hand, its distortion worsened this national oppression. Similarly, aside from the elements constituting the civic society, the allegiance of the indivudal to the various denominations played a role in the differentiation of the national society. This fact can be accounted for in the creation of a relatively complex set of relations which, in the 20th century historic process, have undergone a fairly intensive development. Even though Slovak society has undergone unprecedentedly rapid development and sweeping changes in the 20th century, some residual phenomena of the past still remain.

After 1918, Slovak society underwent dramatic changes. The foundation of Czechoslovakia included the setting up of a democratic parliamentary political system. This was a contrast to the Hungarian political system which was ruled by a narrow group without universal suffrage. For Slovakia this was a dramatic change for the better. Soon, this change became evident in the development of Slovak society. Economically, the Czechoslovak state was liberal-minded. On one hand, this liberal-mindedness had a negative impact on the Slovak economy, especially on industry. Slovak industry could not compete with the more advanced Czech industry. In order to survive, it needed the state's protection. On the other hand, during the years of this first Czechoslovak republic, an independent Slovak bourgeoisie appeared. In part, this bourgeoisie was formed from the pre-war entrepreneurial and financial circles, but it was predominantly a new stratum of society.

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[11] KUBÚ, E.: *Der Tschechoslowakismus und die Entwicklung der tschechisch-slowakischen Beziehungen*; KOVÁČ, D.: *Der Tschechoslowakismus. Entstehung, Verlauf und Ende.* Both in: Ethnos–Nation. Eine europäische Zeitschrift, 1, 1993, No. 1, pp. 7-32.

In a short period of time, the distortions in the social structure of Slovak society were eliminated. At the horizontal level, the structure of Slovak society became like that of a modern industrial society. It was composed of a national bourgeoisie, middle urban strata, peasants and a working class. At the vertical level however, these strata did not develop evenly. The peasants were the largest stratum and still included too many poor peasants. During the First Republic, immigration from Slovakia continued, largely from its impoverished regions in the East and North. Slovakia continued to be an agrarian land.

The process of forming a civic society made considerable progress during the years of the first Czechoslovak Republik. The ideological basis of the new state were the ideas of the state's founder T.G. Masaryk. His concept of democracy was basically an idea of a self-governing democracy in which the individual, the man, the citizen, was to become the fundamental link of the entire society. Masaryk rejected the interpretation of the word "democracy" as literally the rule of the people.[12] In his opinion, only individuals or parties want to rule, while the only thing that people want is self-government. Therefore, Masaryk was critical of the political system dominated by political parties. Masaryk's views were clearly directed toward the establishment of a civic society. A number of these ideas materialized in the first Czechoslovak Republic. The reality of this state, however, was different from the ideas of its founder. The complex international situation, in which Czechoslovakia was involved during its existence, proved to be a limiting factor in the creation of a civic society, as did the existence of strong national minorities. Hence, the state was given much more room than had been originally anticipated. Also, political parties gradually dominated the Parliament, limiting the space for the implementation of civic self-government endeavours.[13]

Despite all of these impediments, the process of creating a civic society in Slovakia progressed. Over the twenty-year existence of the Czechoslovak Republic, the citizen was respected and his self-awareness continuously grew. This was especially striking when compared with the neighbouring countries in which, except for Austria, the citizen was still a mere object, left to the mercy of authorities and state agencies.

After the Vienna Arbitration in 1938, when southern Slovakia was annexed by Hungary, its inhabitants, including those of Hungarian nationality, found this return to undemocratic forms of government very difficult to accept. The gravest consequence was the citizen's degradation and his helplessness in confronting the state machinery.

After 1918, Slovak citizens voted for the first time in their history. Their role was especially vital in local elections in which they directly experienced the effect

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[12] MASARYK, T. G.: *Ideály humanitní* (Ideals of Humanity), Praha 1968, p. 103.

[13] HEUMOS, P.: *Strukturální prvky první Československé republiky*. (The structural elements of the first Czechoslovak republic). In: Soudobé dějiny 2, 1995, 2-3, pp. 157-168.

of their votes. Slovakia's inhabitants became citizens aware of their rights. The social and political circumstances were not ideal, as clashes frequently occurred. Yet, vital was the fact, that the citizen was no longer a helpless victim and a humiliated petitioner left to the mercy of the authorities.

In conjunction with the development of a civic society, social life was also progressing in Slovakia, where it had previously been dormant. The number of clubs and social groups and their membership increased dramatically. The, until then, almost dead cultural life underwent an unprecedented boom. The press reached almost every household, and cultural activities were expanding as various exhibitions were set up and theatre performances held. Amateur theatre troops shot up like mushrooms.

The year 1918 viewed in a national light, brought to the Slovaks liberation from national oppression and warded off the threat of an enforced assimilation of the national intelligentsia. In a short time, a specifically Slovak educational system from basic schools to the university level was established. A distinct Slovak intelligentsia was educated at Czech colleges and universities, and at the Slovak University in Bratislava. The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republik placed Slovak society in a new situation. The Slovak territory was delineated and confirmed by international agreements. In this territory, apart from ethnic-Slovaks, there also lived national minorities. The most numerous of these were the Magyars, the Germans and the Ruthenians. The ethnic Slovaks had to establish new relationships with these minorities. The relationships with the Magyar and the German minorities were particularly complex. Virtually overnight the Magyars became an ethnic minority in Slovakia. They were not prepared to accept this social position. Until 1918, the Magyars had capitalized on the policies of the many successive Hungarian governments, which had put them in a privileged position. Psychologically, it is understandable that the Magyars had difficulty coming to terms with this fact. However, the German minority had not been organized as an independent ethnic group. During the period of the Hungarian state, there was not a self-awareness among the German minority in Slovakia, and the individual groups of Germans did not communicate with each other.

The Slovaks also had to re-establish their relationship with the Czech nation. The theory of a uniform Czechoslovak nation, which had existed in pure theory since the national "revival" period and was rejected by the majority of the Slovak nation, was turned into a political practice in the early years of the first Czechoslovak Republic. The fiction of a uniform Czechoslovak nation was turned into an official state doctrine. Slovak endeavours to achieve political autonomy, which were typical of Slovak politics, continued to be at the top of the Slovak agenda. Forces calling for Slovakia's autonomy were gradually gaining more support.

The denominational division remained a comparatively stable component of Slovak society from 1918 to 1948. The proportion between the two most influential denominational groups – the Catholics and the Lutheran Protestants – was retained.

However, the number of persons not acknowledging any religion gradually increased. During the years of the first Czechoslovak Republic, many Jews declared themselves as Slovaks for the first time. Only a small part of the Jewish population acknowledged their Jewish nationality. This was a new fact, as before 1918, with some exceptions, Jews as Slovaks had not existed.[14]

During World War II, Slovakia was a formally independent state. During this period Slovak society underwent a contradictory development. The Slovak Republic was a totalitarian state and also a satellite state of Nazi Germany. This meant, its sovereignty was curtailed. Under these conditions the Slovak government introduced an undemocratic regime in Slovakia, systematically eradicating all the features of a civic society whose foundations had previously been established. The state strengthened its position dramatically. The governing Hlinka's Slovak People's Party firmly established itself in complete control. That is but one side of the coin. On the other side, the seeming independence from Bohemia helped complete the structure of Slovak society. The state offered new opportunities for the Slovak intelligentsia and Slovak bourgeoisie to develop.

During the Slovak Republic a phenomenon, which was unique in European history was recorded in Slovakia. Slovak resistance emerged even while Slovakia enjoyed a fairly high living standard and Slovaks had their "independent" state, albeit under German "protection" surveillance. This resistance was not just a group of individuals. In August 1944, it culminated in an extensive armed uprising. A significant item on the agenda of this resistance was restoration of the Czecho-Slovak republic on a new basis, i.e. on the principle of equality between Czechs and Slovaks. These were programmed efforts at a return to the civic society forms discontinued by the Nazi encroachment. This fact indicates that the features of a civic society in the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia were well developed. The citizens of the Slovak republic were not willing to silently succumb to the totalitarian forms of government.

After 1945, Slovak society underwent dramatic changes again. The post-war period was not and could not have been a return to the pre-war conditions. Although President E. Beneš attempted to continue the political system of pre-war Czechoslovakia, his endeavour was doomed to failure. Democracy in Czechoslovakia had been constrained long before the communist coup in February 1948. From the international viewpoint, Czechoslovakia was placed into the sphere of Soviet political interests, which greatly aided the communists in gaining political power. After a short period of "controlled democracy" in the years 1945-48, there followed a period of over 40 years of a communist totalitarian regime. During this totalitarian regime, state centralization firmly entrenched itself. The state was omnipotent.The citizen was deprived of his fundamental civic rights. The constitutionally-proclaimed franchise to vote was a farce. State centralization went hand-in-hand with

[14] *Československá statistika 1934.*

national centralization. The armed anti-fascist uprising of the Slovaks failed to achieve a more just political arrangement with the Czechs. Prague centralism suppressed each manifestation of Slovak political sovereignty. Even the formal federation of 1968 continued in fact the Prague centralism.

The period after 1945 was referred to as the period of industrialization of Slovakia. The industry built in Slovakia offered many new job opportunities. However, the structure of this industry was unsatisfactory. These industries did not use local raw materials. Heavy industry and the armaments industry, largely dependent on foreign markets and foreign raw materials, were built in Slovakia. Environmental conditions and other domestic needs were often ignored and abused. The elimination of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance and the removal of state subsides to industry after 1989, hurled Slovak industry into a period of deep crisis. The social impact of this industrial decline was one of the reasons for discontent among Slovaks after 1989. The average number of unprofitable enterprises in Slovakia was higher than the federal average, and even though Slovakia's population represented only one third of the Republic's population, the number of unemployed in Slovakia was also higher in absolute numbers.

Industrialization, along with the collectivization of agriculture, radically changed the social composition of Slovak society. The number of industrial workers increased. The peasantry, until then, the most numerous stratum of Slovak society, almost ceased to exist. The number of people now employed in agriculture represents about 13 per cent of the population. These people, however, are not peasants in the conventional sense of the word. Co-operative farmers in Slovakia are among the population with a fairly high standard of living and, by their nature, they are agricultural workers rather than traditional farmers.

The number of university-educated individuals is comparatively low when compared to advanced western countries and some developing countries. The number of highly-qualified workers in industry is also modest. This has to do with obsolete technologies and outdated equipment in the industrial plants.

It would be impossible to total all of the damages caused to Slovak society by the 40-years totalitarian regime. Many of these damages are similar to the damages that occurred in each of the countries of the Soviet bloc.

Throughout the 20th century, Slovak society has undergone sweeping changes. It has been a breakthrough period of self-development. Despite this, it is possible to identify some invariables which have been fairly stable over a long period of time. The denominational division of Slovak society remains constant with only minor changes. A constant in Slovak history is also a strong sense of national identity which followed from the failure to achieve a Slovak national programme and its insufficient implementation throughout the 20th century. Another constant is the insufficient development of the civic society due to the vital role played by a strong and at times totalitarian state. The transformations which have taken place in Slovak society have largely been precipitated from the outside, i.e. some of the changes

have not evolved from inside the society. Another constant in Slovak development is an almost continuous distortion in this social development and in its structure due to external circumstances or a totalitarian state power. These distortions are rooted in the oppressive regime of the Hungarian State. During the First Czechoslovak Republic the natural development of a civic society was not completed, owing to a complex international situation and also to the very brief existence of this state. It was soon followed by Ľudák totality and later by a communist totality.

Under these circumstances the social structure of Slovak society could not develop in a natural way. A consequence of this, is the current situation and the manifestations of the society's internal crisis. This internal crisis clash with the manifestations of nationalism.

On the other hand, strong democratic traditions and openness toward Europe are still present and prevalent in Slovak society. Slovak political programmes have been traditionally open, whether they be autonomy- or federally-oriented programmes. These programmes have always assumed that Slovakia was to be integrated into a larger region.