HUMAN AFFAIRS *16*, 51–65, 2006

# SLOVAK HISTORIOGRAPHY AND CONSTRUCTING THE SLOVAK NATIONAL STORY UP TO 1948

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The aim of the paper is to analyse the development of Slovak historiography and the Slovak national story from its beginnings until 1948. The most important periods of the national story were identified on the basis of an analysis of the most important Slovak historical works of the period studied. The Slovak case is a typical example whereby a national story has been constructed despite the lack of a relevant state tradition. One of the major concerns of Slovak historiography has been to prove that the Slovaks have a national story which is distinct from those of the Czechs or the Hungarians. The seminal periods in the national story are those where the nation has been shown to be independent or autonomous. The development of views on particular nodal points open to dispute also depends on other factors such as the period, the historian's aim, and ideological pressure. The aim by 1948 was the creation of an independent Slovak national story although its radical nationalist version was rejected after 1945.

## Basic factors and their bearing on the development of Slovak historiography

This analysis of the development of Slovak historiography gives an account of the construction of the national story of a nation without a tradition of its own statehood. The lack of such a tradition that should form the core of the national history has significantly influenced the formation of the Slovak story. With the exception of the rather short-lived Great Moravia in the ninth century, Slovaks have had no period of independence or at least autonomy to refer to in their history. From the growth of nationalism in the nineteenth century onwards this fact was reflected in the search for periods of relative independence; an attempt at creating a national story that would not merge with the history of other nations (the Hungarians and Czechs). It should also be mentioned that the Slovak national story addressed a rather small group of "nationally conscious" intelligentsia up to 1918 although there had been attempts to bring it closer to the wider public through popularizing activities. However, there was no contribution to Slovak history important in the shaping of historical consciousness comparable with the work of Palacký or Jirásek in Czech history.

As across Europe, the growing national self-consciousness stimulated the formation of Slovak historiography which dates back to the Baroque period. From

the period of Baroque historiography (the first half of the eighteenth century), a Slovak interpretation of the Hungarian story began to develop with an emphasis on the equal position of the Slovaks and Magyars in the Kingdom of Hungary. Relations between this and the official history of the Kingdom of Hungary, as presented by Magyar historians, deteriorated throughout the "nationalist" nineteenth century. Slovak historiography became a nation-defensive device for securing the legitimacy and unity of the nation. In the second half of the nineteenth century Slovak historians increasingly focused on isolating the Slovak story from the history of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Although Hungarian historiography provided the most significant comparative framework for Slovak historiography during the greater part of the period under question, Czech and German historiography were also influential. The extent to which they overlapped was strongly accentuated in Slovak historiography. The influence of Czech historiography increased remarkably after 1918. Its position was to some extent similar to the position previously held by Hungarian historiography. The German influence can be seen mainly in the "import" of ideas. In the nineteenth century, Herder's views had a profound influence on the linguistic and ethnic characteristics of the community, where the existence of a nation was not conditioned by the nation-state tradition.

An important factor, which had a strong impact on the development of Slovak historiography, was the delayed institutionalization and professionalization. There was no specialized institution in Slovakia before 1918 that could have created the conditions required for a professional history. Attempts to establish an organization such as Matica slovenská (founded in 1863) ended in its closure in 1875. Slovak historical science was neither institutionalized nor professionalized until the year 1918. The formation of Czechoslovakia brought significant changes in the form of institutions engaged in Slovak (and/or Czechoslovak) history.

## Fundamental periods of development

The development of Slovak historiography can be divided into three broad periods. Of course, this division is not strict; there are areas of overlap and anachronism. In spite of this it is possible to make the following categorization on the basis of certain typical features.

The first, "protonationalist" period begins with Baroque historiography and continues approximately until the Enlightenment period, that is, the end of the eighteenth century. It was a period when scholars began to think of the Slovak nation as having its own history. That means that the term 'Slovak' started to become distinct from 'Slavic'. A wave of "national consciousness" was sweeping across Europe. The Slovak case was to some degree a reaction to events occurring within the Magyar setting: Hungarians were increasingly beginning to identify themselves with Magyars. However, there was still a strong, though weakening

"non-nationalist" conception of Hungarian patriotism, which recognized the equal participation of all members of "natio Hungarica" in Hungarian history.

The second period covered all of the nineteenth century up to 1918. As was the case all over Europe, strengthening nationalism had a great influence on Slovak historiography. In an effort to prove the famous past, classical national myths emerged (making use of and adapting the past for the needs of the present). The negative image of the Magyars that prevailed in the Slovak setting or the image of the thousand-year suffering of the Slovaks serve as examples. During this period Slovak history began to be diverted away from the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. This culminated in the attempt of Július Botto (1848-1926) to exclude the period between the tenth and eighteenth centuries from the Slovak national story. (Such an interpretation had, however, a short life and Botto himself corrected it by inserting the omitted period in his later work).

A new era for Slovak historiography began after the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. It is characterized by a process of professionalization and institutionalization. Slovak historiography began to move away from its previous position of "dissent" and towards that of an independent scientific discipline. This period brought discussions on the existence of the Czechoslovak national story. Articles about the meaning of a national history emerged—discussions were held on whether national history was consummated by the formation of Czechoslovakia or whether it would be complete after the creation of an independent Slovak state. A linear history was constructed with a clear aim (Czechoslovakia or Slovakia). On the other hand, some ideas were presented in a rather cyclic form, in that, after the thousand years' suffering came to an end, the Slovak nation returned to the form of national coexistence that had existed after the fall of Great Moravia: the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks .

As is the case with the majority of European national stories, the Slovak story was also built around basic nodal points. Nodal points are events or periods regarded (in either a positive or negative sense) as groundbreaking or decisive in the construction of national historiography. National myths usually emerge around these nodal periods. However, these are not invariable points. They persist in national stories, but their significance and interpretation vary with the period and intentions of the historian. In this paper I study the development of opinions held on the nodal points of the Slovak national story in the writings of Slovak historians.

## Ethnogenesis: Autochthonicity and the right to territory

The first and one of the most important nodal points of each national story is ethnogenesis. The indigenous nature of a settlement actually decided the right to a territory. Antiquity and autochthonicity were significant parts of the national story as early as pre-nationalist Baroque historiography. However, during that period it was chiefly reserved for scholars and the privileged social strata.

Historians looked for the origin of their nations in the bible or in ancient writings and fables. The rulers and nobility used these "discoveries" for improving their reputation in various international and domestic conflicts. Sweden, which tried to join the respected states by referring to its legendary Gothic heritage during the thirty years' war, serves as an example. A similar situation existed in Eastern Europe—the Romanians believed their ancestors to be Dacians, while for the Poles, it was the Sarmatians. The Magyars also mythicized their origins—tracing them back to the biblical Nimrod and ancient Huns.

This process also occurred within the Slovak context. The Slovaks were first perceived to be a separate tribe in the eighteenth century. This meant exploring the Slovak ethnogenesis. It became popular to refer to Pannonia as an old Slav country, which implied that all nations living on the territory of what is today Slovakia and Pannonia were Slav. These theories appeared in the work of the renowned Hungarian scholars of the first half of the eighteenth century. One of them was the polymath Matthias (Matej) Bel (1684-1749) and another was the Jesuit scholar and university professor, Samuel Timon (1675-1736). It was important that the Slovaks were presented as being an autochthonous nation living in Pannonia before the arrival of the Huns, who were regarded by the Magyars as their ancestors. The scholars mentioned were still perceived as Hungarian patriots of Slavic origin. Their aim was to create a worthy origin for their nationality along the lines of those of neighbouring nations or ethnic groups. Later, however, these theories became part of the struggle for the "right" to the territory of Pannonia and Slovakia. This, of course, had the effect of preserving archaic opinion on ethnogenesis (Tibenský 1965, 100). When, in the second half of the eighteenth century, theories about the existence of autochthonous Slavs in Pannonia began to be doubted as a result of scientific research (carried out by the German professor, Thunemann, and the Hungarian historian, Salagius), Slovak historiography remained resolute. The work of the priest Juraj Papánek (1738-1802) serves as an example of such a reaction. He described the Slovaks as autochthonous and indigenous "proto-Slavs". Pavol Jozef Šafárik (1795-1861), the founder of modern Slavic studies, refused to accept the identification of the Slavs with other nations (Celts, Germans). However, he still regarded the Slavs as autochthonous. The last significant historian to have insisted on this thesis was František Víťazoslav Sasinek (1830-1914)—a Catholic priest and one of the most prolific Slovak historians. F.V. Sasinek supported the thesis of the autochthonicity of the Slavic peoples, who had inhabited the area of central Europe "since time immemorial" despite having different names in historical sources (Potemra 1980, 100).

The myth of autochthonicity survived almost until the end of the nineteenth century for two basic reasons. One of them was prosaic—the lack of any systematic archaeological research. The second reason was founding the ongoing and strengthening national defense struggle. The story of every nation in the nineteenth century required two ingredients: first, that the story should display maximum continuity and second, that the "beginnings" of that history should be widely

known. For it was these two things that enabled a state to make a claim on national territory that had "existed since time immemorial". Moreover, Slovak and Magyar historiography competed as to who was first on the territory of Pannonia. This in turn supported the formation of various myths and complex constructions on both sides, proving their antiquity and autochthonocity. Towards the end of the nineteenth century these constructs disappeared. The description of ethnogenesis stabilized in the national story in the form we know it today. Proof of the later arrival of the Slavs on our territory could no longer be ignored and it was more important still to transfer the emphasis and interest of historians to another nodal section of Slovak history—to the era of Great Moravia.

## Great Moravia: the crucial period of the national story

Great Moravia represented a heroic Golden era of the nation in the Slovak national story. The role of this era was similar to the rule of Charles the Great for the French, the Otonic dynasty for the Germans or the high kings of Ireland for the Irish. This period was crucial to the development of the Slovak nation in several different ways. Great Moravia provided proof of the abilities of the Slovaks to establish and govern their own state. The mission of Constantine and Methodius was presented as evidence of the contribution of Slavic nations in terms of culture and civilization. The state formation of Great Moravia was also introduced as an example of the natural closeness of the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks and even as a precedent for the formation of their common state in 1918. However, Great Moravia was not to become of such exceptional significance until as late as the end of the eighteenth century. Baroque historiography was relatively unconcerned with Great Moravia. During that period scholars considered themselves to be Hungarian patriots and they did not think it necessary to speak highly of a state that had existed before the Kingdom of Hungary and that had fought against the Magyars. On the other hand, we can contrast the relative lack of interest in the heritage of Great Moravia with the popularity of the mission of Constantine and Methodius in the history of Slovaks, as is evident in the work of Samuel Timon and Matej Bel. It was the work of Juraj Papánek that brought a breakthrough in the perception of Great Moravia. The change concerned the neutral, even negative approach of the Slovak elite to Great Moravia. "J. Papánek unreservedly designates Svätopluk, the heritage of Great Moravia, and of Constantine and Methodius as being great and famous for the Slovaks." (Tibenský 1965, 112) The reason was the increasing nationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The heroic period for the Magyars was their arrival in Pannonia in which non-Magyar nationalities could not participate and therefore had to create their own national stories. The strengthening of the position of Great Moravia to its becoming the most important period of the Slovak nation was also significantly reinforced by works of fiction. The priest Ján

Hollý (1785-1849) wrote epic works about Great Moravia. The mythicization of the period reached a climax in the age of Slovak romanticism and the growth of national revival. The young generation of Slovak (mostly Evangelical) "revivalists" was led by Ľudovít Štúr (1815-1856). They constructed a myth of the Golden age of Slovaks as a Slovak alternative to the official Hungarian history and used it to strengthen national consciousness. Literature, excursions and tours of "the graves of distant glory" (places allied with the tradition of Great Moravia, e.g. Devín) and the making of national heroes from the rulers—Rastislav and Svätopluk all had a role to play in promoting national consciousness.

Images of the most famous and most positive era of Slovak history survived into the following stage of the national story. Július Botto (1848-1926), lawyer and Evangelical scholar, who, together with Sasinek, was one of the most significant historians of the second half of the nineteenth century, continued the mythological tradition to some extent: he gave an idealized account of the state structure of Great Moravia as a democratic society and contrasted it with the feudal, caste system of the later Kingdom of Hungary. For Slovaks living under Hungarian rule, Great Moravia thus became a symbol of the existence of their own national story and indicated the delineation of Slovak history from Hungarian history. This was demonstrated by the Slovak national commemoration of the millennium of the arrival of Constantine and Methodius in Great Moravia in 1863 and the ignoring of the official Hungarian celebrations of the arrival of the Magyars in Pannonia.

Attitudes to the age of Great Moravia changed after the formation of Czechoslovakia. Great Moravia remained a crucial period for the history of Czechoslovakia. However, new constructions were formed. Official opinion promoted the idea that the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic was a return to the Golden age of the Czechoslovak coexistence in Great Moravia after centuries of suffering. This idea, supporting the existence of a single Czechoslovak nation also appeared in the official history of the Czechoslovak nation. In response to this image of 'the culmination of Slovak history" in a common state with the Czechs, a nationalist opposition was created which rejected the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation and the existence of a Czechoslovak national story. Its most significant representative was the historian František Hrušovský (1903-1956). In his work, he replaced the myth of Great Moravia as being the state of Slovaks and Czechs with the idea (myth) that it was the state of Slovaks. The consummation of the national history for this nationalist part of Slovak historiography came as late as the formation of the Slovak State in 1939.

## Formation of the Kingdom of Hungary: the hospitable theory and the civilizing mission

The Great Moravian theme is also part of the historical construction of the way in which the Hungarian kingdom was formed. Magyar historiography promoted the

theory that Magyars forcibly occupied the territory of present-day Hungary and the local population surrendered. The Magyars used this theory of conquest as a basis for applying their right to rule over the Kingdom of Hungary and for justifying the inferior position of other nationalities. For their part, the Slovaks developed the so-called hospitable theory in order to foster their claim to an equal standing with the Magyars. The theory emphasized the voluntary way in which the Slavic inhabitants were united with the Magyar tribes. The contradictory nature of the two theories indicate to some extent the conflict between the Slovak and Magyar national stories, whereby the victory of one means the defeat of the other. The increasingly competitive relations between the two national groups and the incipient Magyarization meant that the theory of conquest became a political issue and the subject of propaganda art. A fine example is Mihály Munkácsy's extravagant painting from 1893, "Occupation of homeland" showing a triumphant Árpád bestride a white horse in a shiny suit of armour surrounded by people bowing down. The Slovak antithesis is a picture in Hrušovský's book showing a barbarian horde of Magyars in the foreground with a destroyed altar and beaten Slavic priests. In spite of the fact that between the two pictures there is a time span of more than 40 years, both were painted in a period of strong nationalism and they show an entirely different approach to the crucial periods in the history of both nations. Hungarian historiography presented Árpád as a proud conqueror who won a superior position for his nation by force. The Slovaks reacted with their theory of a warm reception and their civilizing mission during the Christianization of the barbarian invaders. The struggle between the two outlooks began as early as Baroque historiography. Samuel Timon is believed to be the founder of the hospitable theory. His work also represented an attempt to remove Great Moravia from history so that the harmonious coexistence of the Slovaks and Magyars could instead be depicted. Timon stated that the Slovaks conquered by the Moravians united with the Magyar tribes in the fight for freedom. In his work, the Jesuit, Juraj Sklenár (1744-1790), placed this state formation in Serbian Morava from where its rule expanded gradually into our territory. Sklenár tried to present Slovaks as a nation subjugated by the Moravians that merged voluntarily with the Magyars to form a single state after the fall of Great Moravia. Hungarian historiography did not react to these "compromises" and after aggravating national conflicts in the nineteenth century, such theories were definitely abandoned.

Historiography of the period of Romanticism developed the theory of the civilizing mission of the Slovaks. Ľudovít Štúr accepted that the Slovaks had been defeated by the Magyars. He presented them, however, as bearers of culture, as a kind of "moral winner". This view ignored the significance of the military defeat and introduced new justifications for building national pride. At the same time, Štúr's generation contributed most to the mythicization of the period of Great Moravia as a fabulous Golden age of the Slovaks, not only through his historical works but most of all through his poetic and prosaic work within the context of

romantic historicism. František Sasinek presented an unprecedented theory about the Magyars and their arrival on our territory. He stated that the Kingdom of Hungary preserved its Slavic character until the eleventh century. Sasinek also regarded the Árpáds as Slavs and denoted the Pechenegs and Polovets as ancestors of the Hungarians who settled in the Hungarian kingdom 200 years after the fall of Great Moravia. Jozef Hložník-Hložanský (1836-1876) presented another theory. He also tried to prove the continuity between Great Moravia and the Kingdom of Hungary. In his opinion, the Árpáds contrived to inherit the throne of Great Moravia through marriage and he considered Stephen I to have restored Great Moravia. The Catholic priest Jonáš Záborský (1812-1876) criticized these views, arguing that the period when the Kingdom of Hungary was formed can be characterized by the battle between the "Eastern" Church associated with Slav democratic society and "Latinism" which brought German oppression and exploitation. This struggle continued until the Slav ethnic was in the majority in the Hungarian Kingdom—the twelfth century. The work of Hložanský and Záborský were not, however, particularly influential in shaping the national story. Hložanský's activities as a journalist did not last long and Záborský's most extensive work "Dejiny kráľovstva Uhorského od počiatkov do čias Žigmundových" (A History of the Kingdom of Hungary from its inception until the rule of Sigismund) remained in manuscript form. In this respect, the work of Július Botto is of greater significance. In his opinion, the thinking on the rights of nations in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary was absurd. "King Stephen did not want to establish a Hungarian kingdom but a feudal-Christian kingdom..." (Botto 1914, 20). Botto, in his interpretation, rejected the problem of relationships and the rights of individual nations in former Hungary on grounds of irrelevance. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, historians such as Rapant and Hrušovský, accepted that the Kingdom of Hungary was a successor state of Great Moravia, which had, consciously or unconsciously, borrowed some organizational and institutional elements from its predecessor. Hrušovský considered the main benefits of the new state for the Slovaks to be the implementation of European civilization and the Christian faith in the Kingdom of Hungary. This religious dimension is strong in the national story throughout Hrušovský's work.

### Matthew Csák: Searching for periods of independent development

Attempts of Slovak historians to find periods of at least partial autonomy within the Kingdom of Hungary are documented by an assessment of the short reign of the oligarch Matthew Csák (Čák) of Trenčín (c.1260 – c.1312) on Slovak territory. A myth about the Slovak king who restored Slovak independence was created on the basis of this oligarch who ruled over central and western Slovakia. Prior to this there had also been an attempt to create a parallel Slovak history inside the Kingdom of Hungary. The figure of Matthew Csák entered the national story

relatively late—as late as during Romanticism. He does not, however, appear in historical writing but mainly in fiction, drama, and journalism. The figure of Matthew Csák portrayed as the last Slovak ruler and warrior was an ideal subject matter for historical novels and poems. The hero Matthew Csák as a product of romantic literature survived in this form until the 1870s. It was František Sasinek who first wrote about Matthew Csák from the perspective of a historian. Csák fitted neatly into Sasinek's attempt to find continuity in the existence of the Slovak. He viewed Matthew Csák in terms of intentions typically associated with Štúr —as a "true patriot" with whom "the sun of the independence of our wonderful Slovakia has set" (Otčenáš 1995, 47). Záborský's attitude to Matthew Csák, although not so romantic, was similar. Záborský even assumes that Matthew Csák considered the secession of the territory he ruled over from the Kingdom of Hungary. Later historians, such as Botto or Hrušovský, did not share this opinion and did not consider it appropriate that Csák should be so significantly represented in the national story. In spite of this, the figure of Matthew Csák maintained an important position in regional history, legends and to some extent journalism.

### The Hussites: The Czech influence in Slovakia

The issue of the Hussites and their influence on the Slovak nation was much more complicated. The theme of Hussites in the history of the Slovaks was one of the fundamental problems of Slovak historiography from its very beginning. The period of Hussitism was one of the few epochs where the Czechs had long-lasting political power and influence in Slovak territory in the Middle Ages. This period became an important part of the debate over how closely the histories of the two nations are intertwined and the extent of the influence of the Czechs in Slovakia. This was true even as early as the Baroque period in historiography due to the work of Matej Bel. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and after 1918 in particular, this period was also used when trying to prove the existence of a common Czechoslovak history. This nodal period was significant not only from the national but also from the religious point of view. Traditionally, "pro-Czechoslovak" Evangelicals did not see the Hussites as simply nourishing Czecho-Slovak relations but also as a people preparing for the reformation. Catholics were less enthusiastic about the Hussite period. Slovak historians generally recognized that the arrival of the Hussites and particularly their followers—"bratríci" meant a strengthening of the Slovak element and the beginning of the use of Czech as an official language. After 1918, the Hussite wars became an important part of the official Czechoslovak national story. Declarations about the massive Hussite (i.e. Czech) colonization of Slovakia should have supported the theory of a single Czechoslovak nation (these views were not new; they had appeared as early as the eighteenth century). However, this construction was not very successful in the Slovak setting. Branislav Varsik (1904-1994), who from the 1930s on studied the

influence of the Hussites in Slovakia, was the main historian concerned with this period. Historians, such as Hrušovský, felt that both the Hussite influence in bringing the two nations closer together and the theory of the Czech colonization of some parts of Slovakia could be over-exaggerated. Hrušovský's reaction was an attempt to marginalize this and point out the negative impact of Hussitism in Slovakia. Similar assessments also appeared in the work of the Slovak historian František Bokes (1906-1968), the author of the last Slovak history before 1948.

### National revival: The second Golden Age

The history of the nineteenth century is of particular importance to the Slovak national story as is the case with the majority of European nations. For Botto, it is the beginning of the dismemberment of the feudal Kingdom of Hungary into individual nations and nationalities. According to him, only "yeomen whose nationality was unimportant" had ruled before and "just as a Magyar peasant had no rights neither did a Slovak peasant." (Botto 1914, 52) The period of the national revival and of the shaping of the modern nation is an extensive independent nodal section with several subgroups. The period of the national revival up to 1848 forms a separate section in the Slovak national story. After Great Moravia, it is another heroic part of the national story, depicted almost exclusively positively. Similar to Great Moravia, the period of national revival is the age that produced heroes, warriors and martyrs of the Slovak nation. The leaders of the individual phases of the national revival, such as Bernolák, Kollár, or Štúr figure as the most well-known personalities of the national story. The climax of the period was the Slovak insurrection in 1848-1849, which closes the famous phase in a heroic way, and in both literature and politics became an armed struggle. The importance attached to the uprising lies in the existence of the armed struggle—Július Botto appreciates the fact that in 1848 nationalists decided to "use the sword to win the national freedom of the Slovaks". (Botto 1914, 52) Struggles and uprisings "for freedom" play a very important role in every national story regardless of whether it ends in victory or defeat. They usually create momentous nodal sections of the national history—"the spring of nations" plays an important role in the history of central Europe as a whole. A certain demythicization took place after 1918. Hrušovský and Bokes pointed out that only a fraction of the Slovak population participated in the events of the national revival and insurrection and the whole action itself in fact ended in fiasco. However, this does not make any difference to the fact that the position of the Slovak national revival is exceptional in the national story.

### 1867 – 1918: Parting with the Hungarian national story

There is no doubt that one of the most negative nodal points in Slovak history is the Compromise between Austria and Hungary of 1867. All Slovak historians agree

on the negative evaluation of the event. Botto, writing at a time when the Kingdom of Hungary was still in existence, was overcome by pessimism about the hopeless prospects for the nation. On the other hand, while historians writing after the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary characterize it as being a particularly complicated period for the Slovaks they mostly hold the Magyar and Austrian elites responsible for the "mistakes" made that finally led to the dissolution of the monarchy."... the establishment of Austro-Hungarian dualism meant the beginning of the unavoidable dissolution of the monarchy" (Hrušovský 1939, 314). For historians of the twentieth century, dualism led to the definite separation of the Slovak and Hungarian national story. Slovaks and Magyars have been in continual conflict since then—the Kingdom of Hungary was no longer a state with which the Slovaks could have been identified: by contrast, they were ready to leave it at the first opportunity.

The high level of agreement amongst historians, evident in the construction of history before the Compromise disappears once it comes to describing the party life of the Slovaks. The emergence of various strands of opinion at the end of the nineteenth century also enabled historians to demonstrate their ideological preferences more clearly. The Slovak nation, which had previously been presented as essentially homogeneous in terms of opinion was divided into particular ideological groupings. Slovak historians writing about this period depict Slovak political life from a position of elitism. In their work there is a leading political class that disseminates certain opinions and ideologies and these are then divided up into "right and wrong" in accordance with the historian's preferences. The elite leads the "apathetic" people either deceived by harmful ideologies or enthusiastically supporting the right ones, depending on the situation. This tendency is most evident in the work of František Hrušovský.

The relatively small amount of material available for comparison makes the analysis problematic. In his description of the period, Július Botto does not write a history but rather his personal reminiscences—this is because he writes about his contemporaries and it is not in his interest to undermine "the unity of nation" or submit any radical criticism of the stream of thought in Slovak politics. In spite of this, Botto's work confirms that he was representative of the Evangelical wing of Slovak scholars. This traditional and conservative perspective emphasized the idea of Czecho-Slovak solidarity and "Slavic unity". Another newer and continuously strengthening strand was that of the nationalistic Catholic wing which rejected the idea of Czechoslovakism. The chief rivals of both of these were the anticlerical, liberal and socialist movements. In the work of Hrušovský, who wrote during the time of the Slovak State, it is even possible to find anti-Semitic tendencies linked with liberalism. To a great extent, Hungarian and Austro-Hungarian politics disappeared from the story of that period. Slovak history was written separately, which gives the impression of apolitical elite operating within their territory and solving their own problems, with "big politics" intervening as *deus ex machina.* It

was mainly in the work of the historians of the twentieth century that this period was depicted as merely awaiting the creation of Czechoslovakia.

### Czechoslovak Republic: Is there a Czechoslovak history?

The formation of the Czechoslovak state was a real turning point. The new state set out a plan to create its own new national story as explanation and justification of its existence. For Slovakia, it was a definite move away from any version of the Magyar or Hungarian story. Instead, they started creating a Czechoslovak story, with a concerted effort to accentuate the continuing strong ties between the Czechs and Slovaks. In Slovakia however, problems associated with constructing a Czechoslovak nation with a shared national history arose almost immediately. Although there were discussions as to whether the Slovaks could be considered an independent nation or whether they were simply part of the Czechoslovak nation, Slovak historians of the nineteenth century (probably with the exception of Šafárik) had always written about the Slovaks as a separate nation. This was even true of Botto, who was closest to the idea of Czechoslovak solidarity. Botto's *Krátka história Slovákov* (A Short History of the Slovaks) presents these views in a modified form and can therefore, "be regarded in this respect as aimed at encouraging Czecho-Slovak solidarity (Kováč 1997, 14). Botto did not sway from his arguments. After the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, disputes and discussions over the existence of a single Czechoslovak nation were also transferred to professional historiography. The majority of Czech historians engaged in Slovakia based their work on the assumption that Czech and Slovak history had so much in common and influenced each other to the extent that it was quite legitimate to talk of a common history. On the basis of a comparison of the development of language and the cultural and territorial development of the Czechs and Slovaks, a Czech historian, professor Chaloupecký (1882-1951) stated that it was possible "...to speak of the history of the Czechoslovak nation in terms of unity and its gradual development and integration into a single whole" (Rapant 1930, 539). The historian and politician Kamil Krofta (1876-1945) was of a similar opinion: "A natural national and state unity had existed at the very beginning [during Great Moravia], which was, unfortunately, later violently broken apart leaving deep marks in the history of both branches of our nation and in their national awareness." (Krofta 1925, 16) Krofta maintained that Slovakia was culturally and geographically and in some periods also economically, politically and legally closer to the Czech lands than to the Kingdom of Hungary. He saw the fact that the Slovaks did not have their own tradition as a nation and state in the past as a serious obstacle to the attempts to create a separate Slovak history. The most important Slovak historian of the period Daniel Rapant (1897-1988), however, pointed out the unsustainability of the argument for the existence of a common Czechoslovak history. Rapant was the first Slovak professional historian to study

the meaning of Slovak history and the author of the conception of Slovak history. He argued that the concept of a Czechoslovak history was not formed through organic development but that it had been created artificially after 1918. "Because, if Czechoslovak history had been something organic, its concept and terminology could have been or would have had to have been created before the creation of Czechoslovakia itself. ... Czechoslovak history and its construction after this point should be ascribed to the attempt, in terms of history, to justify the integration of the Czech and Slovak branches of the Czechoslovak nation into a single Czechoslovak state ..." (Rapant 1930, 532).

Rapant sees the definition describing the nation on the basis of the subjective principle as being decisive. The essential criterion, and in fact the only criterion he deemed relevant was the existence of national consciousness—culture, language and territory were simply tools that help shape it. If, however, an awareness of a single Czechoslovak nation does not exist (or did not exist in the past), then we cannot speak of a single Czechoslovak history. Rapant's proposal was to study Czechoslovak history as the history of the two branches coming closer together and/or distancing themselves from one another in the period between the two essential points of unity—Great Moravia as the beginning and the Czechoslovak Republic as the consummation of the development of both nations. Branislav Varsik was another historian from the first generation of Slovak professional historians who gave a broader account of this topic. His article "On the unity of Czechoslovak history" can be seen in principle as a series of instructions on how to create a united Czechoslovak history. There should be a programme for selecting and emphasizing all the overlapping parts of the Slovak and Czech national stories. These overlaps should create the nodal points of the new Czechoslovak history. This idea of the national story was only current in the Czech setting, while in Slovakia it had no support at all. In spite of the continuing discussions, it was clear that the majority of Slovak historians and, even the majority of Slovaks, would never accept the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation and the construction of a Czechoslovak history.

### The Slovak State: the nationalist version of a national story

The discussion on Czechoslovak history was rather short. After 1938, and, particularly during the existence of the Slovak state (1939-1945) the question became untenable. The new state started to create its own national story emphasizing independent Slovak historical development. The description of Great Moravia and the reduction of the Hussite influence in Slovakia fit into this frame as a purely Slovak state arrangement. The greatest change was the construction of the history of the First Republic, particularly the mutual relations between the Czechs and Slovaks. The negative aspects of these relations should have led to the necessity of creating an independent Slovak state. Although the official historian of

the Slovak Republic František Hrušovský had evaluated the mutual relations between the Czechs and Slovaks as positive in the past, in his descriptions of Czechoslovak history he began to write about the negative hegemonic Czech tendencies that ignored Slovak needs and traditions. On the other side, there is the mythicized figure of Andrej Hlinka, priest and leader of the strongest Slovak political party. "Andrej Hlinka observed the activities of the Czech people with disgust... and stood up for the Slovak and Christian tradition of his nation with all his might." (Hrušovský 1939, 384) The historiography of every totalitarian state seeks to create historical constructs that justify the status quo. Hrušovský apologized for the formation of the dictatorship of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSĽS) relatively simply—it was the greatest party and therefore it had the right to speak in the name of the whole nation. In this part of the Slovak story uniform currents of thought get lost again and an all-embracing term begins to appear—the Slovak nation and its will. This term is then later used in much the same way as the term "the people and their will" in Marxist historiography. Presented in this way, the Slovak nation then acts, feels and thinks as one person, e.g. "the Slovak nation, divided into various political camps felt that it must once again unite in the HSĽS..." (Hrušovský 1939, 422) The dictatorship of one party and the formation of the Slovak state is not then the result of the activities of particular people or groups but the result of the will of the whole nation: "...it was shown... that the Slovak nation had to end the fight for its national freedom regardless of the interests of the Republic" (Hrušovský 1939, 415). Hrušovský (knowingly or unknowingly) borrows here from the ideas of fascism—the need to have a single leader at the head of a united nation, the necessity of strong patriotism and a rejection of the principles of liberal democracy. After the renewal of Czechoslovakia in 1945, this nationalist version of the national story was rejected in domestic historiography and pushed beyond the fringe. Because of the rapid and violent implementation of Marxist historiography, no scientific compromise with the nationalist construction of history was made; this became evident in the new awakening after 1989; a problem familiar to all postcommunist countries.

## Conclusion

In spite of the fact that the Slovak case is a typical example of constructing the national story under the conditions where there is an absence of a relevant nation-state tradition, it is possible to highlight some more or less specific points. In fact, with the exception of the period of Great Moravia, there is no period of independent development in Slovak history. However, there are several nations that have claims on Great Moravia. In early Slovak historiography there was a tendency to completely eliminate this period from Slovak history. Moreover, this the only "Golden period" of Slovak history in fact contained a serious problem. On the basis

of its analysis, it is possible to argue that the Slovaks were de facto not an independent nation with their own national story. The rejection of such an opinion was one of the main concerns of Slovak historiography. This was aimed both at the external audience, particularly the Magyars and the Czechs but also within the nation because part of its own elite perceived the Slovaks to be part of another (Czechoslovak) nation. The year 1948 did not mark the end of this process of the construction of an independent Slovak national story.

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