



Frontiers, regions and identities in Europe / edited by Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer with Jean-François Berdah and Miloš Řezník. - Pisa : Plus-Pisa university press, 2009.  
– (Thematic work group. 5. Frontiers and identities ; 4)  
940 (21.)

1. Circostrizioni territoriali – Europa – Storia 2. Regionalismo – Europa - Storia I. Ellis, Steven II. Eßer, Raingard III. Berdah, Jean-François IV. Řezník, Miloš

CIP a cura del Sistema bibliotecario dell'Università di Pisa

This volume is published thanks to the support of the Directorate General for Research of the European Commission, by the Sixth Framework Network of Excellence CLIOHRES.net under the contract CIT3-CT-2005-006164.

The volume is solely the responsibility of the Network and the authors; the European Community cannot be held responsible for its contents or for any use which may be made of it.

Cover: Maria Vladimirovna Ender (1897-1942), *Attempt at a New Spatial Dimension*, 1920, painting (detail), Russian State Museum, St. Petersburg.

© 1992 Photoscala, Florence

© 2009 by CLIOHRES.net

The materials published as part of the CLIOHRES Project are the property of the CLIOHRES.net Consortium.

They are available for study and use, provided that the source is clearly acknowledged.

cliohres@cliohres.net - www.clioehres.net

Published by Edizioni Plus – Pisa University Press

Lungarno Pacinotti, 43

56126 Pisa

Tel. 050 2212056 – Fax 050 2212945

info.plus@adm.unipi.it

www.edizioniplus.it - Section "Biblioteca"

Member of



Association of American  
University Presses

ISBN: 978-88-8492-652-4

Linguistic revision

Kieran Hoare, Rhys Morgan, Gerald Power

Informatic editing

Răzvan Adrian Marinescu

# Southern Slovakia as an Imagined Territory

ELENA MANNOVÁ

Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava

## ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the ways and means of constructing a virtual region in territories which suddenly became a borderland, taking Southern Slovakia as a case study. The area in the south present-day Slovakia facing the border with Hungary never stood under a unitary political or ecclesiastical administration and had no common history. It comprised several geographical zones with different occupational structures. It was and is inhabited mainly by Hungarian- and Slovak-speaking peoples, between whom the ethnic boundary is fluid. The state border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia was a primary reason for the formation of this area from 1918. However, the frontier was not stable and was transferred northwards at the expense of Slovakia by the Vienna Arbitration of 1938, only to be returned in 1945. The state used the concept of a borderland – and perceived border regions – to denote areas inhabited by members of a foreign ethnic group who were suspected of irredentism, later of autonomism. The study illustrates the mechanisms by which (Czechoslovak and Slovak) state nationalism and successive (Magyar) ‘minority nationalisms’ have created and reproduced a conceptual space from the inter-war period to the present day, in particular marking the territory with national symbols. Identity building and the legitimization of political stances took place mainly in the context of local space. Because of increasing communication, towns rather than the country provided public space for symbolic politics. It can be shown from the example of two towns in Southern Slovakia – Komárno and Lučenec – that the multilayered loyalties of inhabitants did not allow an easy and unambiguous development of territorial identification. The illusion of the threatened border region in which both ethnic groups represented themselves as ‘minorities’ had to be introduced into local conditions in order to serve as a source of the Slovak as well as the Magyar minorities’ sense of identification.

*Štúdia sa zaoberá spôsobmi konštruovania virtuálneho regiónu na územiach, ktoré sa náhle dostali do pozície pohraničia – na príklade Južného Slovenska. Oblasť na juhu dnešného Slovenska hraničiaca s Maďarskom nikdy netvorila administratívny ani cirkevno-správny celok, nemala spoločné dejiny a pozostávala z viacerých geografických zón*

*s odlišnými zamestnaneckými štruktúrami. Žili a žijú tam dodnes prevažne maďarsky a slovensky hovoriaci obyvatelia, etnické rozhraničenie nie je stabilné. Ani štátna hranica, ktorá tvorila prvotný dôvod na formovanie tejto oblasti po roku 1918, nebola pevná: na základe Viedenskej arbitráže sa roku 1938 posunula na sever a po druhej svetovej vojne sa vrátila naspäť. Štát využíval koncept pohraničia – vnímania prihraničných oblastí ako zón obývaných členmi cudzej etnickej skupiny podozrivej z iredenty resp. z autonomizmu. Článok sa zaoberá mechanizmami, pomocou ktorých (československý a slovenský) štátny nacionalizmus a následne (maďarský) 'menšinový' nacionalizmus vytvárali a reprodukovali konceptuálny priestor, najmä označovaním územia národnými symbolmi od medzivojnového obdobia dodnes. Identifikačná a legitimizačná politika sa realizovala predovšetkým v lokálnom priestore. Z dôvodov intenzívnej komunikácie práve mestá, nie vidiek, ponúkali verejný priestor na symbolickú politiku. Príklady dvoch juhoslovenských miest Komárna a Lučenca ukazujú, že mnohohrstevné lojality obyvateľov nedovoľovali ľahké a jednoznačné rozvíjanie teritoriálnych identifikácií. Kolektívna priestorová ilúzia ohrozeného pohraničného regiónu, kde sa obe etnické skupiny samé reprezentujú ako menšiny, musela byť do miestnych podmienok implementovaná, aby mohla slúžiť ako zdroj identifikácie Slovákov aj príslušníkov maďarskej menšiny.*

## A REGION – NEVERREGION

After the First World War, with the separation from the old kingdom of Hungary, a virtual, symbolical region was set up in Southern Slovakia. The new borderline between Czechoslovakia and Hungary ran through seven former Hungarian counties cutting family ties, fields and transport lines – causing changes in collective identities and loyalties on both sides of the border. The space northwards from the border was, in formal discourse and also in everyday language, called Southern Slovakia. It was not constituted by any politico-administrative or ecclesiastical unit; no fixed borders existed between it and other Slovak regions, and even the primary reason for the formation of this area – the state border – was not fixed. From November 1938 to the end of the Second World War 10,390 km<sup>2</sup> of territory in the south and east of Slovakia belonged to Horthy Hungary. No common political, economic, cultural or religious centre for this space existed and the area itself consisted of several regions. Such a phenomenon or mental map is not unique in Central European history. For instance, *Sudetenland/Sudety* on the Czech-German border was never a single linguistic unit (its many dialects existed independently of the state border), the territory never stood under a unitary administration, it had no common history, and it consisted of several geographical zones with different occupational uses<sup>1</sup>.

The moveable state border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia (confirmed in 1920 by the Peace Treaty of Trianon, transferred again at the expense of Slovakia by the Vienna Arbitration of 1938, and returned in 1945) caused a discontinuity in denomina-

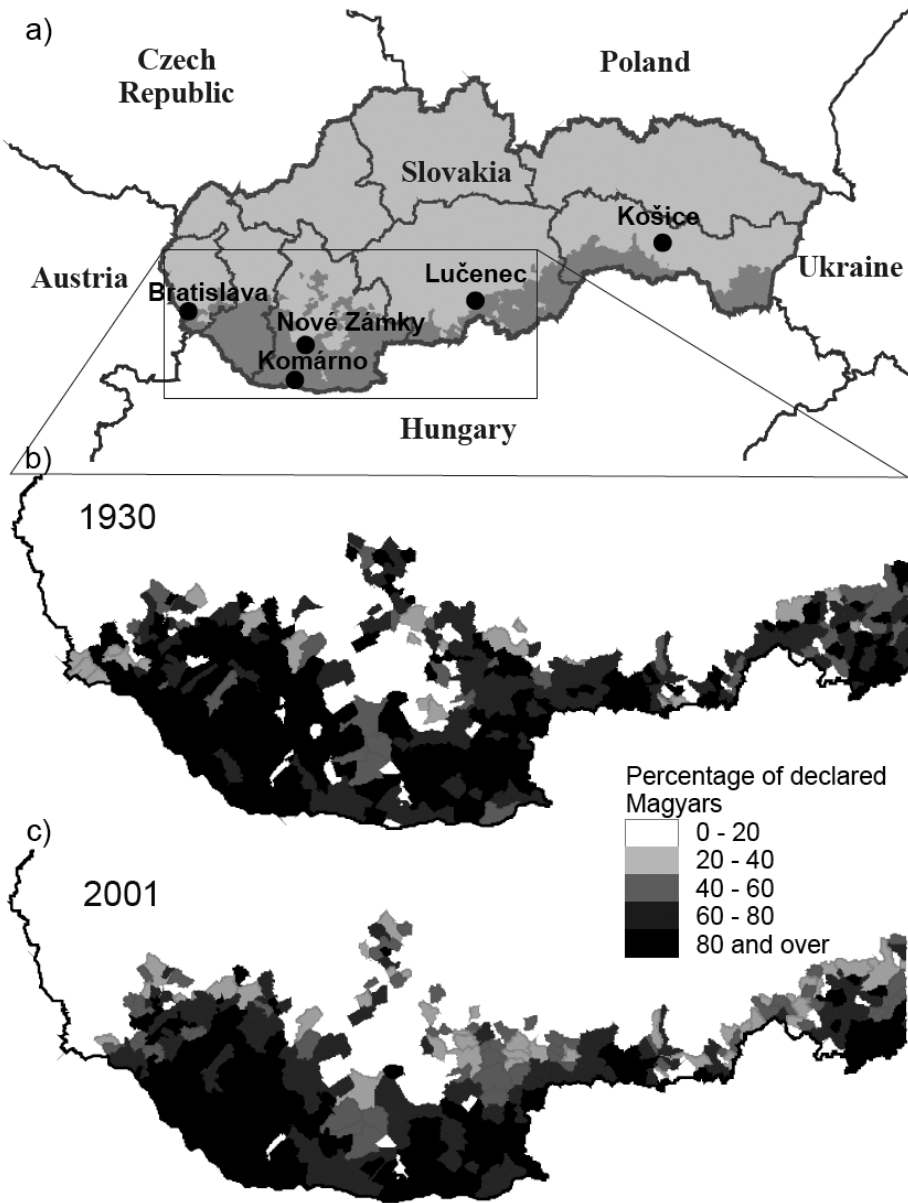


Fig. 2

a) Slovakia and its administrative units showing the area inhabited by Magyars. Deeper grey represents settlements with more than 9.7 % of Magyars (9.7% was a statewide average in 2001).

b) Declared ethnicity in settlements of Southern Slovakia (1930).

c) Declared ethnicity in settlements of Southern Slovakia (2001).

Graphics by Pavel Šuška.

tion: the unofficial term Southern Slovakia was used in 1919-1938 and from 1945 until the present. Its area was not, and is not, fixed and clear; it cannot be simply identified with the region occupied by Horthy Hungary. The population of the region also underwent changes: at various periods, Magyars, Slovaks, Czechs, Jews, Roma and a very small number of Germans were settled, expelled, deported, evacuated, and exchanged<sup>2</sup>. The ethnic border dividing/connecting the dominant Hungarian- and Slovak-speaking inhabitants inside the region was likewise fluid. In their minds many Slovaks from other regions imagine Southern Slovakia as “our space where we have problems with our Magyars”, though the majority of the administrative districts on the southern border had more Slovak inhabitants than Magyar (with the exception of the Komárno and Dunajská Streda districts). In the popular perception, in these constantly changing political configurations, to whom did this area belong? And in reality? What institutions were created in this space? How could it be used as a category of mobilization in the internal Slovak and Hungarian political arenas and in the bilateral conflicts between these two states even after their integration into the European Union? What sentiments of belonging were felt by its inhabitants? The following chapter will describe the mechanisms by which (Slovak) state nationalism and the successive (Magyar) ‘minority nationalisms’ created and reproduced a conceptual space.

#### SCIENTIFIC AND POLITICAL DEFINITIONS

From the perspective of geography Southern Slovakia has some geo-morphological borders, determined by mountain ridges and watersheds. These features divide it further into more geographic regions/sub-regions. The most important are *Podunajská nížina* [the Danubian Lowland], *Juhoslovenská kotlina* [the South Slovakian Basin] and *Východoslovenská nížina* [the East Slovakian Lowland]. Besides the mapping of relief types, geographers use the functional-typological approach. On the basis of the distribution of core spaces and an intra-regional communication network, four regions have been delimited on the territory of Slovakia, viz. two multi-axial core spaces with superior centralizing functions on the spurs of the Pannonian Basin, where the two largest cities (Bratislava, Košice) developed, and two regions of corridor type (the North Slovakian and South Slovakian corridor regions – *Juhoslovenský koridorový región*) divided by the central mountain ridge of the Carpathians. Geographers frequently called and call attention to the unexploited transport and economic possibilities of the South Slovakian corridor region<sup>3</sup>.

Abandoning the one-sided orographic perspective (resulting from the description of mountains), human geographers, sociologists and ethnographers consider *okresy* [administrative districts] as the primary territorial units of regionalization within Slovakia. All basic statistical data from the 1920s relate to this (variable) administrative level of regionalization and – of course – ignore older units, e.g. historic counties as traditional “natural regions”. A remarkable analysis of the regional nexus of political culture and

value orientations in Slovakia after 1989 by the sociologist Vladimír Krivý, the ethnographer Viera Feglová, and the political scientist Daniel Balko attempted to combine both of these levels of regionalization. Demographic, social and economic structures and electoral behaviour could be studied only through administrative districts (12 of them in the south). The topography of ethnographic characteristics such as mentality, approach to traditions, cooperation, ethnic and confessional relations were analysed in relation to the historic counties. Eight such reconstructed “natural regions” are situated in the south of Slovakia. They are ethnically and confessionally heterogeneous: in many places a recognition of the former higher social and cultural status of ‘Magyars’ (the Magyar elites) survived<sup>4</sup>.

Based on the latest multidisciplinary project dealing with regional differentiation in Slovakia, a summary synthetic typology resting on mathematical-statistical evaluations could be constructed. This would also highlight great regional disparities in the south of the country. Through this method twelve administrative districts on the border with Hungary were classified. They did not form a common region, but were integrated into a variety of larger regional clusters on the strength of economic, demographic, social, residential, environmental and politico-administrative characteristics. The more developed regional clusters of the south-west diverge strongly from the less developed ones in eastern Slovakia and in the south of central Slovakia<sup>5</sup>. Another project on efficiency in southern regions (*južné regióny*) also corroborated this pattern of non-uniform development. For the purpose of a report for a book on Magyars in Slovakia, its authors tried to reconstruct six “natural regions” which have a common border with Hungary and a statistically relevant Magyar minority<sup>6</sup>. In the spheres of Slovak human geography, ethnography and political science there is a prevailing tendency to write on ethnically-mixed territory/territories (*národnostne/etnický zmiešané územia*)<sup>7</sup>. In the 1970s the majority of citizens of Magyar nationality (almost 96 %) lived in thirteen administrative districts in the south. The ethnically-mixed territory of southern Slovakia did not form a continuous area. Human geographers distinguished four clear sub-regions with mixed Slovak-Magyar populations in the region<sup>8</sup>.

Different historical national narratives deal with Southern Slovakia. Several overlapping historiographical and political concepts found their way into the canon of the Slovak grand narrative. The region is often described as having originally been a Slovak territory, which was forcibly Magyarized in the 19th century, but many narratives have sought to redress in the balance in favour of the Slovaks. From 1919, Slovak national activists and also the authorities to some degree made use of the Czech concept of a “borderland” – the perception of border regions as areas inhabited by members of a foreign ethnic group who were suspected of irredentism. As Peter Haslinger has stated, at the end of the war both the Czechs and Slovaks were limited in their ability to conceptualize their new imagined community. Slovak elements were mainly minor additions to the already well-established Czech national story. Czechoslovakists (supporters of

the idea of the national unity of Czechs and Slovaks) attached enormous importance to Hungarian revisionist propaganda and the danger it presented to the integrity of the Czechoslovak state, as well as its influence on Slovak autonomists. This perspective encouraged the inclusion of anti-Hungarian and anti-Magyar elements in the Czechoslovak national narrative. To begin with, this utilised images of Magyar 'Orientalism' and of their "different mentality" to foster Czechoslovakism<sup>9</sup>. During the 1920s, Slovak autonomists transferred a rhetoric of dependency from the Magyars to the Czechs by expressing political frustration over the fact that they seemed to be dominated by benevolent yet ignorant others – first the Magyars, then the Czechs. In the long run, the incorporation of this anti-Magyar sentiment led to the development of an independent Slovak national narrative within a Czechoslovak context. The 'hostile minority' was identified with Southern Slovakia<sup>10</sup>.

After the Great War, ethnicity became the main means of structuring local discourses in towns with a well established setting for the expression both of collective national identities and of loyalties in social practice<sup>11</sup> – schools, associations, newspapers, administrative bureaucracy and so on. This ethnic categorization with its competing interpretations of the 'self' and the 'other', as well as mental representations of 'groups', divided people into aliens, enemies or traitors; mapping ethnic differentiation in everyday life. The borderland was represented as a threatened, endangered region, which should be protected. First of all, city dwellers "who had become unfaithful to their nation" should be brought back to "the bosom of the Slovak nation"<sup>12</sup>. Second, a new category of "devoted keepers of the homeland borders" was created. These included soldiers, policemen, customs officials, members of the paramilitary gymnastic society *Sokol* [Falcon], all nationally-conscious Slovaks and Czechs, and their cultural organizations (*Matica slovenská*, *Slovenská liga*). A sharp distinction was drawn between this heterogeneous group and their enemies.

Slovak archaeologists and medievalists use the term Southern Slovakia mainly in its geographic sense. As a specific region it first becomes an object of historiographical studies in connection both with the seizure of territory by the Czechoslovak army (1918-1919), with the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919), with Hungarian revisionist foreign policy, and with the Hungarian occupation (1938-1945). Only recently has there been an increased interest in Czechoslovak settlement and colonization policy in Southern Slovakia during the interwar years.

Language and territory are central to Slovak nationalism. The autonomists' political slogan *Na Slovensku po slovensky* [in Slovakia, in the Slovak language] was introduced into the socio-political practice of the Slovak Republic in the 1930s, reaching its peak in the years of "re-Slovakization" of the Magyars between 1945 and 1948. The use of the Slovak language was identified with the national territory. From 1989, and even more so with the establishment of the independent state in 1993, several state attempts were made to strengthen the monopoly of the state language and to limit the use of

minority languages. Before 1918 the concept of Slovak territory was chiefly connected with the shifting ethnic boundary and with several distinctive geographic elements. First of all there were the High Tatra mountains. The state border fixed at the Paris Peace Conference soon came to be accepted as the proper demarcation of Slovak 'natural' space, though it was not identical with the ethnic one. The redrawing of the border after the Munich Treaty by Hungary, Germany and Poland was considered a grievance. Revision of the borders represented a key policy for Slovakia during the war – both for the official state and for the resistance movement. After 1989 fears that this territory could once again be annexed to Hungary or that a more autonomous regional self-government would lead to discrimination against local Slovak minorities, led to the playing of the 'Magyar card' in the political arena<sup>13</sup>. Fear of Magyar territorial autonomy prompted Czechoslovak and Slovak politicians to initiate various projects of Slovakization in the borderland (from land reform and colonization in 1920s, through the Action of re-Slovakization after the Second World War, to the building of Gabčíkovo water project on the Danube) and also led to successive administrative partitions of Southern Slovakia during each regional reorganization up to the present.

Magyars as representatives of the 'hereditary enemy' had been important for the shaping of Slovak national identity in the past, but Southern Slovakia did not figure in national mythology, national literature, painting or tourism – everything was oriented mainly towards the mountains. Only during the 1970s did Ladislav Ballek become the first important writer to bring the colours and aromas of the southern region and the coexistence of its inhabitants into Slovak literature. The filming of his books helped to integrate this space into the imagined Slovak homeland.

During the inter-war period a rival revisionist discourse in neighbouring Hungary influenced the Slovakian historical narrative. Hungarian political publicity worked with the image of Hungary with its pre-1914 borders as the national territory. This discourse emphasised the eternal and indivisible unity of St Stephen's empire. It referred not only to Southern Slovakia but to all of Slovakia and the other territories lost after 1918, especially after the Trianon Treaty of 1920. Metaphors of the "truncated country" and the "mutilated national body", along with emotions of pain and of martyrdom for western civilization (as a "Christian bastion of Europe" and a "frontier to the East") moulded Hungarian national identity and, through irredentist networks, also had an influence on the Magyars of neighbouring states<sup>14</sup>. The situation in 1938 after the Vienna Arbitration, which was described by Slovaks as an "occupation", was perceived in Hungary and among Magyars settled to the north of the rivers Danube and Tisa as a "return" and a "homecoming". The Magyar minority narrative fluctuated throughout the 20th century between loyalty to the nation, to the ethnic group and to the mother country (Hungary) on the one hand and their duty as citizens to the Czechoslovak/Slovak state on the other hand.



## CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW REGION: WAYS AND MEANS

Representations of the Czechoslovak state and of Slovak nationalism saw the territory along the newly-established border as a hybrid one, which should be transformed and returned to the Slovaks. Fears of disloyalty among German and Magyar minorities led to the state stripping away the autonomy of local and regional governments, setting limits both to the conferring of citizenship as well as to the use of minority languages, restrictions on migration, and so on. Democratic elections meant that state authorities could only exercise limited control over local and regional governments, less so in the private sector. Therefore psychological mechanisms of integration such as propaganda, mental mapping and the redefinition of sites of memory were used extensively.

One of the important steps in inventing a territory is to name it. As the Czechoslovak state had no interest in creating a unique administrative region dominated by the Magyar minority in Southern Slovakia, it remained an undefined space. The titles of local newspapers and voluntary associations indicate that the term remained in everyday use and in part replaced names based on old counties. The range of Slovak newspaper titles in Lučenec shows the cross-over from county through to borderland and onto national terminology: “Novohradská stráž” [Neograd<sup>15</sup> Guard, 1919-1920], “Slovenský juh” [Slovak South, 1920], “Pohraničný posol” [Borderland Messenger, 1922-1923], “Novohradská stráž” (1925-1926), “Stráž” [Guard, 1927-1928] and “Národný týždenník” [National Weekly, 1929-1938]. The short-lived periodical “Južné Slovensko” [Southern Slovakia, 1926] moved from Komárno to Nové Zámky and appeared under a new title with increased national sentiment – “Slovenský juh” [Slovak South, 1927-1938]. (This equated to the newspaper “Slovenský východ” [Slovak East], published in the 1920s in Košice). In recent years those nationalist organizations which wish again to contest the putative discrimination of Slovaks in the south also utilize this name, for instance the civic societies *Slovenský juh* [Slovak South] and *Za slovenský juh – žijeme tu spolu* [For the Slovak South – we live here together] or the monthly “Slovenský juh”.

The titles of the more established and more numerous Magyar local press often departed from the names of historical counties and towns but most frequently introduced the adjective ‘Magyar’. To the present day Magyar publicists use the term *felvidéki magyarság* [Magyardom of Felvidék]. The majority of Slovaks associate the term Felvidék [Upland, referring to the whole territory of Slovakia in the 19th century) with the period of Magyarization and consider it pejorative. At that time the Lowland [Délvidék, present-day Hungary] was stylized as the Hungarian national territory with the Upland representing in this context alterity and peripherality, a land which should be integrated. Today, some Magyar nationalist politicians and many Magyar ethnic-oriented voluntary organizations use ‘Felvidék’ mostly in regard to the territory settled by the Magyar minority<sup>16</sup>. This term is viewed with unease by Slovaks who feel that it implies a territorial claim over the whole of Slovakia.

Oversensitivity in regard to topographic names has its historical roots in the last period of the kingdom of Hungary. The state demanded that everyone use the Hungarian language unconditionally in everyday situations – not only in offices but also in addresses on letters, when travelling by train, as well as for voluntary associations. (People had to use the Hungarian form of the locality, of the name of the society, or the name of the society's house.) Such demands influenced Slovak collective memory and between the wars some of the old Hungarian legal regulations were reversed in the new political conditions, leading to the harassment of the Magyar minority. The struggle for the language of the public space extended from the renaming of streets, places, institutions to various everyday situations, where the local press controlled the correctness of Slovak inscriptions on shops or the language of ball invitations<sup>17</sup>. The names of streets and places were changed frequently according to the political context. The building of monuments was financially more demanding: sometimes one finds a monument of the old regime destroyed, followed by years of enflamed discussion on building new memorials with the organisation of public collections for the purpose. Political myths and symbols, rituals and cults all served as a means of imagining the new region. In order to establish a collective memory for local Czechoslovaks, a mix of Slovak and Czech symbols were used: "Slavic Saints", Cyril and Methodius, were venerated; to a lesser extent there was also the commemoration of Jan Hus (who in reality had little chance of acceptance by the Catholic majority of Slovaks), the myth of the thousand-year oppression of Slovaks in Hungary, the cult of President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and a minor cult of the Slovak co-founder of the Czechoslovak Republic, General Milan Rastislav Štefánik.

## MULTILAYERED LOYALTIES IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

After 1919-20, all inhabitants of the newly formed borderland had to adapt to the new political conditions. In this context it was evident from the very beginning that the construction of neatly-compartmentalized national blocs would not be easy in a regional context. There were too many different groups with different outlooks and agendas: Magyars, local Slovaks, the so-called Magyarones, Slovak and Czech newcomers, Jews and – as special protagonists demanding loyalty – the Czechoslovak and Hungarian states. Among these, the Magyar group may be characterized as being relatively homogeneous. To the north of the newly-drawn state border, a Magyar minority previously part of the modern Hungarian nation controlling the state was gradually forming, therefore, identification was built on the trauma of Trianon and on the initial feeling of being abandoned by the mother-nation<sup>18</sup>.

For the majority of Slovak-speaking inhabitants of Southern Slovakia the category of the nation was not as relevant as for Magyars. Given the low level of institutionalization – there had been only a small number of Slovak journals and associations in this region – only minor nationalist quarrels occurred before the First World War. The forced

Magyarization of the school system, of churches and administration, and also Slovak respect for the stereotype of the Hungarian gentleman created strong pressures towards assimilation. From 1918, however, the Slovaks became, according to the terminology of the time, a “state-forming nation”. After the revolution, the intellectual and political potential of the situation for Slovaks improved considerably over their position under the Kingdom of Hungary. The nationalization of Slovak-speakers was challenged by their identification with strong local and regional outlooks associated with the historic counties. Yet there were numerous groups of people who fell between these two national cultures. These included the so-called “nationally lukewarm Slovaks” or – in respect of those who in pre-war years had for various reasons decided to assimilate – the “Magyarones”. All of these represented a target for the nationalist press and associations of both sides. The project of Czecho-Slovakization in the borderland offered possibilities for advancement for many Czechs and Slovaks, from state employees to agricultural colonists. Their relations with the locally-established Slovaks were therefore often strained because of competition in the labour market. The local Slovak press labelled them a distinct “Czechoslovak” minority. Jews – who were mostly criticised for their ‘ostentatious’ use of the Hungarian language – appeared as second only to the Magyars as a target of Slovak borderland discourses. The Roma hardly appear at all – except before elections, when Magyar political parties would buy their votes, although sometimes Roma music was mentioned as a sign of Hungarianness.

The Great Depression, precipitating an unfavourable economic situation and high unemployment rates, provoked feelings of threat and the need for group loyalty, so helping to create a basis for ethno-political mobilization. Therefore, it was not multi-ethnicity or multi-confessionality which brought permanent crisis and tensions, but the instrumentalization of this national construct of difference and a corresponding identity agenda. Overall, the existence of several important ‘minorities’ (Magyars, Slovaks, Czechs, Jews, Magyarones, people in-between) was therefore an obstacle to the dominance of one group over the others, and this enabled the establishment of various interest groups and also facilitated mediation in the resultant conflicts. Various sources including official documents from the authorities, the local press, and the papers of voluntary associations all testify to the latent ethnicity and the primacy of social over national criteria<sup>19</sup>.

## TOWNS AND THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE REGION

The new nationalizing state pursued integrative, identity building and legitimating politics, and tried to build up feelings of loyalty among the inhabitants. These general developments took place mainly in the local space. Because of increased communication, towns and not the countryside delivered public space par excellence. The correlation between the town as a physical environment and its symbolic dimension turned urban space into a powerful model for cultural memory<sup>20</sup>. Towns on the periphery served as

centres for the periphery and presented space in which the symbolic production of culture took place – in publishing houses, media, museums, and cultural societies. Let us follow the symbolic politics of the different ethnic communities which used symbols to integrate themselves and which, through the local governments, attempted to vindicate this strategy, taking as an example two towns in Southern Slovakia – Komárno with c.21,000 inhabitants and Lučenec with 15,000. Komárno was a Magyar-Slovak town (population proportions in 1930: 64% Magyars, 27% Slovaks and Czechs) surrounded by Magyar villages, Lučenec was a Slovak-Magyar town (60% Slovaks and Czechs, 28% Magyars) in mixed surroundings. Both were defined through various names (in Hungarian Komárom and Losonc), something which already indicates political and symbolical transformations and cleavages. Before 1918, the two towns were fully integrated into the common economic and communication space of the kingdom of Hungary and oriented towards its capital Budapest. After the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy and the definitive establishment of the state border, Komárno and Lučenec found themselves in the Czechoslovak Republic – against the will of many of the citizens (in Komárno of the majority). These garrison towns, dynamically industrialized from the end of the 19th century, were therefore situated in the periphery of a newly-established state. Komárno was even divided by the state borderline into two towns: right up to the present, its former southern part remains in Hungary.

The population was strongly influenced by migration, so that the proportion of locals to non-locals declined. Many Hungarian former state employees and noblemen emigrated to Hungary; they were replaced by Czech and Slovak newcomers. The most mobile element was represented by the army. In ethnic composition the absolute Magyar majority in the 1910 census was reduced. Several factors were responsible for this: the exodus of Magyar officials, officers, and aristocrats; the change in declaring the nationality of the Jews; the reassimilation of some Magyarized Slovaks; the large numbers of Magyars without state citizenship who were registered as foreigners in the statistics. The confessional structure of the two towns was similar: two thirds were Roman Catholic (60% in Lučenec, as opposed to 65% in Komárno in 1930), 22% were Protestants (Lutherans and Calvinists), 15% in Lučenec were Jews, with 10% in Komárno. Church life was fully Magyarized in the 19th century and Slovak worship were introduced (in Lučenec reintroduced) only slowly from 1918. The social structure was remarkable for the growth in the numbers of people dependent on the state – state employees, public officials, and military personal. Only about a half of the town dwellers belonged to a so-called stable group which was relatively less affected by political change, notably the independent self-employed, employees in private industry and in agricultural enterprises, the intelligentsia in independent professions. The change of state sovereignty principally affected the political system and interethnic relations, but in the structure of ownership in the two towns some elements of continuity remained. Identity building was influenced also by the increase of industrial workers and by what we might call

“proletarian culture”. The economic crisis with mass unemployment led to the polarization of social interests and to political radicalization. Due to the universal suffrage introduced after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the communists and the Magyar parties won a majority in the elections to the respective town councils.

Public space in the towns was characterized by a confrontation between local cultural plurality and a political organization of space which aimed at homogeneity: both nationalisms had the power to establish boundaries and to exclude. Mutual relations between the representatives of the ethnic groups depended upon quantitative factors and local traditions. In Komárno, where the Magyars dominated both in local government and in voluntary associations, almost all the previous Hungarian names of streets and places remained during the whole interwar period – only the main street was renamed after Masaryk. Only later did Slovak translations also appear. Streets in Lučenec were marked by bilingual plates, but there street names were changed in many cases: a Slovak provenance could be ascribed to 22 names, a Czech or Czechoslovak to 12, and a Magyar in respect of Hungarian to 20 street names. A very strange solution was devised in another town, Nové Zámky, which corresponded to the numerous balances in terms of relations between local Slovaks and Magyars and to special local traditions of resistance to Magyarization in the last years of the monarchy. In this South-Slovakian town officially old and new street denominations were used concurrently. In a Hungarian text the central place was called Kossuth Square, in a Slovak one – the Square of the Republic. In the same way the main street had simultaneously two names after the representatives of rival Hungarian and Slovak nationalisms – *Széchenyi utca* and *Štefánikova ulica*<sup>21</sup>.

Some balance in the criteria of ethnic differentiation was also evident in regard to the phenomenon of *korzo* [promenades]. The public was not divided ethnically, as in many Bohemian and Moravian towns, but socially: each evening first maids with soldiers promenaded, and on the same street after nine o'clock a more rigorous etiquette obtained for so-called gentleman. The residential structures of South-Slovakian towns were also closely related to social status rather than to ethnicity. There was only one particular ethnic group living separately in some kind of closed area outside both towns – the Roma living in settlements called “pero”. In Lučenec, Roma elites – café musicians – did not build their private houses apart from the majority of the town dwellers but in a street close to the centre which is called Musicians Street even today. Popular coffee-houses were visited mainly by Hungarian- and Slovak-speaking guests: Czech middle classes preferred other sorts of leisure time with sport, tourism and beer. Magyars and Slovaks often occupied neighbouring tables, while the Slovak local journals described inter-ethnic conflicts among the guests and saw cafés as “Magyar nests”.

An invisible Magyar-(Czecho)Slovak frontier cut through almost all institutions in the towns: the local self-administration, the schools, churches, press, libraries, and voluntary associations. However, this delimitation was not absolute: for instance, many Magyar children visited Slovak schools and vice versa, depending on the location of the

educational institution. The associational activities, rhetoric and rituals were subject to strict surveillance by the local press, both from their own side and from the other's too. The majority of societies were continuously influenced by Budapest (through the Magyar minority's political parties which were financially supported from Hungary) or by Bratislava and Prague (directly by their own association central offices). Around one fifth of the voluntary associations in Komárno had a mixed membership (including Slovaks, Magyars and Czechs, for example). They operated without reference to ethnicity or nationality, indifferent to nationalist claims or programmes<sup>22</sup>, and displaying a pragmatic willingness to co-operate.

In spite of the fluidity of boundaries and of various ethnic and linguistic overlappings, hybridizations, and acculturation, and in spite of the fact that linguistically-mixed societies exhibited small predisposition towards ethnic polarization, in the inter-war period ethnicity soon became a strong factor structuring local discourses in both towns. In various forms of local and group representations the element of multi-ethnic contact disappeared or was transformed into a display of cultural difference. Different interpretations of the past and the connections to different centres contributed to constructing of 'cultural' barriers.

The building and the demolition of monuments reflected an aspect of symbolic occupation and control of public space by 'national groups'. Not only the authorities but principally the civic networks shaped sites of memory in towns and their social utilization at festivities and celebrations. On the central square in Komárno, the statue of General György Klapka survived as a reminder; only its mental message for local Magyars changed. During the monarchy it had symbolised the Hungarian independence struggle against the Habsburgs; after the war it symbolized Magyar resistance to the Czechoslovak state. The counter-pole of Klapka – Slovak General Štefánik – was only in 1930 accorded his own monument at the hands of the fluctuating (Czecho)Slovak public (state officers, teachers, customs officials, and gendarmes) and then only with the support of the army. Already in 1911 a local Magyar society had initiated public collections to build a monument for their famous countryman, the Hungarian writer Mór Jókai, and this continued after the war, but Czechoslovak authorities only sanctioned this in 1936. In Lučenec (with its larger Slovak population) the statue of the Hungarian national hero, Lajos Kossuth, was removed in 1919; and after ugly quarrelling the pedestal of the Kossuth monument with the statue of a Hungarian militiaman holding a Hungarian flag likewise disappeared in 1925. Slovak voluntary associations became involved in destroying this "hated symbol of oppression" but they were unsuccessful in attempts to replace him with a projected Štefánik monument. The central square was left empty<sup>23</sup>.

The effectiveness of symbols created the illusion of absolute power in a particular society, including the impossibility of reshaping the environment in an adequate way – and this led to a clash of symbols<sup>24</sup>. Already in the inter-war period, the example of polarization among town dwellers in regard to football illustrates this well. But in general

terms, everyday practice was hardly ever in accordance with the normative discourse. Gendarme reports often highlight a discrepancy between nationalist rhetoric and reality and disclose more examples of the loyal behaviour of Magyars than might be expected to judge from the confrontational local newspapers. The dividing lines between ethnic groups were much more fluid and transparent than the canonized Czechoslovak national narrative would have us believe. In the towns in Southern Slovakia, alliances between ethnic Magyars and Slovaks against Czechs occurred on several occasions and loyalties not yet fixed were still being negotiated. Criteria determining who was a 'good' Slovak or Magyar were very ambiguous.

#### FLUCTUATING STATE AND ETHNIC BORDERS: FROM 1938 TILL TODAY

On 2 November 1938, in the Vienna Arbitration, Germany and Italy decided on the new frontiers of Slovakia. Hungary was awarded new territory with 854,000 inhabitants, more than 270,000 of them of Slovak nationality. After the war this territory was returned to Czechoslovakia, but the topos of a 'bleeding border' remained as a metaphor of potential threat in the Slovak national memory. On the basis of the idea of collective guilt, Germans and Magyars – with the exception of anti-fascists – were in 1945 deprived of citizenship and their property was confiscated. As a result of an agreement with Hungary on an exchange of population, 73,000 Slovaks moved from Hungary to Slovakia and 74,000 Magyars moved from Slovakia to Hungary. About 44,000 Magyars were forcibly resettled in the Czech frontier regions to replace the German labour force there. In the strained atmosphere of revenge more than 326,000 Magyars were 're-Slovakized'. In exchange for declaring themselves to be Slovaks, they received civil rights and the possibility of employment. After 1948, when rights of citizenship, schools in their own language, a press and cultural societies were returned, the majority of the 're-Slovakized' people reverted to their Magyar nationality<sup>25</sup>. But the process of Slovak national appropriation of the territories settled by Magyars did not stop. In 1948 it was symbolised by the renaming of many South-Slovakian towns and villages after Slovak personalities who had no connection to the localities concerned (for instance, Štúrovo, Hurbanovo, Bernolákovo, Hamuliakovo, Gabčíkovo). The period 1945-1948 is enshrined in the collective memory of Magyars in Slovakia as "the years without a homeland", but this view was incorporated slowly in Slovak history textbooks, and in public discourses it appeared only from the 1990s on.

The inhabitants of the South-Slovakian region had a dramatic destiny with a distant past. They had already experienced a practical sense of being in a borderland during early modern times when Ottoman expansion divided the kingdom of Hungary and a great part of present-day Southern Slovakia lay north of the border and suffered from Ottoman invasions. Fluctuating state borders in the 20th century (1918-1938-1945) brought not only waves of migration but also a border regime with special infrastruc-

ture for policing the territory, with a special border administration and a peculiar way of life (including smuggling). The present ethnic boundary represents another type of border identity which characterizes this region. As a theoretical construct, based on various criteria, it can be defined from different perspectives. Ethnology and historiography study first of all the use of language, migrations and processes of change in ethnic belonging – acculturation and assimilation. Human geography interprets the boundary between ‘ethnic groups’ as the projection of a social boundary into a physical space. It is a zone rather than a line dividing areas inhabited mainly by members of one ethnic group, a zone representing different patterns of social behaviour and distinguishing in-group members from out-group members. The ethnic boundary also affords the highest possibility for social and cultural interactions<sup>26</sup>. The Hungarian historian László Szarka analysed the linguistic border between Slovaks and Magyars and discovered three types of border. He presumed that the sharp ethnic boundary with a high measure of social and cultural isolation between areas inhabited by Slovaks and Magyars had dominated in the past and still survives in the Mátyusföld region between the river Malý Dunaj [Small Danube] and the lower reaches of the river Váh – though there are minimal physical-geographical barriers. Another historic type of linguistic and ethnic border – a striped one – can be seen in the geographically more segmented southern parts of central Slovakia (Tekov, Hont, Gemer, Novohrad), where the different ethnic areas assumed the form of stripes. The third type – the blurred ethnic boundary – became evident after the Second World War, when bilingualism in consequence of migration and assimilation increased<sup>27</sup>. In addition, the research by Slovak human geographers on the district of Galanta confirms that from the 1950s and 1960s the Slovak-Magyar ethnic boundary has broadened and has shifted further to the south<sup>28</sup>.

For almost a hundred years after the collapse of Austro-Hungary, the internal cohesion of the regions settled by Magyar population did not change, even though there was a constant decline in the overall proportion of Magyars in the population. In the census of 2001 more than 520,000 citizens declared themselves Magyars (9.7% of all the inhabitants of Slovakia). They live relatively compactly in Southern Slovakia, in its developed regions but also in the more economically underdeveloped and marginalized parts. In spite of tensions with the Czechoslovak and now Slovak state, they have managed to maintain their own language, symbols, political parties, press, literature, theatre and cultural associations – after 1989 in attenuated contact with their mother nation<sup>29</sup>. The majority of their marriages ethnically-homogeneous were marriages. The language forms the base of their ethnic identification. According to socio-psychological research they have a strong sense of belonging to their family and to their minority community, then to the mother nation, to the Slovak Republic, to the Hungarian Republic and to the European Union, but also to their own town and region<sup>30</sup>. A case study on inter-ethnic relations with Slovaks highlights as a local source of tensions misunderstanding between Slovak newcom-



ers and Magyar inhabitants, where first and foremost the question of the language barrier appears. Economic, religious and cultural positions did not seem conflictive<sup>31</sup>.

## A REGION CREATED BY TWO NATIONALISMS

Southern Slovakia cannot be identified with any territorial corporation delimited by the state according to functional criteria. Nor is it a typical historic developed space characterized by cultural, linguistic, homeland or natural specificities or by the feeling of belonging to the space<sup>32</sup>. Regional identifications of its individual inhabitants, so-called internal regionalism, are bound not only to natural and material socio-economic aspects of the country but also to a “non-material geosphere of anthropogenic character”<sup>33</sup>. People shape their individual image of the region in connection with remembering the time of their childhood, with a common language and generational memory of smaller sub-regions – historic counties or natural surroundings of rivers such as the Danube, Ipel’ or Tisa and the like. Concurrently, the whole region serves as a projection of space for a common awareness of symbolic groups, especially of Slovaks from other regions, and of the Magyar minority in Slovakia. From 1918 Slovak and Czechoslovak national identities penetrated to this territory and local and small-regional identification forms intermingled with national ones in the relationship of exchange and hierarchization<sup>34</sup>. A new morphologic – linguistic- regionally-defined zone – a borderland – formed the arena for conflict and the source of national discourse. National activists from the locality were stylized as persons of symbolic representation, the region itself as a stage of national oppression. Both sides considered the borderland as a component of their own national territory. All population increases were celebrated as a success of the whole nation and assimilation losses were bemoaned as the beginning of the end of one’s own national existence<sup>35</sup>. Nationalist organizations, especially so-called protective societies such as the Slovak League (which built Slovak schools in the south) had their local and regional branches in the borderland, but they developed national, not regional identities. They imposed national classification schemes and interpretations of the past according to the national canon.

On the one side, ‘Southern Slovakia’ was – and still is – constructed by Slovak nationalists – mainly from outside this region – as a territory which should be conquered (linguistically, and by monuments). In such a way it offers a source of Slovak identification. On the other side, regional claims and the political mobilization of a Magyar political coalition in the context of a region strengthens the ethno-regional awareness of Magyar minority. The system of voluntary institutions (first and foremost the cultural organization *Csemadok* with its 450 branches and 56,000 members, but also various other foundations) is incompatible with the more differentiated Slovak civic network. Closed Magyar minority organizations which are supported from the Hungarian Re-

public describe and delineate the ethnic boundary<sup>36</sup> as only this seems to save the minority community from assimilation.

A new phenomenon – the marking of the territory with Hungarian national symbols – has extended in Southern Slovakia from 1990s. In open spaces, mainly in the centre of villages, but also in private gardens, spear-shaped memorial poles or *kopfaja* are built. Richly decorated Protestant grave markers, carved from wood, originally appeared first on cemeteries and, under the influence of the ethnographic literature from the 19th century, they started to become an expression of an ancient Hungarian identity. In the Horthy era wooden memorial poles marked the reclaimed territory upon the Danube. A new impulse to revive this symbol came in 1976 from Hungary with the 450th anniversary of the tragic battle of Mohács in 1526 which stood for the beginning of foreign (Ottoman and Habsburg) hegemony. Beginning in 1977 representatives of the Magyar minority in Slovakia had started to use it sporadically, but the boom came with the revolution of 1989. Wooden memorial poles as well as different monuments with St Stephen's crown or the mythological *turul* bird are places of local celebrations which recall the tragic and successful moments of the minority's history and also of the Hungarian nation's and state's past, including the period after 1918. The singing of the Hungarian national anthem and the laying of wreaths with red, white and green ribbons belong permanently to the minority's public festivities. Some ethnologists assume that a great part of Magyars probably greet the unveiling of memorial poles unenthusiastically or critically but they do not express these sentiments openly for fear of being labelled as traitors to the national symbols<sup>37</sup>.

Those Slovaks who feel themselves to be members of the dominant nation are rather able to ignore the totalitarian pretensions of their own nationalism. A part of the Slovak press has responded with criticism and derision in regard to the Slovak nationalists' answer to the Magyar minority's identification policy. Specifically, nationalist activists reacted to Magyar monuments by mounting a vehement struggle for the erection of the monument of Cyril and Method in Komárno or by erecting double-armed crosses to mark their own territory. Both nationalisms feed on each other and both hold up in regard to the collective space the illusion of a threatened border region where both ethnic groups are denominated "minorities". In the Slovak nationalist ideology Southern Slovakia appears as the dwelling place of "national enemies". Some Magyar/Hungarian nationalists dream nostalgically about this region as part of the erstwhile Great Hungary. Southern Slovakia as a fictional world – the Neverland – lives in the minds of nationalists on both sides of the border. In such a context neither the (partially geographic) term, 'Southern Slovakia', nor the (ethnic) denomination of a 'territory inhabited by the Magyar minority' can be considered neutral: they belong to the political terminology of the region-neverregion.

Cross-border cooperation<sup>38</sup> with its activist potential for the economy has a chance to influence, to change, or to corroborate the territorial awareness of the inhabitants of the region where a socio-cultural space constituted by cultural norms, personal networks and iden-

tification with the narrow 'homeland' and the 'genius regionis' still have more relevance than political frameworks. The anticipated economic and other advantages of Euroregions might also foster the inhabitants' resistance to nationalist constructions of social reality and lead to an elimination of the political deployment of the term 'Southern Slovakia'.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> G.R. Schroubek, *Die künstliche Region: Beispiel "Sudetenland"*, in H. Gerndt, G.R. Schroubek (eds.), *Regionale Kulturanalyse*, Munich 1979, pp. 25-29.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. a partial study, É. Varga, *Migrationsprozesse im ehemaligen Komitat Hont 1938-1948 (Deutsche, Juden, Slowaken, Ungarn)*, in G. Seewann (ed.), *Minderheitenfrage in Südosteuropa*, Munich 1992, pp. 411-420.
- <sup>3</sup> E. Mazúr, M. Lukniš, *Regionálne geomorfologické členenie SSR*, in "Geografický časopis", 1978, 30, 2, pp. 101-116; M. Lukniš, *Regionálne členenie Slovenskej socialistickej republiky z hľadiska jej racionálneho rozvoja*, in "Geografický časopis", 1985, 37, 2-3, pp. 137-161; O. Bašovský, E. Hvozďárová, J. Paulov, E. Povincová, *Regionálna analýza a prognóza rozvoja okresov Juhoslovenskej kotliny*, in "Geografický časopis", 1985, 37, 2-3, pp. 287-302.
- <sup>4</sup> V. Krivý, V. Feglová, D. Balko, *Slovensko a jeho regióny: sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania*, Bratislava 1996. From an ethnographic point of view, the following South-Slovakian districts were reconstructed in the cited publication: Oblast Bratislavská, Dolnonitrianska, Komárnianska, Tekovsko-hontianska, Hontiansko-novohradská, Gemersko-malohontská, Abovsko-turnianska, Zemplínska.
- <sup>5</sup> V. Ira, J. Pašiak, L. Faltán, P. Gajdoš, *Podoby regionálnych odlišností na Slovensku*, Bratislava 2005; L. Faltán, J. Pašiak (eds.), *Regionálny rozvoj Slovenska. Východiská a súčasný stav*, Bratislava 2004.
- <sup>6</sup> The term southern regions is used for the following six regions based on cultural-historical, economic and social bonds: Dolné Považie – Podunajsko, Dolná Nitra, Tekov, Gemer – Malohont – Novohrad, Košice – Abov, Zemplín. P. Pažitný, K. Morvay, S. Frisová-Ondriašová, J. Kling, *Správa o výkonnosti južných regiónov*, in J. Fazekas, P. Hunčík (eds.), *Maďari na Slovensku (1989-2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, Šamorín 2008, pp. 317-370.
- <sup>7</sup> J. Žudel, *Osídlenie južného Slovenska. Ako sa menila etnická hranica*, in "Historická revue", 1995, 6, 10, pp. 12-14 offers an overview of the changes in the ethnically mixed zone along the state border.
- <sup>8</sup> Danubian Lowland, South-Slovakian Basin, the region alongside the rivers Bodrog and Latorica in South-Eastern Slovakia and the Hungarian language island around Nitra. E. Mazúr, *Národnostné zloženie*, in P. Plesník and coll., *Slovensko. Ľud 1. časť*, Bratislava 1974, pp. 451 and 454.
- <sup>9</sup> P. Haslinger, *Hungarian motifs in the emergence and the decline of a Czechoslovak national narrative, 1890-1930*, in N.M. Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other. Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, New York 2003, p. 172.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. P. Haslinger, *Loyalität in Grenzregionen. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der Südslowakei nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, in M. Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918-1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, Munich 2004, pp. 45-60.
- <sup>12</sup> Haslinger, *Hungarian motifs* cit., p. 177.
- <sup>13</sup> L. Lipták, *Symboly národa a symboly štátu*, in E. Krekovič, E. Mannová, E. Krekovičová (eds.), *Mýty naše slovenské*, Bratislava 2005, pp. 53-54.
- <sup>14</sup> Haslinger, *Loyalität* cit., p. 54; P. Haslinger, *Im Schatten von Trianon: Konstruktionsversuche eines nationalen Territoriums und einer nationalen Wir-Gruppe in der ungarischen politischen Publizistik 1919-*

1939, in G. Schubert, W. Dahmen (eds.), *Bilder vom Eigenen und Fremden aus dem Donau-Balkan-Raum. Analysen literarischer und anderer Texte*, Munich 2003, pp. 281-301.

- <sup>15</sup> The name of the county.
- <sup>16</sup> K. Tóth, *Vývoj systému inštitúcií maďarskej menšiny*, in Fazekas, Hunčík (eds.), *Maďari* cit., pp. 291.
- <sup>17</sup> Details and cf. Mannová, „Sie wollen...” cit., pp. 45-67.
- <sup>18</sup> É. Kovács, *Alteritás és identitás: a két világháború közötti határtérsegek, különös tekintettel a szlovák-magyar határra*, in K. Tóth (ed.), *Ezredforduló*, Dunaszerdahely 2001, pp. 126-139; É. Kovács, „Trianonisierung.“ *Vom Diskurs über die Staatsgrenze zum Diskurs über Trianon*, in: A. Kerekes, A. Millner, P. Plener, B. Rásky (eds.), *Leitha und Lethe. Symbolische Räume und Zeiten in der Kultur Österreich-Ungarns*, Tübingen - Basel 2004, pp. 241-261.
- <sup>19</sup> E. Mannová, „... aber jetzt ist er ein guter Slowake.“ *Varianten nationaler Identität im Vereinswesen zweier südslovakischen Kleinstädte 1918-1938*, in P. Haslinger (ed.), *Regionale und nationale Identitäten. Wechselwirkungen und Spannungsfelder im Zeitalter moderner Staatlichkeit*, Würzburg 2000, pp. 215-225.
- <sup>20</sup> H. Hein-Kircher, *Clash of symbols and local politics – multiethnic cities in contested regions of East Central Europe after World War I*, Paper given at the Regional European Congress ICCEES – International Council for Central and East European Studies, Berlin 2-4 August 2007.
- <sup>21</sup> For details and sources, see Mannová, *Konstrukcia menšinovej identity v mestskom prostredí (Maďari v Komárne a Lučenci 1918-1938)*, in P. Salner, D. Luther (eds.), *Etnicita a mesto*, Bratislava 2001, pp. 111-140; L. Kočíš, *Nové Zámky v minulosti a súčasnosti*, Nové Zámky 1967, p. 81.
- <sup>22</sup> The American historian Pieter Judson uses for such cases the term “indifference to the nation.” P. Judson, *Guardians of the nation: Activists on the language frontier of imperial Austria*, Cambridge MA 2006.
- <sup>23</sup> Details in E. Mannová, *Von Nationalhelden zum Europa-Platz. Inszenierungen des kollektiven Gedächtnisses in Komárno an der slowakisch-ungarischen Grenze*, in M. Csáky, K. Zeyringer (eds.), *Inszenierungen des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Eigenbilder, Fremdbilder*, Innsbruck 2002, pp. 110-131.
- <sup>24</sup> Hein-Kircher, *Clash of symbols* cit.
- <sup>25</sup> L. Lipták, *Post-War Slovakia*, in E. Mannová (ed.), *A Concise History of Slovakia*, Bratislava 2000, p. 276.
- <sup>26</sup> J. Majo, D. Kusendová, *Vývoj etnickej hranice v okrese Galanta*, in “Geografický časopis”, 2007, 59, 3, pp. 251-253.
- <sup>27</sup> L. Szarka, *Border region, or contact zone. Ethnic and ethno-social processes in small regions between the Hungarian-Slovak language and state border*, in D. Torsello, M. Pappová (eds.), *Social networks in movement*, Komárno 2003, pp. 141-153.
- <sup>28</sup> Majo, Kusendová, *Vývoj* cit., p. 261.
- <sup>29</sup> Š. Šutaj, Z. Saposová, *Problém identity menšinových Maďarov na Slovensku*, in Š. Šutaj, L. Szarka (eds.), *Regionálna a národná identita v maďarskej a slovenskej histórii 18.-20. storočia*, Prešov 2007, pp. 173-188.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-186.
- <sup>31</sup> M. Botíková, L. Navrátil, L. Öllös, L. Végh, *Maďarsko-slovenské interetnické vzťahy v Šamoríne*, in “Slovenský národopis”, 1994, 42, 1, pp. 73-94.
- <sup>32</sup> These characteristics are used by P. Gleber, *Region und Identität. Eine grundlegende Einführung*, in G. Bosson (ed.), *Westeuropäische Regionen und ihre Identität. Beiträge aus interdisziplinärer Sicht*, Mannheim 1994, p. 3.
- <sup>33</sup> J. Vencálek, *Vnímání genia loci krajiny jako základ rozvoje regionální identity*, in Z. Beňušková, O. Danglová (eds.), *Trendy regionálneho a miestneho rozvoja na Slovensku*, Bratislava 2007, p. 57.
- <sup>34</sup> This is one of four basic constellations in the common relationship between nation and region described in P. Haslinger, K. Holz, *Selbstbild und Territorium. Dimensionen von Identität und Alterität*, in P. Haslinger (ed.), *Regionale und nationale Identitäten* cit., p. 29.

- <sup>35</sup> P. Haslinger, *Der Rand als Zentrum? Die deutsch besiedelten Grenzregionen der böhmischen Länder als Wertezentrum im tschechischen nationalen Diskurs (1880-1938)*, in M. Gibas, R. Haufe (eds.), „Mythen der Mitte.“ *Regionen als nationale Wertezentren. Konstruktionsprozesse und Sinnstiftungskonzepte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Weimar 2005, p. 291.
- <sup>36</sup> K. Tóth, *Vývoj systému inštitúcií maďarskej menšiny*, in Fazekas, Hunčík (eds.), *Maďari* cit., pp. 267-289.
- <sup>37</sup> I. L. Juhász, *Kopijovité/pamätné stĺpy ako prostriedky národného označenia priestoru*, in „Slovenský národopis“, 2008, 56, 1, pp. 43-54.
- <sup>38</sup> Seven out of twelve Euroregions in present-day Slovakia lay in Southern Slovakia. Details in Z. Beňušková, *Cezhraničné regióny – nové územné identity?*, in Beňušková, Danglová, *Trendy* cit., p. 69.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beňušková Z., Danglová O. (eds.), *Trendy regionálneho a miestneho rozvoja na Slovensku*, Bratislava 2007.
- Fazekas J., Hunčík P. (eds.), *Maďari na Slovensku (1989-2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, Šamorín 2008.
- Haslinger P. (ed.), *Regionale und nationale Identitäten. Wechselwirkungen und Spannungsfelder im Zeitalter moderner Staatlichkeit*, Würzburg 2000.
- Id., *Hungarian motifs in the emergence and the decline of a Czechoslovak national narrative, 1890-1930*, in N. M. Wingfield (ed.), *Creating the Other. Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, New York 2003, pp. 169-182.
- Id., *Loyalität in Grenzregionen. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der Südslowakei nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, in M. Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918-1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, Munich 2004, pp. 45-60.
- Id., *Der Rand als Zentrum? Die deutsch besiedelten Grenzregionen der böhmischen Länder als Wertezentrum im tschechischen nationalen Diskurs (1880-1938)*, in M. Gibas, R. Haufe (eds.), „Mythen der Mitte.“ *Regionen als nationale Wertezentren. Konstruktionsprozesse und Sinnstiftungskonzepte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Weimar 2005, pp. 287-300.
- Ira V., Pašiak J., Faltán L., Gajdoš P., *Podoby regionálnych odlišností na Slovensku*, Bratislava 2005.
- Krivý V., Feglová V., Balko D., *Slovensko a jeho regióny: sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania*, Bratislava 1996.
- Lukniš M., *Regionálne členenie Slovenskej socialistickej republiky z hľadiska jej nacionálneho rozvoja*, in „Geografický časopis“, 1985, 37, 2-3, pp. 137-161.
- Majo J., Kusendová D., *Vývoj etnickej hranice v okrese Galanta*, in „Geografický časopis“, 2007, 59, 3, pp. 251-253.
- Mannová E., „... aber jetzt ist er ein guter Slowake“. *Varianten nationaler Identität im Vereinswesen zweier südslowakischen Kleinstädte 1918-1938*, in P. Haslinger (ed.), *Regionale und nationale Identitäten. Wechselwirkungen und Spannungsfelder im Zeitalter moderner Staatlichkeit*, Würzburg 2000, pp. 215-225.
- Id., *Konstruktia menšinovej identity v mestskom prostredí (Maďari v Komárne a Lučenci 1918-1938)*, in P. Salner, D. Luther (eds.), *Etnicita a mesto*, Bratislava 2001, pp. 111-140.
- Id., *Von Nationalhelden zum Europa-Platz. Inszenierungen des kollektiven Gedächtnisses in Komárno an der slowakisch-ungarischen Grenze*, in M. Csáky, K. Zeyringer (eds.), *Inszenierungen des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Eigenbilder, Fremdbilder*, Innsbruck 2002, pp. 110-131.
- Id., *„Sie wollen keine Loyalität lernen!“ Identitätsdiskurse und lokale Lebenswelten in der Südslowakei 1918-1938*, in: P. Haslinger, J. von Puttkamer (eds.), *Staat, Loyalität und Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1918-1941*, Munich 2007, pp. 45-67.
- Mazúr E., Lukniš M., *Regionálne geomorfologické členenie SSR*, in „Geografický časopis“, 1978, 30, 2, pp. 101-116.
- Šutaj Š., Szarka L. (eds.), *Regionálna a národná identita v maďarskej a slovenskej histórii 18.-20. storočia*, Prešov 2007.
- Varga É., *Migrationsprozesse im ehemaligen Komitat Hont 1938-1948 (Deutsche, Juden, Slowaken, Ungarn)*, in G. Seewann (ed.), *Minderheitenfrage in Südosteuropa*, Beiträge der Internationalen Konferenz: The Minority Question in Historical Perspective 1900-1990, Dubrovnik 8-14 April 1991, Munich 1992, pp. 411-420.