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SLOVAK – HUNGARIAN RELATIONS, CATHOLICISM AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Consequences of the Treaty of Trianon

In 1995 *Václav Havel* stated that the paths of Czechs and Germans are intertwined. One year later *Rudolf Chmel*, a former (and the last) Czechoslovak Ambassador to Hungary expanded on this idea that it is also true for Slovaks and Hungarians. And this is the reason why the issue of historic Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation is urgent and, in fact, fated².

The Peace Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920, and the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1947, which replaced the Treaty of Trianon³, are considered by the Hungarians unjust and seen very neuralgic points in the history of Hungary. When the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Hungary, a mid-size European country, became one of the small states of Central Europe. In Budapest on 4 June 1920 all newspapers were printed with a black frame, the flags were placed at half-mast, usual life stopped and protest meetings took place. Following the mourning ceremonies in the basilica and other churches, the national assembly started its session. The chairman of the House of Parliament *István Rakovszky* in his speech, *inter alia*, passed the message to the "citizens of separated parts of the country": *"After a thousand years of living together, we have to separate, but not forever. From this moment all our thoughts, every beat of our hearts, day and night, will aim to reunite us, in all our former glory, all our former grandeur. And at the final farewell, we will clutch you to our bosom and our hearts will unify so that no pitfall, no force, no*

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² CHMEL, R. *Moja maďarská otázka*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996. p. 10.

³ With the Treaty of Paris the victorious allies, except for Italy, and together with the Soviet Union, renewed the Trianon borders of Hungary. The Slovak-Hungarian boundaries were revised and became nearly identical with those of 1920 – three villages were transferred to Czechoslovakia.

power can separate them.” The MPs showed their support through a standing ovation⁴, and to this day the message is an important memento for several politicians⁵.

The victorious powers expected that the Treaty of Trianon would allow new national states to prevent German expansion to the East and the potential future Russian expansion to the West. This geo-strategic aim was to be achieved by a re-organisation of the region and subsequent cooperation of new states. However, it remained only an idea, which turned out to be unfeasible due to the ethnic disputes and conflicts related to the established borders between new states. There were many situations where raw materials were separated from industry by newly created borders, which resulted in economic difficulties in the region which further increased its dependency on the German economy.

The views on the Treaty of Trianon differ to this day, and it may be stated that the dissolution of the Danubian monarchy and establishment of new states did not solve the problems, which actually accelerated the break-up of the monarchy. The West European idea of a national state led to a gradual destruction of the supra-national state entity, which the monarchy was. The Central European Habsburg monarchy was a union of different ethnicities: Germans, Slavic peoples, Hungarians, Jews, Italians, etc. *Giuseppe Mazzini* in one of his articles claiming annexation of Istria and Dalmatia wrote: “Austria should be defeated in a way that the different nationals living there would turn against one another.” The main idea of the book “*Mitteleuropa – Bilanz eines Jahrhunderts*” written by *Renate Riemeck* is that the destruction of Central Europe is related to the acceptance and realisation of the idea of a single national state in this region.

At the end of its existence the monarchy was gradually losing its ability to create a certain common-state idea or to uphold, under these conditions, the traditional idea of a supranational monarchy, which would be able to bond different nations and nationalities living in Central Europe with a certain degree of loyalty. Nationalism, which entered Europe after the Napoleonic wars, paved the way, which *Franz Grillparzer* called the way “from humanity through nationalism to bestiality”⁶. “The large amount

⁴ Nemzetgyűlési napló (the Parliamentary Daily), 1920 – 1922. III. volume, 4th June 1920. p. 216. Quoted according to ROMSICS, I. *Trianonská mierová zmluva*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006. p. 200.

⁵ As early as 1990 the Hungarian Prime Minister *József Antall* stated that he felt himself to be Prime Minister to all 15 million Hungarians, and not only the ten million living in Hungary. His statement immediately sparked outcry in neighbouring countries. It was a gesture which did not call for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, but rather for a certain symbolic unification of Hungarians. http://www.europeum.org/disp_article.php?aid=788 This perception can be found among many high rank politicians including *Béla Bugár*, a longstanding chairman (currently the former) of the *Party of Hungarian Coalition*, a political party which was an important element of the Slovak government (1998-2006). *Bugár*, who is generally regarded as a moderate political representative of Hungarian minority in Slovakia, writes in his book that the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is a part of the cultural nation (he means the Hungarian nation), and that Hungarian minority is a significant minority in the state in which it lives. *BUGÁR, B. Žijem v takej krajine*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2004. p. 25-26.

⁶ Quoted according to KUČERA, R. *Kapitoly z dějin střední Evropy*. Praha: Institut pro středoevropskou politiku, 1992. p. 9-10, 23.

of languages in central Europe ceased to serve as a means of communication, and began to serve as means of separation and hatred”⁷.

We may only suppose what would have happened to the Central Europe if the Habsburg monarchy had not changed to the dual monarchy in 1867, if it had been federalised or, the opposite, if the centralisation power of Vienna had been reinforced, etc. The Central European region is so heterogonous that any political re-organisation would certainly create its own problems. It is only a question, as to whether the problems would be greater or smaller than those created by the Treaty of Trianon. In general, it may be stated that a new “post-Trianon” re-organisation of the region did not adhere to the national-ethnic principle - not even to the extent allowed by ethnographic and demographic conditions. Some of the new state entities resembled the Habsburg monarchy because of their heterogeneity; especially Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes⁸. It should also be noted that to maintain the newly established states in the form of the Treaty of Trianon cost more lives than at the time of their formation.

Hungary was shook after the signature of the Treaty of Trianon. Not even half a century prior to the Treaty of Trianon the Hungary reached the “*Austro-Hungarian Compromise*”, i.e. great independence and nearly equal status to the Austrian government. On the other hand, as a result of the *Austro-Hungarian Compromise*, non-Hungarian nationalities entered into a harsh period affected by anti-ethnic measures in the Hungarian region known as Magyarisation (or Hungarisation)⁹. By the Treaty of Trianon Hungary lost more than 60% of its territory and more than 30% of its population. More than 3 millions of Hungarians ended up in the territory of a different state, which is approximately one third of Hungarian population. From a cultural point of view, Hungary lost many places where some of the most important events of the Hungarian history took place. Cities such as Košice, Cluj, Komárno, Prešov, Timisoara

⁷ KUČERA, R. *Kapitoly z dějin střední Evropy*. o. c. p. 9.

⁸ ROMSICS, I. *Trianonská mierová zmluva*. o. c. p. 222.

⁹ Peter Hunčík. Maďarská menšina ve Slovenské republike. In GABAL, I. *Etnické menšiny ve střední Evropě. Konflikt nebo integrace*. Praha: GG, 1999. p. 204. In the 1870s a systematic magyarisation policy was put in place. Hungarian liberals inspired by France, where the nation was a result of the state, tried to apply this model to multinational Hungary. They expected the creation of a one-nation Hungary, instead, they caused a defensive reaction of non-Hungarian nationalities. G. Beksics, a journalist and historian, in his book “*Dualism*” writes that “Hungary shall either become a great nation-state, or shall not survive as a state.” On the contrary, the Hungarian historian, G. Szekfüi in his book “*Three generations and what was after*” supported the idea that the leading Hungarian politicians leave the *Szechenyi* direction and take the positions of naive and generous liberalism. Assimilators through massive magyarisation were responsible for considerable damage with consequences for the Hungarian nation. Intolerant zealots often arose from this group. Assimilators stood behind the Hungarian illusion and led Hungary down a risky path, often promoting the ideas of the state to dogmas. Por. Róbert Letz. Historický exkurz slovensko-maďarských vzťahov. In KOSSEY, P. (red.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. Zborník zo seminára. Bratislava: J. Mrocek, 2007. p. 22. Björnstjern Björnson wrote about magyarisation of non-Hungarian nations in the dual monarchy in the Budapest newspapers on 17 September 1907 that “this injustice will sooner or later lead Hungary into discontent.” In *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés Magyarországon a dualizmus korában*. V. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1971. p. 111.

and Oradea were important centres of cultural and social life. Bratislava used to be the capital¹⁰ of Hungary and the coronation town of Hungarian kings and queens for many years¹¹. The Treaty of Trianon is a phenomenon, which almost all important Hungarian politicians feel the need to refer to even in present days. This treaty is regarded as a crime committed on Hungarians, humiliation, a national tragedy, which is certainly a cause of several complicated uneasy international foreign relations in Central Europe, especially in the context of the rights of national minorities¹².

After the adoption of the Treaty of Trianon, Czechoslovakia was a heterogeneous country, with 51% Czechs, 15% Slovaks and 34% other nationalities dominated by Germans, who exceeded Slovaks in number and reached almost half of the number of Czechs. Paradoxically, the Czechoslovakian constitution, the most democratic constitution of the region, was not established in cooperation with the national minorities. Neither Czechoslovakian Germans and Hungarians, nor Slovaks were granted the expected autonomy although an autonomous status was repeatedly promised in 1918-1919 to Slovaks by Czech exile politicians¹³. Newly created states were not reinforcing the rights of their minorities and the efforts for assimilation appeared sometimes greater than in the pre-war period¹⁴.

From 1918 when, after the World War I, the Czechoslovak Republic was founded on the remnants of the Habsburg monarchy, until 1993, when an independent Slovak Republic was founded on the remnants of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Slovaks were going through their (uncompleted) self-determination fight. However, it should be taken into account that neither the Slovak war-state¹⁵, nor the second Slovak state was a result of a plebiscite, but a result of the will of particular politicians who were not granted the mandate for this by voters. The reaction of the Slovak society could be described as simply passive towards these events and in reflecting on them. It might also have been a consequence of historic experience which gradually shaped and supported certain persisting Slovak fatalism. In 1848 Slovak representatives called for the federalisation of Hungary. Later in the 1860s and 1870s they tried to

¹⁰ Since 1536.

¹¹ Eleven kings and queens were crowned in the St. Martin Concathedral in 1536-1830.

¹² The issue of Hungarian minority in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia is largely discussed in Hungary.

¹³ The Czechoslovakian federation in 1968 was created after the Russian invasion and the Brezhnev dictate; however, such Union of Czechs and Slovaks could be hardly called a federation.

¹⁴ Having considered the high number of nationalities which could lead to serious and foreseeable conflicts, the victorious allies set equal binding norms for the protection of minorities in each state of the region. These norms corresponded to levels of rights of minorities granted by the Hungarian *Act on Nationalities* from 1868. However, there were no sanctions for violating these norms, so the practical effect of the protection of minorities was largely limited.

¹⁵ The declaration of an Independent Slovak Republic on 14 March 1939 was not the result of the endeavour of the Slovak nation for national emancipation and self-determination, but a consequence of an ultimatum presented by Nazi Germany.

promote the idea of *Slovenské okolie* (Slovak region, free translation), i.e. a territorial autonomy in the Kingdom of Hungary¹⁶, but all these projects failed. Although the hungarianisation process in Hungary is currently the subject of many discussions, it appears that the contemporary Slovak population (which was in the majority) was closely tied to the monarchy, which might have been the reason why the nationally-oriented Slovak intelligence in Hungary was not massively supported in its idea for *Slovenské okolie*. Similarly, and maybe because of the concept of “single Czechoslovak state”¹⁷ promoted by Masaryk it is very unlikely that political efforts of the Czech and Slovak political emigrants in America and France would have been widely supported. Not until the spring of 1918, when the collapse of the monarchy was inevitable, did anti-Hungarian feeling together with the idea of a union with the Czechs in a new state come to the fore¹⁸. Previous political activities of Czech and Slovak politicians found almost no support in Slovakia¹⁹, and social issues prevailed over political or national issues. Provisions of neither the Cleveland Agreement, nor the Pittsburgh Agreement from 1918²⁰ were put into practice; therefore, the Slovak National Council, which was established at a secret session in September 1918²¹, accepted the idea of “a single Czechoslovak nation”. According to Patočka, Masaryk created a state, which had to

¹⁶ CHMEL, R. *Moja maďarská otázka*. o. c. p. 414.

¹⁷ This concept was created as a political update of part of certain older views of Karel Havlíček Borovský, an ideologist of austroslavism (promoter of “Slavic Austria”), who wrote: “Czechoslovakian lands, Bohemia, Moravia, a part of Silesia and Slovakia in Hungary have already been one nation for a long time in literary and spiritual life, and a significant part of these territories has also already existed as a state.” HAVLÍČEK BOROVSKÝ, K. *Slovan*. Část 1. Praha: Nakl. Laichter, p.178. It should be admitted that the powers were much attracted by the idea of Czechoslovakian national unity. This idea was probably an important reason why the powers agreed with the creation of Czechoslovakia. Without this ideology, Czechoslovakia would have appeared an ethnically heterogeneous country and unstable and risky entity in the region. “Magyarisation was to be replaced by other variant: czechoslovakisation or even czechisation”. . . CHMEL, R. *Moja maďarská otázka*. o. c. p. 415.

¹⁸ In 1915 the first Congress of foreign Czechs and Slovaks was held in Paris, during which the “First Proclamation of Paris” was adopted. The proclamation mentions a new state in which “Czech and Slovak nations” shall live on new foundations. On 25 October 1915 the Cleveland Agreement was signed in the U.S., which stated in Article 1 “independence of Czech lands and Slovakia”, and in Article 2 “... unification of Czech and Slovak nations on a federative basis while Slovakia shall enjoy full national autonomy, retain its own parliament, state administration, full cultural freedom, Slovak language as a state language,” etc. Quoted according to HOENSCH, J., K. *Dokumente zur Autonomienpolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas*. München – Wien: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1984. p. 107.

¹⁹ MP Votruba in his speech to the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1919 said that there had been around 1,200 nationally conscious Slovaks in the territory of Slovakia in 1918. Stenograph record from the 72nd session of the National Assembly of Czechoslovakia held on 16 September 1919. In Rudolf Kučera. *Právo na vlast by mělo platit*. In UJVÁRY, Z. *Bezdomovcem ve své vlasti. Deportace Maďarů do Čech*. Praha: Svaz Maďarů žijících v českých zemích, 1994. p. 9.

²⁰ The Pittsburgh Agreement reads: “... we recognise the political program aiming at the unification of Czechs and Slovaks in a single, independent state composed of Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia) and Slovakia. Slovakia shall have its own administration, parliament, courts,” etc. HOENSCH, J., K. *Dokumente zur Autonomienpolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas*. o. c. p. 111.

²¹ M. Hodža insisted on the establishment of the Slovak National Council, which was at Masaryk’s disposal as the Slovak executive body. Because the Council was founded at a secret session, its members were not appointed by any authority, therefore were not the representatives of the Slovak nation.

deal with all problems of the former monarchy, but without its power²². Accession of Slovakia into a joint state was not accompanied by any emancipation process of the Slovak nation; however, the transition from magyarisation to czechoslovakisation was accompanied at least by partial participation of Slovaks in the political power.

The failure of Slovak autonomy and the rise of the czechoslovakistic ideas led to the resistance among Slovak Catholics and Protestants. In December 1918, *Andrej Hlinka*, who had become the leader of Slovak Catholics, founded the Slovak Christian People's Party²³ and promoted the idea of Slovak autonomy within Czechoslovakia. *Hlinka* emphasised the respect for Christian nature of Slovakia. This imposition represented a counterweight to the public affiliation to the Czech reformation, i.e. especially to the tradition of Czech Hussitism and the idea of reformation, which was regarded in Bohemia almost as a state ideology.²⁴ Because *Masaryk* failed with his idea of reformation, which was to support the czechisation of Slovakia, he later proposed the idea of a national Czechoslovak Church, which was not supported either.

Current Slovak-Hungarian relations in the light of common past

*"Nobody in Europe can claim that they have solved the issue of minorities once and for all. The living minority is a living, changing problem of co-existence. Every past solution faces new issues of the present, every present solution will face issues in the future"*²⁵.

Under strong pressure from the Euroatlantic structures, *Gyula Horn* and *Vladimír Mečiar* signed the *Treaty between the Slovak Republic and Hungary on good neighbourhood and friendly cooperation* in Paris in March 1995²⁶. However, the process of its ratification both in Hungary and Slovakia reflects the Euroatlantic pressure more than good neighbourhood relationships or friendly cooperation – on a political level. The Hungarian Parliament ratified it after three months and the Treaty was voted on only by the governing coalition. Hungarian nationalist politicians described the governing coalition as treasonous and anti-national, especially in relation with the confirmed inviolability of borders. The Slovak Parliament ratified the Treaty with a one year delay, with the governing coalition and a large part of the opposition voting for it. Nationalist part of the coalition regarded the Treaty antinational, and certain MPs from the opposition parties also considered it as unhappy. The Hungarian opposition parties

²² PATOČKA, J. *Masaryk*. Svazok II. samizdat. Praha, 1980. p. 45.

²³ In 1925, the party was renamed to *Hlinka's Slovak People's Party*.

²⁴ This idea was completed *ad absurdum* by *L. Stěhule*, a Calvinist and an advocate of *Masaryk's* ideas, who planned the creation of the Czechoslovak reformed state, as did Dutch Calvinist in South Africa. STĚHULE, L. *Československý stát v mezinárodním právu a styku*. Praha: Vyd. Laichter, 1918. p. 52 n.

²⁵ KUSÝ, M. *Čo s našimi Maďarmi?* Bratislava: Kalligram, 1998. p. 44.

²⁶ Signing of the Treaty took place during the presidential campaign in France.

believed that the governing politicians did not do enough for Hungarian minorities, while Slovak nationalists considered the terms of the Treaty more than generous to the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia. The major bone of contention on both sides was the clause dealing with “inviolability of borders”. Slovaks wanted to have this clause incorporated in the wording of the Treaty, the Hungarians refused it. After the adoption of the formal Slovak-Hungarian Treaty, the Western Europe appeared to be satisfied, but the politicians on both sides of the Danube threw away this chance to draw a thick line, a chance for a historic settlement, reconciliation, and a new start.

The stereotypes of the current Slovak political arena, obviously with the exception of the Party of the Hungarian Coalition, include hypercritical judgment of common Slovak-Hungarian past *en block*, underlining the magyarisation after the *Austro-Hungarian Compromise* in 1867, and refusal of any positives of coexistence lasting almost 1,000 years. One of rare exceptions is a speech of the former chairman of the Slovak National Council and the chairman of the Christian-Democratic Movement, *Pavol Hrušovský*, delivered at the parliamentary session on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the creation of the Slovak Republic: “*We should not be afraid to accept the fact, of which we may be truly proud. We were a part of the Empire that was ruled by such important rulers as St. Stephen, Charles Robert, Matthias Corvinus or Maria Theresa. They were also our kings and rulers, and Slovakia flourished under their rule. [...] We therefore proudly acknowledge Hungarian history to be a part of our history*”²⁷.

Rudolf Chmel, the last Czech and Slovak Ambassador to Hungary, noted in his diary that the only consensus in the divided Slovak political scene (at that time) is the consensus in the issue of Hungary and Hungarians²⁸. The complex of the past and the trauma of minorities related to the post-war map of Europe, Benes decrees, exchange of populations, a call for the autonomy of southern regions of Slovakia (inhabited by a large Hungarian minority) automatically associated with irredentism, and many other neuralgic issues continuously dominate the agenda of both Slovak and Hungarian politicians. Specific (and often extreme) approaches to these issues are often sources of the political capital. It is above all the petrification of two mutually linked issues – the issue of the borders and the issue of the minorities. However, this issue is not specific only to Slovaks or Hungarians. In Central Europe “*there is almost no single state, which would consider the existing borders just and fair, which is the legacy of peace treaties signed after World War I. and II.*”²⁹ The Slovak legacy also includes the rise

²⁷ *Pavol Hrušovský* at the ceremonial session of the Slovak National Council on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the creation of Slovak Republic. KÁFER, I. Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy z kresťanského hľadiska. Pohľady literatúry. In KOSSEY, P. (red.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. o. c. p. 33.

²⁸ Slovensko po ratifikácii alebo O nemožnosti slovensko-maďarského zmierenia. *Gazeta Wyborcza* 9. 5. 1996. p. 9. In CHMEL, R. *Moja maďarská otázka*. o. c. S. 393 n.

²⁹ KUČERA, R. *Kapitoly z dějin střední Evropy*. o. c. S. 35.

and maintenance of a consciousness of “1,000 years of suppression of Slovaks” mainly by Hungarians, and encouragement to be circumspect about Hungarians, including their own citizens, whose autonomist efforts represent a serious “threat to territorial integrity of the country”. Although there are more Slovak-Hungarian marriages, long-term, neighbourly or work friendships than those “mixed of other nationalities”³⁰, these political challenges are faced, in general, in those (relatively homogenous) regions of Slovakia³¹ where everyday life is not troubled by real difficulties and misunderstandings which sometimes stem from co-existence in multi-ethnic territories.

The petrification of consciousness about the continuous threat of Slovakia and Slovaks by *Magyar* [Hungarian] *irredenta* represents an organic part of the rhetoric of certain Slovak politicians and nationally oriented political parties. The political parties with parliamentary representation, which voice nationality issues, are Slovak National Party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – People’s Party, Smer – Social Democracy, and Christian-Democrat Movement. The majority of the political parties without parliamentary representation (acting at a local level) also profile themselves as nationally oriented. Of the three presidents of independent Slovakia, only *Rudolf Schuster*, with an ethnic Carpathian German ancestry, may be regarded as a president with a certain sense for heterogeneity within Slovak society; however, he was more a people’s politician than a statesman. His successor, *Ivan Gašparovič*, emphasised his national feeling during the election campaign and later in his presidential motto: “*I think nationally, I feel socially*”.

The reason why the “Hungarian question” is so sensitive in Slovakia is because of its indivisibility from the “Slovak question”. The national emancipation process, completed only recently through the establishment of the Slovak Republic (1993), coming after a long period of a “semi-statehood” within the joint state with Czechs, combined with continual references to magyarisation in the joint state entity with Hungarians, has not helped to create an environment suitable for mutual reconciliation with Hungarians. It appears for now that it is more or less a predilection environment for establishment of nationalism-oriented organisation such as *Národná pospolitost*³² with *Ján Kotleba* at its head. Hungarian side feels injured and aggrieved and these feelings stem from the post-Trianon map of Central Europe and the resulting destruction of Great Hungary. Subsequent limitation of Hungarian territory after World War II also led to anger, feelings of injustice, and provided a predilection environment for nationally oriented activities

³⁰ Which is undoubtedly caused by the multi-ethnic character of Southern Slovakia and the border with Hungary, which is the longest section of Slovak border.

³¹ Districts of Central and Northern Slovakia.

³² *Slovenská pospolitost’-Národná strana* (Slovak Solidarity-National Party, free translation) was active in Slovakia in 2005-2006. The Supreme Court dissolved this party because its political activity was not compatible with the Slovak Constitution. Historically, it was the first case in Slovakia that the Supreme Court dissolved a political party.

of certain organisations, such as the recently founded Hungarian Guard. It is necessary though to recognise the actions of Hungarian citizens who, in Budapest 2007, publicly protested against this movement³³. Although the majority of Slovak citizens do not agree with Slovak movements such as *Národná pospolitosť*, they are not eager to express their disagreement. It seems that not only collective memory, but also Slovak collective indecisiveness and Hungarian collective political efficiency are real.

Christians, Catholics, Hungarians and Slovaks

“These two nations have lived well together for a long time, and it will certainly remain that way”³⁴.

The ongoing project of Hungarian and Slovak historians on their views on the common past, resulting in a book, represents a good step toward the Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation, adoption of a unified position on injustice against human dignity on both sides.

Common Slovak-Hungarian past was affected by several traumas: the introduction of Apponyi's school laws and true national oppression of non-Hungarian nationalities within Hungary after 1867, the Vienna Arbitration, the application of Benes decrees followed by the expulsion of Hungarian population from the Slovak territory to Hungary³⁵ and Bohemia³⁶, the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros conflict, etc. However, apart from these traumas, the long-term Slovak-Hungarian co-existence and cooperation and their further prospect should be also taken into account.

The Hungarian literary historian and an expert in Slovak philology, *István Käfer*, states that *“the original Slovak-Hungarian interethnic relation is a symbiosis”³⁷*. He describes Hungary as a supraethnic home which contributed also to the development of Slovak-language elements that, as he writes, are integral part of Hungarian Christian culture. He regards Christianity as a factor which moderates national requirements

³³ Hungarian Prime Minister, *Ferenc Gyurcsány*, described the founding of the Hungarian guard as *“shame of Hungarian democracy”*. Unfortunately, the matter of the fact is that the flag of the Hungarian Guard was consecrated by priests of three historical churches. http://spravy.pravda.sk/garda-je-hanbou-madarska-hovori-premier-d9v-/sk_svet.asp?c=A070827_103737_sk_svet_p12

³⁴ The interview with the Hungarian Foreign Minister, *Géza Jeszensky*, for *Magyar Hírlap* (newspaper) on 18 August 1990. Quoted according to CHMEL, R. *Moja maďarská otázká*. o. c. p. 35.

³⁵ The expulsion of non-Slavic population from Czechoslovakia. On 27 February 1946 in Budapest the Hungarian Foreign Minister *J. Gyöngyösi* and the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry State Secretary, *V. Clementis*, signed an Agreement on the Exchange of Hungarian and Czechoslovak population. Hungarians from Slovakia were chosen for expulsion, Slovaks could leave for Czechoslovakia on a voluntary basis.

³⁶ Por. UJVÁRY, Z. o. c. 100 s. JANICS, K. *Roky bez domoviny. Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne*. Budapest: Püski, 1994. 315 p.

³⁷ KÄFER, I. Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy z kresťanského hľadiska. In KOSSEY, P. (red.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. o. c. p. 33.

that were born and spread during the French revolution. He refers to the life and work of *Alexander Rudnay*, an Esztergom hierarch, who originated from the Slovak ethnical territory of the Upper Hungary. Through his teachings in Slovak language, *Rudnay* encouraged his believers to have respect towards the St. Stephen crown. He revived the pre-Turkish importance of Esztergom by returning the seat of the archbishop from Trnava. *Käfer* also refers to *Péter Pázmány*, the founder of Trnava University (a renowned university in the present), who encouraged ethnic Slovaks to use their own language. Finally, he calls the Hungarian Catholic hierarchs of Slovak origin, who are buried in the crypt of the Esztergom basilica, "*the Apostles of Christian solidarity*"³⁸.

Slovaks have been living together with in the Carpathian Basin for almost 1,200 years. The Latin tradition of the Roman Empire and its Panonian province established a basic civilisation framework for this region. All state entities followed this framework hereafter. The Christian church administration openly followed the Panonian tradition. After the dissolution of Great Moravia, a part of the present-day Slovakia³⁹ was gradually transformed into the Árpád⁴⁰ Principality. Later, in the middle of the 11th century, a new frontier duchy with the seat in Nitra was established. Grand Principalities oriented themselves toward the Bavarian diocese from where new missionaries were coming. The territorial completion of the Hungarian state entity was also influenced by newly established neighbouring Polish and Czech Kingdoms. Prince Stephen⁴¹ (997 – 1038) found his allies among the old Slovak *Hunt* and *Poznan* families. According to a Hungarian legend, around the year 1,000 *Pope Sylvester II* sent a royal crown to *Stephen I* and a letter of blessing officially recognising Stephen as the Apostolic King. The Holy See recognised the Hungarian Church Province with the seat in Esztergom quite soon. The Esztergom diocese represented continuity of the Diocese of Nitra from 880. Great Moravia became a cultural centre on which the Hungarian Kingdom was built⁴². *Stephen I*, an excellent lawmaker, politician and organiser, introduced civil comitat (county) administration and church administration. He also set up several dioceses. Esztergom, a Hungarian city located near the current Slovak border, became the seat of both the King and Bishop. Today, Esztergom is connected with the Slovak border city of Štúrovo on the other side of the Danube River by the Mária Valéria Bridge.

³⁸ KÄFER, I. Prosba o odpustenie a odpustenie. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru*. 3/2006. S. 81

³⁹ Between Moravia and the Štiavica Mountains.

⁴⁰ Árpád – the prince of Old Hungary (9th century), founder of the Árpád dynasty, the first ruling Hungarian dynasty (1000-1301).

⁴¹ According to legend, Prince Géza (970 – 997) was baptised by the Prague bishop *St. Adalbert* who stopped in Esztergom on his way to Rome in 995. The legend also says that he also had his son *Vajk* (the future king *St. Stephen*) baptised. It is said that at that time both of them had already been baptised, but it is possible that *St. Adalbert* had confirmed *St. Stephen*.

⁴² Great Moravian system of castles on which the comitat (county) administration of the Kingdom of Hungary was built.

The oldest preserved literary piece is "*Libellus sancti Stephani regis de institutione morum an Emericum ducem*"⁴³. It originates from 1013-1015 and contains recommendations of *St. Stephen* to his son *Imre*. In this book *Stephen* recommends to his son that as a future ruler he should respect diversity within his country because a kingdom of one language and one custom is fragile and weak. The marriage policy of the Árpád dynasty focused on diversity of the country and its environment.

A double cross, accepted by both current states as their state coat of arms, is associated with the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages and the ruling of *Béla III* (1172-1196)⁴⁴. The universalism of the high Middle Ages contributed to the centralisation of the Hungarian state whose legal, historic and state expression was the *Crown of St. Stephen*. In this period saints *Imre*, *Stephen*, *Ladislaus* and *Elisabeth* started to be celebrated⁴⁵.

The Ottoman victory⁴⁶ led to Hungary being broken *de facto* into three parts⁴⁷. Western and north-western parts fell under the rule of *Ferdinand I. Habsburg*⁴⁸, and the territory of the present-day Slovakia thus became the custodian of the Hungarian Kingdom's tradition during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Esztergom archbishop *Nicolas Oláh* stood against the reformation. He invited some Jesuits to Trnava in 1561, and five years later he opened a seminar there. His activities were followed by his successor, *Péter Pázmány*.

The religious life in the Austrian monarchy was significantly affected by the reforms of *Maria Theresa of Austria* and her son *Joseph II*. In 1758, *Pope Clement XIII* confirmed the honoured title *Rex Apostolicus* to *Maria Theresa* and her successors in the Kingdom of Hungary. On 18 February 1867, the Austrian monarchy was transformed to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The Hungarian part and the Austrian part of the Empire differed in certain aspects of religious life. In Hungary, Canon law was applicable as Civil law for Catholics, it was a part of the Constitution of the Empire and represented a certain unifying element.

After the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, most of the Slovak dioceses were headed by Hungarian bishops. Some of them left voluntarily and some of them were,

⁴³ Book of the king *St. Stephen* containing moral advices addressed to Duke *Imre*.

⁴⁴ This Christian symbol might have represented a connection with an old Byzantine tradition (*St. Cyril* and *St. Methodius*).

⁴⁵ Róbert Letz. Historický exkurz slovensko-maďarských vzťahov. In KOSSEY, P. (ed.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. o. c. p.12-19.

⁴⁶ The battle of Mohács in 1526.

⁴⁷ Principality of Transylvania (with *János Szapolyai* as a ruler), Hungarian pashalik (a territory occupied by the Turks), and northern and western part of Hungary (present-day territory of Slovakia and western part of Transdanubia and part of Croatia) under the rule of the Habsburgs.

⁴⁸ 1526-1564.

under the new government led by Vavro Šrobár, ejected to Hungary in 1919⁴⁹. It should be noted that based on the constitutional Act of 28 October 1918, the Czechoslovak government started to exercise the nomination right of Hungarian kings to appoint bishops. However, the Holy See did not recognise such transition of an old privilege to the competence of a new government. After the conclusion of *Modus Vivendi*, the government gave up this privilege. *Modus vivendi* governed and amended certain aspects of relations between the state and the church, but in general it maintained the legal state from the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Both archbishop seats (in Esztergom and Eger) remained in Hungary. In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued a bull entitled *Ad ecclesiastici regiminis incrementum*, based on which Slovak dioceses were withdrawn from the Eger and Esztergom church provinces and fell under the jurisdiction of the Holy See⁵⁰. Currently, issues related to property matters of the Eger and Esztergom dioceses in their original territories are being discussed. Christianity and majoritarian Catholicism represented certain supraethnic cultural and spiritual environment in Hungary; hence, Catholic clergy⁵¹ took on the role of national revivalists and fighters for national rights⁵². In general, it may be concluded that affiliation to the Catholic denomination and to Hungary were the main identifying features of many nationalities in Hungary for a very long time. Catholic religion represented rather a link leading to Hungarian unity than a protection of regional particularities caused by national differences and varieties of non-Hungarian Catholic nations.

We forgive and we ask for forgiveness

“Our Lady of Sorrows, the patron of Slovaks, is one and the same as Our Lady of Hungarians”⁵³.

Magyar Sion started to be published again in Esztergom in 2007 by A Szent Adalbert Képzési, Lelkiségi és Konferencia Központ⁵⁴. In the foreword of the first edition, Péter

⁴⁹ László Báthy, Earl Wilhelm Baatthyány, Farkas Radnay.

⁵⁰ The independent Slovak Church Province was established already in 1977. Based on the agreement between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Holy See, Pope Paul VI established, by the constitutional *Praescriptum sacrosancti*, an independent church province with the seat in Trnava. The Trnava apostolic administration was promoted to the level of Archdiocese by the apostolic constitution *Qui divine*.

⁵¹ Literate clergy played a unifying role especially in rural communities, composed mainly of peasants subordinated to foreign owners. Por. RÉMOND, R. Náboženství a národ: dvě univerzální reality. *Teologický sborník*. 4/2001. p. 43.

⁵² In 1801, Slovak Protestants founded *Spolok literatúry slovenskej* (*Association of Slovak literature*, free translation) in Bratislava. They first supported Czech language as a standard, literary language. Later, they focused on the codification of Slovak language (L. Štúr, J. M. Hurban, M. M. Hodža).

⁵³ KÁFER, I. Prośba o odpustenie a odpustenie. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru*. 3/2006. p. 81. Old Kingdom of Hungary used to be also called as *Regnum Marianum*.

⁵⁴ St. Adalbert Centre of Instruction, Spirituality and Conferences in Esztergom.

Cardinal Erdő, Hungarian Catholic Primate, emphasises that the magazine is for all readers of the Carpathian Basin. The contents of the magazine is translated into English and Slovak, and, on Cardinal Erdő's initiative, two Slovak experts became members of the editorial team. However, this is not the only example of activities undertaken by Catholic hierarchy aiming at mutual cooperation and dealing with national myths. Under the communist regime, in 1948-1989, Budapest was also one of the places from where religious literature was smuggled by Slovak Catholic dissidents.

In 2006, on the initiative of Cardinal Erdő, a historical event took place. In 2006, Hungary commemorated two important jubilees: 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and 150th anniversary of the Belgrade battle in which the Hungarian army, led by *John Hunyadi* and *San Giovanni di Capistrano*, defeated Sultan *Mehmed II*. On this occasion the Hungarian Bishop Conference declared the Year of prayers for spiritual revival of the nation, which was also to be a year of reconciliation, cleansing of the national memory and reconsideration of own past.

On 29 June 2006, a liturgy, in which members of the Hungarian Bishop Conference and members of the Standing Committee of the Slovak Bishop Conference participated, took place. During the liturgy, dedicated to the idea of mutual understanding and forgiveness, the head of the Hungarian Bishop Conference, Hungarian Primate, *Péter Cardinal Erdő*, together with the Head of the Slovak Bishop Conference, *František Tondra*, exchanged letters expressing the will to settle historical conflicts between the two nations. This meeting was also greeted by *Pope Benedict XVI* through a letter, which was read by the Vatican State Secretary *Angelo Sodano*. In his letter, Pope wrote that he was delighted that both nations look for a way to mutual understanding. Both letters of Bishop Conferences may be perceived as a response to the invitation of *Pope John Paul II*, who invited individuals and nations to "cleanse memory".

In their letters, Hungarian Bishops state that they wish to reconsider their past⁵⁵ and, with a deep respect and brotherly love, they address Slovak Bishops and the whole Slovak Catholic community and Slovak nation, asking for "*forgiveness for acts, which were committed in this region in the past against people because of their affiliation to a nation, language or culture. With great regret we remember those cases where Hungarians hurt Slovaks or Slovak communities*"; and they went on to say: [...] "*before God's face we renew feelings of respect and reconciliation, feelings of forgiving love, which, in the*

⁵⁵ [...] "*We share more than 1,000 years of common history. It was filled with precious periods of evangelisation, which shaped our culture. It was also filled with success in science, arts, and the whole Christian culture. The same history was; however, also history of common hardship and common efforts. The pages of this history also contain contradictions and injustice, which left scars in our souls.*" [...] In the Letter of Hungarian Bishop Conference delivered to the Slovak Bishop Conference. <http://tkkbs.sk/> (Press Office of the Slovak Bishop Conference), issued on 29 June 2006.

background of personal and societal wounds, our nation is also experiencing. We forgive and ask for forgiveness"⁵⁶.

Both letters contain the motto of this historical act and of the exchanged letters: *"We forgive and ask for forgiveness"*⁵⁷. It is an invitation to forgive, without which no real reconciliation may be achieved.

The letter of Slovak bishops to Hungarian bishops expresses *expressis verbis* the doctrine of the Catholic Church and what has been and is to be, from a Christian ideology point of view and based on the doctrine of the Catholic Church, a crucial task of these two particular Catholic churches too: *"together we wish to consider the truth of the history, reconciliation as God's gift, and not let ourselves be influenced by personal or national interests to the extent that we would think, say or act in contradiction to Christian values"*⁵⁸.

Texts of both letters and the act itself may be seen rather as the first step towards an historic reconciliation than its actual achievement. Although this act was of a true historic nature, it affected neither the wider public, nor the development of Slovak and Hungarian society as had been expected. Much less attention was paid to this event by the media than it regularly is to offensive placards at a football match or chanting at neo-Nazi assemblies. Neither political parties, nor the political elite reflected on the effort of the Catholic Bishops. *"The chance for Slovaks and Hungarians to reconcile the past, to enter into a dialogue in peace and humility, was squandered"*⁵⁹. *"How could badly educated or uneducated generations understand the old supra-ethnic character of St. Stephen Crown?"*⁶⁰ *How could politicians who see the national question as political capital find Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation important?"*

It appears that both, a large section of the Slovak and Hungarian electorate, and the Slovak and Hungarian Catholic majority, continue to live in the stereotype of mutual mistrust and intolerance, despite a complete spiritual restoration and revitalisation of ecclesiastic life. *"If a Slovak is interested in Hungarian culture, he is a separatist or a Hungarian supporter; if a Hungarian is interested in Slovak culture, he is a*

⁵⁶ Letter of the Hungarian Bishop Conference delivered to the Slovak Bishop Conference. <http://tkkbs.sk/> (Press Office of the Slovak Bishop Conference), issued on 29 June 2006.

⁵⁷ The idea of reconciliation between two nations through the Bishops' letters (as of 18 November 1965) was formulated by the Wrocław Bishop *Bolesław Kominek* who (supported by the then Kraków Archbishop *Karol Wojtyła*) tried to reconcile Poland and Germany after World War II. Por. ŚOLTÉS, P. Prekričané ospravedlnenia. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru*. 3/2006. p. 14.

⁵⁸ Letter of the Slovak Bishop Conference delivered to the Hungarian Bishop Conference. <http://tkkbs.sk/> (Press Office of the Slovak Bishop Conference), 20060629002, issued on 29 June 2006.

⁵⁹ ŚOLTÉS, P. Prekričané ospravedlnenia. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru*. 3/2006. p. 14.

⁶⁰ KÁFER, I. Prosba o odpustenie a odpustenie. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru* 3/2006. p. 82

traitor to the nation. [...] For the Slovak intelligence a Hungarian represents an absolute obstacle to the development of a national identity; for the Hungarian intelligence a Slovak, *Felvidék*, is nothing more than a part of the national tragedy -Nagymagyarország”⁶¹. Despite the fact that it has been 150 years since the nations in this region formed clear identities, the political elite has been ineffective in removing historical complexes from the current relations of the two neighbouring European cultures. These complexes place a persisting burden on mutual political relations, and furthermore, they hinder both post-communist societies from development. Efforts of the Hungarian Catholic Primate *P. Cardinal Erdő*, members of the Slovak-Hungarian Committee of historians, and other intellectuals on both sides of the Danube are continually outvoiced by nationalistic myths developed in populist political concepts.

Christian democracy - first Christian identity, then national identity

“Religion affects views and behaviour of people more than affiliation to a nation or a social class”⁶².

“Our weakest point is the insufficient adherence to our religious principles in the co-existence of nations”⁶³.

The idea that Christianity is for a Christian an identity which is stronger and more important than other elements of his identity, such as affiliation to race, nation, class, etc., is one of the main principles of Christian democracy. In fact, it is also a doctrine of any religion, except for those like Judaism, which are not linked to a certain nation and aspire to universalism. However, reflection of the post-communist political scene both in Slovakia and Hungary indicates that introduction of the said principle into the political practice remains a dream, intricately confronted with the balance between patriotism and that what goes beyond the line of patriotic feeling.

Establishment of Christian Democratic parties after the collapse of the communist system in Slovakia was a natural part of gradual crystallisation of political scene. In this chapter I will focus mainly on the Slovak Christian Democrats because this party regularly wins around 10% of the popular vote, and on the political representation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, members of which are also Christian-democratic politicians; at the same time, these two groups are long standing parliamentary subjects and affect politics at the highest level.

⁶¹ KÄFER, I. Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy z kresťanského hľadiska. Pohľady literatúry. In KOSSEY, P (red.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. o. c. p. 36.

⁶² ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Cestami KDH*. Prešov: Vyd. Michala Vaška, 2007. p. 331.

⁶³ KÄFER, I. Prošba o odpustenie a odpustenie. In *Impulz. Revue pre modernú katolícku kultúru*. 3/2006 p. 80.

After the fall of the communist regime, two Christian-Democratic parties were formed in Slovakia: Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, KDH) and Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (Maďarské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, MKDH). The founder of Christian Democratic Movement was *Ján Čarnogurský*, a former Catholic dissident, who subsequently led KDH for many years⁶⁴. The leader of Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, which later became part of Party of Hungarian Coalition⁶⁵, was *Béla Bugár*⁶⁶. The longstanding KDH vice-chairman, *František Mikloško*, former member of the strongest post-revolution movement Public Against Violence⁶⁷, writes in his book that after the 1990 parliamentary elections, he asked *Ján Čarnogurský* whether KDH considered to merge with MKDH. *Čarnogurský* replied that "*MKDH had not been interested in such common approach.*"⁶⁸ In the following period Slovak and Hungarian Christian Democrats in Slovakia remained divided on a national basis although they sought to cooperate. At the time when smaller Hungarian political parties were not likely to have enough votes to get into Parliament, MKDH merged with more liberal and civil Hungarian parties and formed the Party of Hungarian Coalition. The national vector appeared to be prevailing over the Christian vector. The question remains as to whether KDH would have merged with MKDH if MKDH had showed interest in such merge because KDH profiled itself as a nationally oriented party (and strongly linked to the Catholic doctrine too⁶⁹).

The founder of KDH, *Ján Čarnogurský*, in his book "*Videné od Dunaja*" (*Seen from the Danube*) entitled one of its chapters "Christianity is more than nation"⁷⁰. In this chapter he determines the hierarchy of values upwards: citizenship – nation – Christianity⁷¹. He sees these groups as key categories in post-communist Europe (beginning of the 1990s). "*Struggle or symbiosis between civil, national and Christian principles creates a*

⁶⁴ Serving as the chairman of KDH for one decade (1990–2000).

⁶⁵ In 1998, MKDH merged with two other Hungarian political parties, *Co-existence* and *Hungarian Civil Party*, and formed the *Party of Hungarian Coalition*.

⁶⁶ Serving as the chairman of the *Party of Hungarian Coalition* from 1998 to 2007. In 2002–2006, he served as the chairman of the Slovak National Council (Parliament). From February 2006, when the Parliament chairman *Hrušovský* resigned from his function, until June 2006, when the early parliamentary elections took place, he was in charge of all competences of the Parliament chairman.

⁶⁷ In 1989, he entered the Coordination Committee of the Public Against Violence, in 1992 he joined KDH. In 1990–1992, he served as the Chairman of the Slovak Parliament.

⁶⁸ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Videné od Dunaja*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997. p. 127

⁶⁹ At the time of the establishment of KDH, the leaders of this party made efforts to win votes from the Protestant and Orthodox Churches (they even offered engagement in the leadership of the party). Although several figures from the churches got engaged in KDH, they soon left these activities.

⁷⁰ *Ján Čarnogurský* delivered an introductory speech dealing with this topic at the Meeting of the Christian Democrats on 16 February 1992 in Heiligenkreuz (Austria).

⁷¹ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Videné od Dunaja*. o. c. p. 157.

new history of Central and Eastern Europe”⁷². Elsewhere in his book he highlights the particular points where the national and civil principle meet: “In our region (central Europe) there is no record of a major conflict between the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities or between several ethnic minorities. Members of various nationalities are able to live together. There are villages and towns with mixed populations in Czechoslovakia and no nationality conflicts occur. The complaints made by ethnic minorities refer to the attitude of authorities to them, i.e attitude within the administration”⁷³. The issue of minorities, especially Hungarian minority in Slovakia (but also in Romania and Serbia) is an accelerator of the complex of the history – Trianon, and it makes it present in the practical politics, either on the international or domestic political scene. The main ideologist of the Slovak Christian Democracy puts forward the idea that where improvements of the rights of the Hungarian minority are concerned, Slovakia is the key because it is here where territorial autonomy may be most simply achieved, which would be a precedence for the other neighbouring countries⁷⁴.

During the conference *Iustitia et Pax* held in Budapest in 1998, Ján Čarnogurský said: “Christianity is a unifying vision for Slovaks and Hungarians. [...] Symbiosis of Christianity and nation is dialectic [...] meaning, that Christianity, on one hand, provides a supranational idea; on the other hand, reinforces the nation”⁷⁵. He further emphasised that Christianity as a supranational idea comes into consideration only if Christianity is truly placed above the nation. He referred to an unsuccessful attempt of a Slovak Christian Democrat to make the Slovak and Hungarian delegations take a common approach at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994⁷⁶, and he sees it as a failure to apply this idea in practice.

It appears that the failure is continuing. Although, as stated above, Slovak-Hungarian cooperation at different levels (social life, art, science) exists, cooperation at the political level is insufficient. KDH and Hungarian Coalition Party are able to efficiently cooperate if they have a common enemy as it was, for example, in the 1998 election when they defeated *Vladimír Mečiar*. The following cooperation within the governing coalition was also more or less constructive. Slovak Christian Democrats are also known for their “pragmatic approach”, as they feel “more secure” when sharing the power with the Hungarian political representation rather than being in the opposition, where they would be “more demanding”. On the other hand, part of the Hungarian

⁷² ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Videné od Dunaja*. o. c. p. 157.

⁷³ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Videné od Dunaja*. o. c. p. 99.

⁷⁴ Por. ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. Prvky úspešnej stratégie Slovákov vo vzťahu k Maďarom. In KOSSEY, P (red.) *Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy*. o. c. p. 55.

⁷⁵ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Cestami KDH*. o. c. p. 243.

⁷⁶ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Cestami KDH*. o. c. p. 244 – 245.

minority supports the idea that the minority politics may be effectively carried out only in opposition. The participation of SMK in two governmental cabinets of Mikuláš Dzurinda in 1998-2006 affected the dynamism within this party. The longstanding party chairman, *Béla Bugár*, a moderate politician and popular also among Slovaks, was succeeded by the more assertive *Pál Csáky* (2007). Since the beginning of his chairmanship (summer 2007), *Pál Csáky* has been seeking to reinforce the rights of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia by laying claim to autonomy. This claim was firmly rejected by the governing coalition (the part of which is also the right-wing nationalist Slovak National Party), the President of Slovakia and other subjects; however, *Csáky* is laying claim to personal autonomy. Attempts to achieve autonomy, establishment of the Hungarian Guard and the anti-Hungarian rhetoric of the currently governing Slovak National Party: all these factors cause certain regress in successes achieved in the field of cooperation between Slovak and Hungarian politicians and also affect relations between these two countries.

During the press conference held on 28 August 2007, four Slovak Christian Democrats⁷⁷ stated that *"relations between Slovakia and Hungary are getting radicalised"*⁷⁸. As an example of radicalisation, they stated the recently established paramilitary movement the Hungarian Guard. *"We believe that if a member of the Hungarian Guard were to come to Slovakia, he should be arrested and prosecuted by virtue of section 312 of the Penal Code,"* can be found in the declaration of the four KDH members. They also suggested Slovak and Hungarian Parliaments make a conciliatory gesture. They think the Parliaments should express joint regret at hardship of the Slovaks expelled after the Vienna Arbitration and the Hungarians expelled after the application of Benes decrees. Furthermore, they should return certain works of art, which were made in the Slovak territory and should be therefore a part of the Slovak Cultural Heritage⁷⁹. "The middle part" of their declaration containing the proposal of a gesture of mutual reconciliation through a resolution, the content of which would express regret at the hardship of Slovaks expelled after the Vienna Arbitration and Hungarians expelled after the application of Benes decrees, could be actually seen as an attempt to improve Slovak-Hungarian relations. However, the introductory part dealing with the potential prosecution of a member of the Hungarian Guard if he travels to Slovakia, and the conclusion – a request for the return of cultural works of art are regarded as vague.

⁷⁷ Members of Parliament, the former KDH chairman *Ján Čarnogurský*, and former vice-chairmen *František Mikloško*, *Vladimír Palko* and *Pavol Minárik*.

⁷⁸ <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=246289>

⁷⁹ *jm Radikalizujú sa vzťahy? Týždeň*, 36/2007. p. 8

Pavol Hrušovský, chairman of KDH, in his New Year's Speech in 2003, when he served as the Chairman of the Slovak National Council, admitted that *"it is a shame that the independent Slovakia did not deal with the holocaust and the issue of the deprivation of rights of Slovak Hungarians with the appropriate respect and degree of objectivity."* It should be noted that Ján Čarnogurský replied, also on behalf of others, to the question as to whether four Christian Democrats consulted their declaration with the KDH leadership, that *"there is no obligation which would require them to do so"*⁸⁰. Lajos P. János, in an article for a Hungarian minority newspaper in Slovakia, reacted to the declaration of the four politicians: *"Views on nationality issues of these Christian Democrats differ from those held by the current leadership of KDH. Vladimír Palko, who failed in his ambition to become the chairman of the party last summer, stated during his campaign, preceding the Assembly of the Party, that KDH would like to attract voters of SNS"*⁸¹.

Slovak media did not respond to this invitation positively and focused on the issue as to what cultural pieces should Hungary return to Slovakia. The Ministry of Culture replied by a brief statement: *"We shall examine it"*⁸². The Director of the Institute of Art History of the Slovak Academy of Science said that the majority of art works from the Slovak territory, which are currently in Budapest or Esztergom, had been transferred at the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. They were imported to Hungary mainly during the 19th century, for example for the 1896 Millennium Exhibition in Budapest. Many works of art from across Hungary remained in the capital where they were better cared for. After the dissolution of the Kingdom of Hungary, they remained there. From a legal point of view, it is not clear what the requests for their return would be based on, as this issue was addressed in detail at the time of the dissolution of the monarchy. *"Each case has to be assessed individually and it is unreasonable to require something like that en bloc"*⁸³.

The statement of the politicians obviously did not contribute to the improvement in Slovak-Hungarian relations, but to analyses of KDH itself, which appears to be split into at least two fractions whose communication is problematic. On 8 September 2007 the Party of Hungarian Coalition suggested that the Slovak and Hungarian Parliaments adopt a resolution with the same content. SMK proposed that this Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation take place on the symbolic date of 9 May 2008 (9 May is Europe Day).

⁸⁰ <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=246289>

⁸¹ JÁNOS, L., P. Kincset keres a KDH. Megoldás lehet a kölcsönös? *Uj Szó*, 30. 8. 2007 p. 1.

⁸² PIŠKO, M. Čo majú Maďari vrátiť, sa nevie. *Sme*, 31.08.2007. p. 3

⁸³ PIŠKO, M. Mali by jasne povedať, kde na to číslo prišli. *Sme*, 31.08.2007. p. 3.

Conclusion

*"Around the world, when the talk turns to us (Hungarians and Slovaks), I say that our mentalities are the closest..."*⁸⁴

In general, it may be concluded that after the integration of Slovakia into the European and Transatlantic structures, and with the upcoming accession into the Schengen zone and the European monetary union, the issue related to the protection of national interest and the effort to maintain the sovereignty of the state in the ethical and cultural areas gradually takes the central position in the agenda of political parties. It appears that Slovak voters are affected, after a short break, by the emphasis placed on the protection of the nation rather than economic indicators. A memorial plaque unveiled on the Parliament building, whose text places national sovereignty above all other values is a good proof of it⁸⁵.

The former Swedish Ambassador to Prague and political analyst, *Ingmar Karlsson*, states that the Eastern European nationalisms are more impulsive, more emotional and more intense than the Western nationalisms. He explains this statement with several reasons: In Western Europe national states were formed slowly, by gradual extension of the central power, while in Eastern and Central Europe national states were results of speedy development of central power and its collapse. In 1918, after the World War I, multinational states, which considered themselves as such, were replaced by national states, which they actually were not because none of the states of Central and Eastern Europe is mononational⁸⁶. On the other hand, the powers have been fighting one another for a long time, and despite all these wars, Europe managed to preserve the consciousness of common identity. The identity of Europe was based on the respect for diversity of its citizens⁸⁷. Has been and is the religious affiliation of citizens of the Habsburg monarchy's territory significant in regards to the political development in this territory? Reflecting on the relations between Hungary and Slovakia, it appears that the Christian-Democratic principle on the precedence of Christianity over the nation is not applicable. Common affiliation to Christianity and Catholicism alleviates the persisting conflict; however, it does not prevail over the different national identity. National identity affects the behaviour of elite and

⁸⁴ *Árpád Göncz*, former President of Hungary, but in office at the time of debate during which he expressed this idea (August 2006). In MIKLOŠKO, F. *Čas stretnutí*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996. p. 149.

⁸⁵ The author of the text is a former communist functionary, author, Vladimír Mináč. Governing coalition's representatives argued against the protests of the opposition representatives, especially Christian Democrats, by highlighting the efforts of Mináč in the protection of the nation and constructing nationhood. Christian Democrats did not raise objection against the content of the text, but against the quotation of the communist protégée who was in the service of communist power.

⁸⁶ KARLSSON, I. *Európa a národy. Európsky národ alebo Európa národov?* Bratislava: Slovenský inštitút medzinárodných štúdií, 1998. p. 97.

⁸⁷ ČARNOGURSKÝ, J. *Videné od Dunaja*. o. c. p. 360.

institutions. The responses of Christian Democrats to the questions on the ineffectivity of the Christian-Catholic common identity as a unifying force among the Slovak and Hungarian political elites and political subjects, are typical: "Christian identity is strong on our side but weak on theirs"⁸⁸. Both Catholic Churches, Hungarian and Slovak, play the role of a protector of national interests, and are continually asked for cooperation by nationally-oriented parties. Events such as "We forgive and ask for forgiveness" in 2006 appear to be more or less exceptional, and a result of an exceptional initiative and a specific approach (which should be standard in case of truly dominating religious identity) of certain clergy persons-elites.

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⁸⁸ Response of a Christian Democrat to the question of the author as to why religious (Christian) identity does not dominate the national identity in relations between Slovak and Hungarian Christian Democrats.

Summary

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SLOVAK – HUNGARIAN RELATIONS, CATHOLICISM AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, disagreement of Hungary with the post-war reorganisation of this region based on the Treaty of Trianon and the issue of the rights of the Hungarian ethnic minority in neighbouring countries are obstacles, which place a burden on Slovak-Hungarian relations. It appears difficult to overcome these obstacles although both nations are close culturally and mentally, they share more than 1,000 years of common history in several state entities and traditional Christian and Catholic identity. The conflict is ongoing at the political level. It manifests itself especially in the domestic political level because Slovakia has a well-organised and large Hungarian minority, and also in relations between both neighbouring countries at the international level. Both particular Catholic churches place an emphasis on the protection of national interest. A nation connects a sum of individuals more than a religion. In difficult situations a nation becomes a secular religion, and this is also related to the gradual secularisation of a society, and transferring transcendent characteristics and functions to the nation or national state.

Christian Democrats prefer to cooperate with political parties that focus on the national interest rather than with Christian politicians of Hungarian/Slovak nationality. One of the essential premises of Christian democracy - that religious identity dominates national identity and has more influence on behaviour - does not actually appear to be true in the case of Slovak-Hungarian relations as seen in practical politics (also carried out by Christian Democrats).

However, religion as one of the determining identifying factors may significantly affect further development of Slovak-Hungarian relations leading to a historical reconciliation. It may help to overcome historical stereotypes about a generalised perception of one nation by the other. Rare bilateral activities of Catholic churches and numerous examples of Slovak-Hungarian cooperation at different levels of social life show that petrified conflict at the political level may be overcome easier in the area of human relations and professional cooperation, and that a real Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation may be achieved at a lower level⁸⁹.

⁸⁹ There have already been some voices of citizens and their associations that media should ignore press conferences and "messages" of politicians whose content directs against other nations

Key words: Slovak-Hungarian relations, ethnic minorities, religion, values, identity, the Treaty of Trianon, the post-war map of Central Europe, collective memory, Catholicism, Christian democracy, international politics, regions, autonomy.

Резиме

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СЛОВАЧКО – МАЂАРСКИ ОДНОСИ, КАТОЛИЦИЗАМ И ХРИШЋАНСКА ДЕМОКРАТИЈА

Распад Аустроугарске монархије, неслагање Мађарске са послератним променама у овом региону на основу Тријанонског уговора и питање мађарских етничких мањина у суседним земљама представљају сметње које оптерећују словачко–мађарске односе. Ове сметње се, по свему судећи, тешко могу превазићи, упркос томе што су ове две нације културно и ментално блиске, што их спаја, с једне стране, више од 1000 година заједничке историје у неколико државних ентитета и, с друге стране, њихов традиционални хришћански и католички идентитет. Сукоб се данас одвија на политичком нивоу. Он се посебно манифестује на унутрашњеполитичком плану, јер у Словачкој живи добро организована и бројна мађарска мањина, као и у односима између две суседне земље на међународном плану. Католичке цркве у обе земље стављају нагласак на заштиту националног интереса. Нација повезује појединце снажније од религије. У тешким ситуацијама, нација постаје нека врста секуларне религије и то се односи, такође, на постепену секуларизацију друштва и пребацивање трансцедентних карактеристика и функција на нацију или националну државу.

Хришћански демократи су више окренути сарадњи са политичким партијама фокусираним на национални интерес него сарадњи са хришћанским политичарима мађарске или словачке националности. Једна од суштинских премиса хришћанске демократије – да је верски идентитет изнад националног идентитета и да има јачи утицај на понашање људи – изгледа да не важи у случају мађарско–словачких односа, као што се то види на плану практичне политике (коју такође воде демохришћани).

Међутим, као један од најзначајнијих фактора одређивања идентитета, религија би могла значајно да утиче на развој мађарско–словачких односа у правцу националног помирења. Она би могла да помогне у превазилажењу историјских

стереотипа који постоје у уопштеним међусобним виђењима. Ретке билатералне активности између католичких цркви у две земље и бројни примери словачко–мађарске сарадње у различитим областима друштвеног живота показују да петрификовани конфликт на политичком плану може бити лакше превазиђен на пољу међуљудских односа и професионалне сарадње, као и да стварно словачко–мађарско помирење може бити остварено на nižем нивоу⁹⁰.

Кључне речи: словачко–мађарски односи, етничке мањине, религија, вредности, идентитет, Тријанонски мировни уговор, послератна мапа Централне Европе, колективно памћење, католицизам, хришћанска демократија, међународна политика, региони, аутономија.

⁹⁰ Већ се чују неки гласови грађана и њихових организација да медији треба да игноришу конференције за штампу и „поруке“ политичара са садржином која је директно уперена против других нација.