

KOVÁČ, Dušan – KOWALSKÁ, Eva – ŠOLTÉS, Peter et al. *SPOLOČNOSŤ NA SLOVENSKU V DLHOM 19. STOROČÍ. (SOCIETY IN SLOVAKIA IN THE LONG 19TH CENTURY)*. Bratislava : VEDA, 2015, 511 pages. ISBN978-80-224-1478-4.

The collective monograph consists of of seventeen studies divided into five chapters. *The country and the towns* is the title of the first chapter composed of two studies. The following two chapters, composed of five and four studies respectively, are named: *The individual and society* and *A nation emerges*. The remaining six studies are divided between the fourth and fifth chapters under the titles: *Military and political battlefields* and *Man does not live by bread alone*. These titles of the chapters already suggest that in spite of its general title: ***Society in Slovakia in the long 19th century***, the book only covers some specific aspects of the social history of the territory of Slovakia, which formed an integral part of the Kingdom of Hungary and Habsburg Monarchy in this period. A closer look at the individual studies shows that some of the chapters are rather heterogeneous in their content, which could be perceived as a shortcoming. However, in the case of the reviewed work, the relative thematic heterogeneity is a natural result of the purpose this book was intended to serve. This collective monograph is an outcome of the project financed by the Agency to Support Research and Development (contract no. APVV-0119-11). However, the main result of this project, is supposed to be a three volume synthesis of Slovak history in the 19th century published in the years coming. The seventeen studies forming the work reviewed here represent the initial results of the research team, giving an idea about the state of the research and the broad conception of the synthesis to be published.

The work opens with an *Introduction* authored by the three editors of the work: Dušan Kováč, Eva Kowalská, and Peter Šoltés. They give a rather selective outline of some aspects of the existence of the Slovaks in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 19th century. They concentrate on the following themes: the appearance of nationalism and later of political nationalism in the course of the 19th century, the “incorrect interpretation” of the Kingdom of Hungary by the “Magyars” as their own nation state, the absence of a Slovak national territory defined by a historical boundary, the problem of the patriotism of a large part of the Slovak elites and ordinary people towards the historic Kingdom of Hungary, and forced Magyarization. In the second part of the introduction, the authors devote attention to the theoretical points of departure they propose to use when researching the history of Slovakia in the 19th century. They consider the “paradigm of social history” to be optimal and they consider particularly useful the model proposed by Jürgen Osterhammel, which they briefly introduce (OSTERHAMMEL, Jürgen. *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. München: C.H. Beck, 2009). In the closing section of the Introduction the editors briefly outline the areas in which the research is still in its initial stages. They suggest that the Slovak historiography should devote more attention to the development of aristocratic estates in the early modern period, processes of bureaucratization in the course of the 19th century, the adoption and development of modern forms of economy in the period before March 1848, the functioning of county and municipal structures especially in the part of the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary inhabited by Slovaks. At the same time, the editors self-critically admit that the aforementioned subjects will receive little or no attention on the following pages of the book. Finally, the Introduction concludes with a suggestion for abandonment of the narrowly national perspectives on Slovak history, for avoidance of a strong orientation towards political history, and for a more comparative approach to the research on the history of the Slovaks, paying attention also to the wider European context.

The introductory text of the book under review is revelatory. It is evident that the volume is meant to address particularly the Slovak readership. Since there is little attention paid to the introduction of the research questions that the authors actually attempt to answer in the volume, and some other issues are not mentioned at all – which particularly, I will specify below – this *Introduction* appears to be a wasted opportunity.

In the opening article to the first chapter, Dušan Škvarna analyses the ideas of the Slovak patriots about the national territory of the Slovaks in the first half of the 19th century. He outlines the pre-modern conceptions of the Slovak ethnic territory, but devotes more attention to the works of the leading representatives of the Slovak national movement in the 1830s and 1840s. Škvarna also studies cartographic sources, the works of early statisticians and ethnologists, and school geography textbooks. The second article by Jana Pochaničová is devoted to tradition and innovation in architecture in the period from the beginning of the rule of Joseph II in 1780 to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. The changes of architectural style as a result of the dialectical relationship between the continuity of tradition and the discontinuous elements of innovation are documented using the example of the sacred architecture of the Jewish religious communities in Prešporok (the author uses the post-1918 designation of the city: Bratislava), and in the counties of Prešporok (Pressburg/Pozsony), Trenčín (Trencsén), Liptov (Liptó), Spiš (Szepes), Šariš (Sáros) and Zemplín (Zemplén). The second half of the article consists of a case study of the Feigler family, who belonged to the most prominent city architects, builders and developers in 19th century Prešporok.. Pochaničová traces architectural development and the various influences that determined it through the activities of three generations of the family.

The second chapter begins with a demographic study by Branislav Šprocha and Pavol Tišliar. Under the title: *Population development in the long 19th century. An outline of demographic trends*, they offer an analysis of the accessible demographic data, which they rigorously reduced to the present territory of the Slovak Republic, although, as they admit, this cannot be done with equal consistence in every case. The study traces the basic demographic parameters: growth of the population of the delineated territory (the authors usually speak of Slovakia, less often using the description: “territory of Slovakia”), the conditions and factors of change in the reproductive behaviour and death rate, marriage patterns and the structure of the population by age and gender. On the basis of these and other parameters and factors, they conceptualized the quantitative and qualitative transformation of the so-called old demographic regime and the coming of the demographic revolution to “Slovakia” in the course of the long 19th century. In the next study Tomáš Janura offers a partial prosopographic study of the county official apparatus using the example of the County of Zvolen (Zólyom) in the period 1790–1848. In the first part of the study, he informs the reader about the individual functions of the county administration and the responsibilities of officials. He also devotes attention to the process of selecting and appointing officials, the renewal of mandates or restructuring, although he concentrates mainly on the periodicity of elections summoned by the chief sheriff of the county. In the second part of the study, he analyses the so-called official dynasties of the County of Zvolen, that is the degree of presence of representatives of individual noble families (Radvanszky, Beniczky, Rakovszky, Czerva and others) in official positions during the relevant period. Janura looks at the building up of official dynasties from the point of view of the corrupt practices of clientelism (cronyism) and nepotism. In this way, he outlines an important theme for further research also concerning periods before the end of the 18th century and for the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries. The next three texts of the second chapter form one of the best integrated parts of the collective monograph. These three studies by Ingrid Kušniráková, Katarína Pekařová and Gabriela Dudeková are devoted to social and health care. I. Kušniráková studies the reforms of care for the urban poor, unsupported children and orphans in the Kingdom of Hungary during the reigns of Joseph II and Leopold II. The reforms mainly of the

first of these monarchs had the aim of rationalizing, bringing under state control and centralizing the hitherto unorganized and decentralized charitable activity. The author analyses not only the reforms, but also their practical implementation. In spite of its progressive character, the new system of social care finally resulted in a decline of the resources that individual charitable institutions could obtain, which reduced the number of people they could support. The Josephine reforms were implemented in Hungary only to a limited degree, and in the end they were either completely repealed or changed to such an extent that in various ways there was a return to the state before the reforms. K. Pekařová's extensive study examines the organization of public health in the territory of Slovakia in the period 1780–1918. The introduction briefly defines the issue of systematic health care in the framework of political and expert scientific discourse in the period. Pekařová mentions general data about the illnesses of the population of the counties situated in regions now belonging to Slovakia, and analyses various aspects of the legislative and institutional organization and professionalization of health care in chronological order with the years 1848 and 1867 identified as milestones. In the second part of the study, K. Pekařová considers the personnel providing health care, beginning with the professional training of doctors and midwives, and ending with the education of nursing staff. The last part of the study briefly covers the hospital institutions, their development in the 19th century and the activity of medical societies in the field of public health. The author devotes greater attention to the struggle and medical interventions against epidemics that afflicted especially the territory of Slovakia in this period, namely smallpox, diphtheria, cholera, typhus and tuberculosis. The author of the last of the three texts, Gabriela Dudeková has investigated the organization of health and social care in the period of Neo-Absolutism. Apart from tracing the legislative and organizational aspect, she attempts to see the reform of health and social care of the “Bach regime” also in relation to a question that has again attracted increased interest from Habsburgologists: To what degree was the repressive and centralizing system of the so-called Neo-Absolutist period modernizing or progressive, specifically in the field of state social policy?

The third collective chapter *A nation emerges* opens with Miloslav Szabó's study: *Nation and family. A contribution to analysis of the discourse of the Slovak national movement*, in which he analyses gender aspects of the narratives created by specific representatives of the Slovak national movement. He concentrates mainly on the texts of Ľudovít Štúr and Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, observing that gender and specifically sexual motifs are far from being limited in Slovak nationalist discourse only to the relations between “man” and “woman”. They also appear in the form of naturalist codes to define the Slovak national community, especially in connection with the anti-Jewish and xenophobic ideology of Slovak nationalists. In the following study, Peter Šoltés devotes attention to the hitherto unstudied theme of Slovak and Slavic “national names” in the Slovak national movement. He analyses the factors leading to a substantial difference in strategies of choosing Christian names between the Roman Catholic and Evangelical confessions in the course of the 19th century. It was much more difficult to establish non-traditional or non-biblical names in the Catholic environment than among Protestants. This is shown by quantitative soundings in church registers as well as by analysis of the Christian names in the families of active Slovak patriots from the Evangelical and Catholic confessions. For two generations, from the 1840s to 1880s, the giving of Slovak or Slavic national names remained a phenomenon confined mostly to the Evangelical patriotic elite. In the non-elite environment of the ordinary “Slovak people”, Slovak and Slavic names began to spread slowly only in the 1880s. The third study in the chapter on the “emergence of the nation” is a text by Daniela Kodajová devoted to the funerals and commemorations of notable Slovak patriots. Kodajová looks at these events as places for an “emotional form of staging of national identity”. As a result of the persecuting and restrictive activity of the Hungarian county and state officials, the funerals of leading “men of the Slovak nation” and commemorative events were among the few public scenes at which the active Slovak patriots could use gestures and

ritualized acts to address not only the small educated, reading public, but also the semi-literate or illiterate population, since these public events were not subject to notification obligations. National celebrations functioned as public theatrical performances and speeches at funerals enabled the construction and spreading of a cultural image of noble self-sacrifice for the nation, an ideal image of the national hero and leader of the nation or of the struggle for the nation. D. Kodajová analyses in more detail the funeral celebrations for Ján Kollár and Ján Hollý, the speeches at the funerals of Eudovít Štúr, Jozef Miloslav Hurban, Viliam Pauliny-Tóth and the superintendent Karol Kuzmány, Bishop Stephen Moyses and others. The third chapter closes with a study by Peter Macho on Bishop Fridrich Baltík and the attitude of the Slovak patriotic activists to him in connection with ecclesiastical legislation and the struggle of the Slovak Evangelical elites to preserve the integrity of the Cis-Danubian denominational district (the north-western part of the Kingdom of Hungary) in the last decade of the 19th century. The structures of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, especially the Cis-Danubian district, represented a unique institutional platform in which they had some degree of autonomy and could relatively freely use the Slovak language not only as an instrument of communication, but also as an official administrative language. According to P. Macho, the governments of Hungary saw the Slovak Evangelical patriotic activists mainly as spreaders of pan-Slavism and so as anti-state elements threatening the territorial integrity of Hungary, so starting in the 1890s they increased their effort to Magyarize church life. A second source of tension and fear was the ecclesiastical policy laws, which introduced civil marriage and transferred registration to state offices. In the given situation, the Slovak Evangelical patriotic activists placed great hope in Fridrich Baltík, who was elected Bishop of the Cis-Danubian district in May 1890. However, Baltík did not fulfil their expectations, precisely the reverse. According to his critics, he followed a conformist and servile attitude towards the government, which led to Evangelical patriotic discourse viewing him as a turncoat, national renegade, “Magyarone” and traitor to the Lutheran Church and confession. However, P. Macho comes to the conclusion that such a designation is not correct, and an objective evaluation of Baltík by historians is still needed.

The fourth chapter with the title *Military and political battlefields* opens with a text by Roman Holec, which takes the reader back to the period of Neo-Absolutism. The study *Bach's hussars – symbol of the regime or one its myths* is an attempt to refute several interpretative schemes, which were and to some extent still are firmly rooted in the narratives of Central European historiography, especially in Hungary. R. Holec describes them as myths, which mostly originated during the period of neo-absolutism or soon after it. According to Holec, the Hungarian historiography uncritically accepted them into its national historical argumentation and repeats them until today. There are three specific “Hungarian myths”: (1.) Collaboration with the neo-absolutist regime also meant collaboration with Vienna during the revolution; (2.) The myth of the passive resistance of the Hungarian political elites to the neo-absolutist regime; (3.) The myth of the inability of the Slovaks to understand “Bach’s hussars”. The fourth myth that Holec seeks to deconstruct is not “Hungarian”, but rather “Czech” or “Czecho-Slovak”: (4.) The myth of the good and helpful Czech officials working in Upper Hungary in the period of neo-absolutism. R. Holec refutes these “myths” by giving concrete examples as well as statistical data. However, his study is mainly devoted to researching the strategies of self-preservation and trans-regime migration of professional cadres of Hungarian/Magyar officials, especially Bach’s so-called hussars. The next study in the fourth chapter is also concerned with the 1850s and specifically with the last year of that decade. Vojtech Dangl offers a detailed analysis of the presence of the armed forces of the Habsburg Monarchy in Lombardy–Venetia and the course of the Battle of Solferino in 1859. The final text in the chapter *Military and political battlefields* is the longest study in the reviewed work: *Slovak politics in the period of provisional arrangements and preparation for the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, 1859 – 1867* by Dušan Kováč. The study offers an analysis of dynastic politics and

the positions of the Hungarian political elites with an emphasis on the “nationality question” and specifically on the Slovak national movement. D. Kováč points critically to the hitherto prevailing one-sided and superficial evaluation of the loyalty to the Kingdom of Hungary and pro-government position of the Slovak political elite, namely the so-called Pest/Budapest group or Young School. However, he also evaluates the political conception of the Budapest group as naive and he regards the division over basic questions of the Slovak national programme as one of the most serious problems of the Slovak movement as a whole.

The last chapter, regarding its content not quite appropriately titled *Man does not live by bread alone*, is composed of excellent studies by three historians. Eva Kowalská, Elena Mannová and Ivona Kollárová devote their attention to selected aspects of institutional, social and political factors of the organization of modern society. In her study *Education as politics. The Enlightenment, elementary education and the Habsburg state around 1800*, E. Kowalská examines the establishment of state supervision over the process of organizing mass education and the pushing of the churches out of their previously dominant position not only in the field of education. State reform meant complex change not only in the field of applying the conception of reformed Catholicism and confessional tolerance, but also disruption of church school organization and securing of material and financial support for schools. The reforms also concerned teacher training and monitoring of the quality of education. New educational methods were derived, at least according to the theoretical conceptions of the reformers, from the principles of mercantilism, physiocracy and philanthropism. E. Kowalská analyses the inter-connected conceptual elements derived from Enlightenment conceptions of a good and just organization of society and the pragmatic needs of the dynasty and state. The concluding part of the study considers especially the impact of the Toleration Patent of 1781 on the organization of non-Catholic elementary education or on the so-called (denominationally) mixed schools. In the next study, Elena Mannová examines the phenomenon of civil societies and relations between the state and the citizens in the period 1848–1867. She traces the establishment and functioning of societies during the revolutionary years, the period of neo-absolutism and the 1860s. She analyses the legislative framework and the attitude of the government to society activities in this period. She devotes special attention to Slovak societies, but does not limit her consideration to them. The basic research question that E. Mannová tries to answer concerns the modernization potential of the non-governmental civil sector in the 1850s and 1860s. To what degree were civic societies in the Kingdom of Hungary and especially in Upper Hungary the bearers of social and political modernization changes in comparison with the Cis-Leithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy and the German states? The state was the main initiator of modernization changes, but in spite of this, we cannot undervalue the importance of societal activity, because many civil societies were the bearers not only of nationalist agitation, but also of civil virtues and the ethos of civil equality. The final chapter ends with a study by Ivona Kollárová on the institutionalization and disciplining of the reading public in the period of more than half a century from the 1770s to 1840s. She investigates organizational and institutional conditions such as the establishment of reading rooms and reading societies, as well as conceptual and ideological changes, which led to the spread of reading as a new social phenomenon. The traditional institutions or organizations, which claimed to supervise the moral and ethical imperatives of social life and to be the arbiters of “truth” with regard to questions concerning the “correctness”, “success” and “necessity” of the existing political and social order of society, namely the church and state institutions, very soon began to notice the growth of reading and publishing activity as a lively phenomenon, which represented a serious threat if it was not controlled and regulated.

The collective monograph ends with a summary in English and index of names. There is no final synthesizing chapter, summarizing and evaluating the main findings of the authors, assessing the state of research and proposing further directions for investigation.

Let us first consider the formal aspect of the collective monograph. As I said in the introduction, the volume is rather heterogeneous in various ways. Apart from the relative thematic fragmentation, which is a natural result of the publication of “work in progress” research papers and so can be accepted without criticism, the lack of unity in the chapters and studies also appears in the internal division of the texts. Some studies have no conclusions and appear to end in the middle of the account (Pohaničová, Janura, Kodajová, Kováč). The use of names of people and places is not unified. Various authors use anachronistic names of cities and geo-political units (Bratislava, Italy, Germany). For example, the historically correct name Prešporok (Pressburg/Pozsony) is used consistently by only three authors (Pekařová, Dudeková, Mannová), with some authors at least mentioning the historic name in brackets. The writing of names of historic actors is even more variable, beginning with the systematic use of originally Hungarian (Magyar) Christian names and surnames in transcribed forms according to Slovak orthography (Pohaničová), continuing with the transcription of Hungarian names only of persons born or active for a long time in the territory now belonging to Slovakia (Pekařová) and with provision of the original form in brackets or with Christian names in the Slovak form and the surnames in the original form (Holec, Kowalská, Mannová). The question of using or not using anachronistic “Slovakized” names of Hungarian/Magyar people and places is still an open and sensitive question in Slovak historiography. However, from the scholarly point of view, the “retrospective Slovakizing” of historic Hungarian personal names and the anachronistic naming of geopolitical units is difficult to defend.

To what degree does the collective work fulfil the appeal formulated by the editors in the *Introduction* for an abandonment of the narrow national perspective on Slovak history, and for introduction of a more comparative approach? Only partially and superficially, rather than directly and systematically.

The majority of studies entirely lack any comparative dimension and some authors directly apply a Slovak ethnocentric national historicizing approach (Šprocha, Tišliar). On the other hand, some of the authors do not limit their attention exclusively to the territory now belonging to the Slovak Republic and consider to some degree the context of the whole Kingdom of Hungary and/or the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (e.g. Kušniráková, Dudeková, Holec, Mannová). Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid critically mentioning the excessive anachronistic use of the geo-political name “Slovakia”, already found in the actual title of the work, as an inevitable result of the ethnocentric or national conception of history. Before 1918 Slovakia did not exist as a geo-political entity, its territory formed an integral part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Only E. Mannová (p. 438, note 6) states an explicit position on this. She defends the regionalist approach and the use of the term “Upper Hungary” or “Upper Hungarian region”. It is only possible to agree with her that when researching the region of the north-western, northern and partly also north-eastern counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, inhabited mainly by Slovak speaking people, it is not historically accurate to use the geopolitical name “Slovakia”. The justification for the consistent retrospective construction of “Slovakia”, when researching the demography of the territory now forming the Slovak Republic, is questionable from the scientific point of view (Šprocha, Tišliar). The effects of social, political, economic, cultural and other factors in the 19th century in the framework of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy were not limited to the territory defined by the present frontiers of the Slovak Republic. It is impossible to avoid and ignore the fact that especially, but not only, the demographic factors resulting from legislative norms and governmental policies affected the territory of the whole kingdom and not only an anachronistically delineated part of its territory. The existence of confessional, cultural and social determinants specific to some regions inhabited by Slovak speaking people does not justify the retrospective designation of “Slovakia” in the period of the 19th century. Is it not more justified and more accurate in such cases to use the above mentioned regionalist approach with regard for historical realities?

In this context, the absence of critical reflection on the above mentioned problems, whether in the form of a separate study or a treatise in the *Introduction*, can be evaluated as a deficiency of the reviewed work. The correctness or incorrectness of ethnocentric interpretative frameworks and approaches to historical research has been discussed for several decades in the theoretical and methodological literature. Traditional national narrative history was rejected as a form of critical historical knowledge even earlier. It is unfortunate that the authors or at least the editors did not use this opportunity – the publication of working materials for a future large synthesis – to initiate discussion on the genre of syntheses of national history.

Some of the studies contain a further fallacy characteristic more of the traditional methodologically inadequate narrative approaches to the writing of history, namely uncritical, generalizing use of ethnic categories such as “Hungarians” (“Magyars”) and Slovaks. The studies of several authors contain the inadequate simplification of attributing an ideological position or political agenda to entire categories of the population, most often to the “Magyars” in general. I will mention only one example from the *Introduction*: “*On the basis of a historically incorrect interpretation that the Kingdom of Hungary, the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, had been a nation state since the Early Middle Ages, the Magyars demanded a Magyar nation state.*” Immediately in the next sentence a relatively more exact designation of the actors is given: “*However, Czech, German, Polish and other national agitators also used similarly incorrect historical interpretations in the same period. They also included historiography in their national agitation.*” (p. 11). Ethno-categorical generalizations are not problematic only because they obscure or fail to precisely designate concrete initiators and actors. Regardless of the historians’ good intention, such generalizations can potentially act as legitimizations of naive ideas about “collective responsibility” and as confirmations of social stereotypical constructions.

In connection with this problematic aspect of some studies, it is impossible to avoid criticism of the absence of a theoretical anchoring of the majority of texts in the collective monograph. This absence is surprising in relation to the fact that in the *Introduction* the editors describe the 19th century as the century of nationalism and propose to depart from the “paradigm of social history”. The almost total absence of theories of nationalism and of social theories is notable. In studies such as those of Škvarna, Kodajová, and Kováč, this absence is noticeable. M. Szabó is the only author who uses “nationalism” as an analytical category not tied to the ethnic background of the historical actors. In most of the other studies, “nationalism” is implicitly represented as a feature or phenomenon primarily related to the Hungarian (“Magyar”) political elite or Hungarians (“Magyars”) in general.

However, in spite of the above mentioned shortcomings, most of the 17 individual studies represent relevant scholarly examinations of particular Slovak related 19th century social history issues. However, deeper theoretical reflection and more consistent methodological consideration would certainly add to its explanatory value.

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