The Nationalizing Processes in Slovakia 1969–1988

The Case Study of Hungarian Minority*

Juraj MARUŠIAK

Ústav politických vied Slovenskej akadémie vied
The institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences
Dúbravská cesta 9, 841 04 Bratislava, Slovakia
polimars@savba.sk

The presence of the Hungarian and Ukrainian minorities after World War II in Slovakia was recognized for the first time officially, in the legal documents in the Constitutional Act on the Slovak National Organs, adopted on 31 July 1956 (Act nr. 33/1956 Coll.), which strengthened their powers. According to § 2 the Slovak National Council obtained responsibility for the „provision of the favorable conditions for the economic and cultural life of the citizens of Hungarian and Ukrainian ethnicity."[1] However, there was still in power the so called "Ninth-of-May Constitution" adopted in 1948, according to which Czechoslovakia was described as the "national state, free from the all hostile elements, friendly living in the family of Slavic states and in the friendship with all peaceful nations in the world". However, the preamble of Constitution defined respective "hostile elements" as the "descendents of the foreign colonists settled with us and, enjoying all democratic rights, in accordance with our constitution, together with us." They were accused of the assistance in the "malicious aggression against our peaceful state" in 1938. Therefore the minorities were still treated as a hostile element within the Czechoslovak society, although the ethnic Hungarians received their civil rights back at the end of 1948. On the other hand, one of the consequences of the Hungarian revolution in October – November 1956 was the small improvement of the situation of the Hungarian media in Slovakia. The circulation of home-grown Hungarian-language newspapers and periodicals increased after the press imports from Hungary was stopped[2] and later in order to reduce the popularity of the media from Hungary among the members of Hungarian community in south Slovakia.
Subsequently, the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, adopted in 1960, officially recognized the members of Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian national minority (however not the members of the German one) to be equal with the other citizens of the state. The short period of the liberalization of the Communist regime during the so called "Prague Spring" in 1968 brought political mobilization of the members of Hungarian minority, both in the field of minority rights and in the field of human rights

* This article was prepared under the Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) grant project "Democracy and Citizens in Slovakia: A Half-Century of Change", registration number 0627-12.

1 ZVARA, Juraj: *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1945*, Bratislava 1969, 104.

2 Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archive, hereinafter referred only as SNA), fund ÚV KSS, predsedníctvo (Presidium of the Central Committe of the Communist Party of Slovakia), box 933. Session of the Bureau of the ÚV KSS 16. 11. 1956. Návrh na zmeny vo vydávaní maďarskej tlače na Slovensku.

and democratization within the frameworks of the existing political system.[3] This period resulted in the adoption of the Constitutional Act on the Position of National Minorities (Act nr. 144/1968 Coll., adopted on 28 October 1968), that provided not only the equal status of the members of ethnic minorities, but also their cultural and language rights. However, respective law was not accompanied with the legal acts on the implementation of its provisions. The lack of such legal amendments caused later, in 1970s and 1980s, conflicts in the territories with ethnically mixed population. The discontent was expressed not only by the members of ethnic minorities, but in many cases also by the members of the majority Slovak speaking population. Such contradictions and misunderstandings has an impact on the character of the political discourse in Slovakia since 1989 as well.

At the same time, the Constitutional Act on the Czechoslovak Federation (Act nr. 143/1968 Coll.) transformed the centralized Czechoslovak state into the federation of two entities. The Czechoslovak state was declared to be a "state of two equal fraternal nations" (Art. 1, paragraph 1). Its ground was a "voluntary union of equal national states of the Czech and Slovak nations, established on the principle of the right of self-determination" (Art. 1, paragraph 2). Thus, the newly established Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR) was declared to be a national state. However, due to the deformations of Czechoslovak federation since 1969 the definition of the SSR could be disputed. The aim of our research is to discuss, on the grounds of case study of the relations between Slovak majority and Hungarian minority compactly living in south Slovakia, to which extent the SSR could be considered a national or more precisely nationalizing state? The term "nationalization" is understood as a process of implementation of the nationalist project. According to Rogers Brubaker[4] the politics and practices of ethno-cultural nationalization consists from several components. The "core nations" of Czechoslovakia were already defined by the previously adopted constitutional acts. Slovak ethno-cultural nation was defined as an "owner" of the newly established SSR. The research will analyze, if some actions were adopted in order to promote the hegemony, how they were justified and which kinds of the policies and practices were implemented in order to achieve the above mentioned aims. The relations with Hungarian minority have been chosen as in the Slovak case only the Hungarian minority fully meets the criteria of the politically relevant ethnic minority, representing a significant share of the population, living compactly along the southern borders of Slovakia, with high level of national consciousness and high degree of self-organization. The relations of SSR or the majority Slovak population with other minorities (Germans, Ukrainians, Rusyns, Roma, Croats etc.) have a different character and due to their lower share of the country´s population, different ways of national self-identification or lack of the compact settlements they cannot be fully comparable with the Slovak-Hungarian relations.

The manifestations of the political discontent of the members of Hungarian dissident groups were concurring on the processes, which had begun already in 1960s. The contemporary relatively liberal political atmosphere allowed the legalization of the so far officially not legalized activities, for example the József Atilla Youth Club or clubs of the ethnic Hungarian undergraduates in Prague and Brno within the framework of the single

3 POPÉLY, Arpád: Maďarská menšina počas pražskej jari a v prvých rokoch normalizácie, in: *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 3, 2010, 2, 105–116.

4 See: BRUBAKER, Rogers: Nationalizing states in the old New Europe - and the new, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 1996, 2, 411–437.

legal cultural association of Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia Csemadok (Czechoslovak Hungarian Workers´ Association, in Hungarian: Csehoszlovákiai Magyar Dolgozók Kulturális Szövetsége). The political liberalization during the so called Prague Spring affected Csemadok and the Hungarian community in South Slovakia as well. The longstanding chairman of Csemadok Július Lőrincz (since 1949) was suspended and replaced by the writer László Dobos. Rezsö Szabó became the following important representative of Csemadok at that time. During the short period of the liberalization of the Communist regime there were new organizations established within the framework of Csemadok, with the aims to support the cultural and intellectual life of the Hungarian community in South Slovakia, like for example Hungarian Sociological and Sociographic Society in Czechoslovakia or Ethnographic Society. These organizations were attempting to involve the intellectuals into the cultural life of Hungarian minority and they have a potential to become the core of the future Hungarian civic activities. The Union of Hungarian Youth in Slovakia has been established after the dissolution of the monopoly youth organization Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ČSM). The activists of the new Hungarian youth organizations were among others Lajos Tóth and Árpád Duka-Zólyomi[5]. However, the Soviet intervention in August 1968 and the upcoming regime of so called „normalization" was discredited not only by the restrictions from the Communist Party´s of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) leadership, but also by the decisions of the new leadership of Csemadok, loyal to the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of CPCz Gustáv Husák.

Institutional arrangement of Hungarian community in Slovakia (1969–1989)

Since the adoption of the Constitutional act on the position of national minorities in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) the jurisdiction in the field of minorities' legislation and policy received the governments of national republics, i.e. Czech Socialist Republic and Slovak Socialist Republic. The position of the Minister without Portfolio for the minorities' policy had been established at the Government of the Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR). The first minister became Hungarian writer László Dobos, however after his suspension on 30 June 1970 the new minister wasn't appointed anymore. A parliamentary Committee for the ethnic minorities in the Slovak National Council was established, however after the general elections in 1971 this Committee merged into the Committee for the national committees, state administration and ethnic minorities. Following the decision of the Presidium of the Slovak National Council nr. 185 from 23 September 1968 the Secretary of Presidium of the Slovak National Council for the ethnic minorities as an auxiliary body of Presidium and committee was established. Ethnic minorities' council (RVN) as the new consultative body of the Slovak government was established, at the Governmental Office of SSR was established the auxiliary, initiative and consultative body – Ethnic Minorities Secretary was created[6]. The establishment of the separate minorities' research institute

5 Interview with M. Duray. Bratislava, 16 February 1999; Interview with L. Nagy. Bratislava, 8 September 1999.

6 Archív Fórum Inštitútu pre výskum menšín (Archive of the Fórum Minority Research Institute, hereinafter referred only as AFIVM), fund Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *Pripomienky k návrhu na zrušenie odboru pre národnosti Úradu vlády SSR. Bratislava, 20. 4. 1973.*

within the framework of the Slovak Academy of Sciences was supposed with the aim to perform the comprehensive research of the minorities' issues[7], however such institute was never established.
However, since 1969 the regime of the so called "normalization" restricted the activities of the minorities organizations in Slovakia, including the activities of the largest one - Hungarian minority. The new leadership of Csemadok actively participated in the persecutions of the pro-democratic activists, in close interactions with the new leadership of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS - the regional branch of CPCz). In 1970 the new chairman of Csemadok became István Fábry for the short time, later J. Lőrincz assumed this position once again. The independent initiatives of the Hungarian minority activists ceased to exist. The position of Csemadok in the existing political system was marginalized, its status was "the civic special interests organization of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia". Csemadok ceased to be a member of National Front, the nominal coalition of the Communist Party, satellite political parties and civil organization, strictly controlled by the CPCz. The state and political control of Csemadok and other ethnic minorities organization was assured by their subordination to the Ministries of Culture of the national republics. Thus, Csemadok could not appoint the candidates to the single list of elections and its role in the public life was reduced to the cultural activities only. The organization had no space for political activities, although it attempted to become a political representation of Hungarian minority in the short period of the liberalization of the Communist regime in 1968 - 1969. The part of the infrastructure of the Hungarian minority's political institutions was media. The most relevant Hungarian media was the Új Szó daily newspaper, published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Besides the Hungarian speaking radio channel a weekly news program of the Czechoslovak TV in the Hungarian language was introduced.

Nationalizing policies of Slovak communist elites in 1970s and 1980s

The upcoming regime of the so called "normalization" and its consolidation in 1969 – 1970 led to the stagnation of the activities of RVN and Ethnic Minorities Secretary for the period of almost one year. According to the report on the work of Ethnic Minorities Secretary, delivered by the Deputy Prime Minister Štefan Sádovský addressed to the Government of SSR there were "serious shortcomings" in its activities, including the direct correspondence with the ministers and "certain elements of the autonomy"[8]. In 1970 the competences of the Ethnic Minorities Secretary were reduced to the issues of culture and education. The process of preparation of the minorities rights act was stopped, instead of it there was adopted the Order of the Ministry of Interior of SSR on the names of the municipalities and their parts, streets and other public places, according to it the bilingual signs of the streets, municipalities etc. were forbidden. Such measure was justified by the "national interests".[9] The bilingual names of the streets and municipalities were the

7 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *Zasadnutie Rady vlády pre národnosti (RVN) 22. 4. 1969.*

8 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *List B. Tolnaja predsedovi vlády SSR Petrovi Colotkovi. Bratislava, 18. 1. 1971.*

9 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, Gyönyőr, József: *Stav riešenia národnostnej otázky v SSR (aktuálne*

conflict issue during the entire period of 1970s and 1980s. However, the minorities issues, or, more precisely, the inter-ethnic relations in Czechoslovakia, ceased to be a priority of the political elites of the so called "normalization regime". Just in 1970 took place the restriction of the jurisdiction of the national republics in favor of the jurisdiction of federal institutions. Slovak political elites accepted these steps without any significant criticism.[10] The homogenization policy was introduced mostly by the leadership of CPC as the part of the "restoration of the order" policy.[11] The respective order of the Ministry of Interior of SSR might be seen as a demonstration of the political inertia, ideological and political rigidness of the „normalization regime" resisting any attempts to promote the changes in the field of politics, economy and, in fact, in all spheres of public life. The "normalization regime" refused any changes of the existing state of affairs, and such approach affected not only the issues of inter-ethnic relations.

However, the later activities of the political institutions of Slovak Socialist Republic could be in full extent considered to be the part of nationalizing practices. Since the beginning of 1970s the attempts to create the new schools or kindergartens with the Hungarian language of instructions were hampered, as well as the attempts to install the bilingual signs with the names of the streets or municipalities in ethnically mixed territories, including regions with the presence of Ukrainian minority. There was widespread the opinion among the political elites according to it bilingualism is only a provisional phenomenon, until the members of ethnic minority will not learn Slovak. However some of the members of RVN, including the lawyer Juraj Zavara, insisted that "bilingualism in the ethnically mixed state is a persistent principle." The official documents were published almost exclusively in Slovak language, the state institutions answered the submissions written in Hungarian language generally in Slovak. The discussions in national committees in the ethnically mixed territories were held in the Hungarian language only at the local level, however on the level of district only in district Dunajská Streda.[12] In the first months of 1978 took place the first attempt to reduce the use of the Hungarian as the language of instructions by the introduction of the so called bilingual education in the primary and secondary schools for the children of Hungarian ethnicity. The "bilingual education" meant the replacement of the Hungarian language in certain subjects (mainly the natural sciences) by the Slovak one. However, due to the protests of Hungarian intellectuals and members of Hungarian minority in south Slovakia such arrangement was never put in practice.

However, the following nationalizing attempts took place in 1984 during the preparation of the amendment to the education law. According to the proposal of the Ministry of Education of SSR the regional national committees (in Slovak "krajský národný výbor") should receive the right to promote the change of the language of instructions in some subjects to Slovak, or Czech language. In fact, point is that it was a similar measure to

problémy), internal document, undated.

10 RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945 – 1992.* Bratislava – Praha 1998, 284 –285.

11 ŠIMEČKA, Milan: *Obnovení pořádku. Příspěvek k typologii reálného socialismu.* Köln 1984.

12 MARUŠIAK, Juraj: Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike v rokoch normalizácie, in: *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, KMEŤ, Norbert – MARUŠIAK, Juraj (eds.), Bratislava – Prešov 2003, 228, 233–235.

project of so called "bilingual education" in 1978.[13] The argument was the negative trends in the education of the ethnic Hungarian youth in Slovakia at the beginning of 1980s. Their share in the entire number of the students of secondary schools was lower (8.1 % in the school year of 1982/83) than the share of Hungarian pupils in the entire number of pupils of the primary schools.[14] However, the protests of the activists of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia prevented the adoption of respective amendment, although it was already submitted to the session of Slovak National Council.[15]

The attempts on the direct reduction of the positions of Hungarian minority in Slovakia failed, however the practices of marginalization of the role of ethnic minorities in the political system of Slovakia continued. According to the decision of the Government of SSR from 17 October 1986, the organizations representing the ethnic minorities (Csemadok and Cultural Union of the Ukrainian Workers) became the members of National Front. However, they were not allowed to participate in the elections and to appoint their representatives into the Presidium of the National Front.[16] In spring and summer 1987 the state institution tried to replace the language of instructions in two secondary schools with Hungarian language of instructions – in Šafárikovo (present-day Tornaľa) and in Rimavská Sobota.[17] However, the nationalization practices increased in the last years of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The Government of SSR adopted on 18 May 1988 the resolution nr. 132 in order to dissolve its consultative body RVN, however in Czech Republic the similar institution continued to work. Respective resolution presumed the dissolution of the Ethnic Minorities Secretary as well. After the protests of Hungarian opposition activists in Slovakia caused the abolition of such decision, the Ethnic Minorities Secretary had been restored under the name of Secretary of RVN.[18]

Hungarian minority activists – between the civic protest, ethnic mobilization and political dissent

The Helsinki Final Act adopted by the Conference of the Security and Cooperation in Europe on 1 August 1975, paid attention, although only in the general level, to the rights of the persons belonging to the ethnic minorities (Art. VII). It contains the guarantees of the equal protection of the law and the participating countries obliged to provide all opportunities for the genuine implementation of the fundamental rights and freedoms.[19]

13 AFIVM, *List Skupiny pre ochranu maďarských škôl v ČSSR Národnostnému sekretariátu Úradu vlády SSR. Bratislava, 21. 12. 1984.*

14 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *Informácia o súčasnej situácii a perspektívnych zámeroch výchovy učiteľov pre základné a stredné školy s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským. Zasadnutie RVN 13. 1. 1983.*

15 Stanovy Csemadoku nejsou schváleny, in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 9, 22–24.

16 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *Zasadnutie RVN 3. 2. 1987.*

17 Problémy maďarské menšiny na Slovensku. In: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 10, 11. See also: AFIVM, *List J. Čarnogurského M. Durayovi, 10. 6. 1987*; Zprávy Výboru na ochranu práv maďarské menšiny v Československu, in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 12, 14-20; AFIVM, *List Výboru pre ochranu práv maďarskej menšiny v Československu ministrovi školstva SSR. Bratislava, 13. 8. 1987.*

18 AFIVM, *List Výboru na ochranu maďarskej menšiny v Československu FZ ČSSR a federálnej vláde ČSSR o zrušení Rady pre národnosti pri vláde SSR. Bratislava, 20. 6. 1988.*

19 Dokument č. 15. Záverečný akt KBSE. in: *Medzinárodná ochrana národností. Európsky štandard*

As the Soviet bloc countries were among participant states and in such a way even the non-democratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe undertook responsibility to respect the human and minorities´ rights, the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act became an impulse for the civic activities in the region. The second half of 1970s was characteristic for the increasing activities of the independent initiatives in Poland and also in Czechoslovakia. The most relevant Czechoslovak independent initiative became Charter 77 which just referred to the Helsinki Final Act.[20]

The aim of the Slovak government to introduce the so called "bilingual education" announced in Spring 1978, raised the protests of individuals and groups and subsequently it became a direct impulse for the founding of the Committee for the Protection of the Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia. Its main representative was Miklós Duray, who signed all documents issued by the Committee. Other founding members were László Nagy and Péter Püspöki-Nagy. The committee refused the project and characterized it as the manifestation of the ethnic discrimination and assimilation trends. However similar attempts continued later, at the end of 1978 and in 1983.[21] The protests of Hungarian minority activists however contributed to the postponing of such measures. In fact, the Committee for the Protection of the Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia became the first independent initiative in Slovakia since the establishment of the "normalization regime". Since May 1979 M. Duray launched contacts with Charter 77 and in 1983 he became its signatory. He kept close contacts with Ivan Havel brother of one of the first speakers of Charter 77 Václav Havel and later also with Václav Benda. Committee elaborated the further documents focused on the minority policies in Czechoslovakia and on the situation in the field of human rights. Documents were addressed to the Czechoslovak state institutions; however the contacts with Charter 77 allowed their further dissemination in Czechoslovakia and abroad. The Committee launched the cooperation with the activists in the region; however its members received certain information from the members of Hungarian minority working in the central organs of state administration and in the state institutions of the regional or local levels. The employees of the Ethnic Minorities Secretary at the Government Office of SSR supplied the Committee with information as well.

In May 1979 at the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitutional Act on the Czechoslovak Federation and Constitutional Act on the position of national minorities the Committee published the extensive document focused on the problems in the field of education, culture, economy and politics, which was considered to be the evidences of "anti-constitutional discrimination". The main topic of criticism was the insufficient network of the schools with the Hungarian language of instructions on the all levels which caused the deepening of the divergences between Hungarian minority and Slovak majority in the education level. Document criticized the reduction of the support of the minorities´ culture

v dokumentoch, ŠEBESTA, Štefan (ed.), Bratislava 1997, 98.

20 *Dokument č. 1. 1977, 1. leden, Praha – Základní (konstitutivní) Prohlášení Charty 77 o příčinách vzniku, smyslu a cílech Charty a metodách jejího působení*, in: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977-1989, vol. I*, CISAŘOVSKÁ, Blanka – PREČAN, Vilém (eds.), Praha 2007, 1.

21 AFIVM, f. Inheritance of József Gyönyör, *Návrh opatrení na zvýšene počtu študentov maďarskej národnosti na stredných odborných a vysokých školách, osobitne na vysokých školách technického smeru. Zasadnutie RVN 16. 1. 1979.*

to the belletristic and volunteer activities, but also the economic underdevelopment of south Slovakia. Document required the increasing of the opportunities for the university studies in Hungarian languages for the members of the Hungarian minority both in Slovakia and in Hungary and restoration of the membership of Csemadok in the National Front.[22]
The organization of the protests against the Slovakization of the schools with the Hungarian language of instructions and the publication of the book *Kutyaszoritó* ("In a Stew") were the reasons of the seizure of M. Duray. In spite of the beginning of the trial Duray was not sentenced and in February 1983 he was released from the prison for probation. However, the activities of the Committee for the Protection Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia continued under the coverage of the Group for the Protection of the Hungarian Schools in Slovakia, whose members were the younger activists of the Committee, for example Károly Tóth, László Ollős, Tibor Kovács and Eleonóra Sándor (wife of K. Tóth).[23] M. Duray was imprisoned for the second time on 10 May 1984. The accusations changed several times; finally on October 1984 he was accused for the "subversion of the republic" with a highest punishment of 10 years. Finally he was released from the prison in May 1985, probably one of the reasons was the publicity achieved by his prosecution abroad, including Hungary, which was an ally of Czechoslovakia within the Soviet bloc. There was established the Committee for Defense of Miklós Duray in Hungary, which ceased to exist after his discharging in May 1985. The imprisonment and accusations raised against M. Duray became an impulse for the protests addressed to the Czechoslovak government by the most relevant activists of Slovak dissident movements.[24] After the involvement of the Slovak dissidents the activities of M. Duray and the Committee for the Protection of Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia stepped over the framework the ethnic mobilization, they received the character of the civic protest against the violation of the human rights.
The further step towards the politicization of the Hungarian activities in Slovakia at the end of 1980s came after the departure of M. Duray to the scholarship into the USA, at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Than the new leader of the Committee for the Protection of Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia became a historian Alexander Varga; however, he was recorded as a secret collaborator (agent) of the communist State Security.[25] On the other hand, at the end of 1980s the role of the younger liberal activists, represented mainly by Károlyi Tóth, within the independent initiatives of Hungarians in Slovakia, had increased. K. Tóth that time worked with the Madách Publishing House in Bratislava focused on the publication of literature in Hungarian language. People working in this publishing house organized the petition against the plans of Romanian communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu to destroy the countryside by the forced removal

22 List Výboru pre ochranu práv maďarskej národnosti v ČSSR, in: *Svědectví*, XVI, 1980, 61, 133–138.

23 AFIVM, *List Skupiny pre ochranu maďarských škôl v ČSSR Národnostnému sekretariátu Úradu vlády SSR. Bratislava, 21. 12. 1984.*

24 Solidarita s uvězněným M. Durayem (dopisy Jána Čarnogurského, Jozefa Jablonického a Milana Šimečky předsedovi vlády SSR Petru Colotkovi a dopis Miroslava Kusého prvnímu tajemníkovi ÚV KSS Jozefu Lenártovi), in: *Infoch*, 7, 1984, 7-8, 23–24. See also: Maďarský výbor na obranu Miklósa Duraya se rozpustil, in: *Infoch*, 8, 1985, 10, 16–17.

25 RAGAČ, Radoslav: Intelektuál za rázcestím alebo ako som sledoval M. Duraya, in: *Euro Domino*, 1, 2008, 17. 36–38.

of the inhabitants to the prepared new settlements. This plan was aimed against the ethnic minorities in Romania, living mostly in the villages, as well. In June 1988 there was established PEN club of Hungarian writers in Slovakia and its first declaration required the releasing of the imprisoned Czech writers.

The most important milestone in the process of the overcoming of the strictly defined particular minority agenda was the *Memorandum 1988* issued on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovak Republic in October 1988. The document was signed by 266 people, mostly Hungarian intellectuals living in Slovakia, including those who were not actively involved in the opposition activities. One of the main initiators of respective document was K. Tóth. The document appealed to the democratic traditions of the first Czechoslovak Republic and stressed the requirement to change the political system instead of its reforms. Document required the involvement of Czechoslovakia to the process of European integration as well. However the *Memorandum 1988* required the introduction of the collective minorities´ rights and criticized not only the political atmosphere in Czechoslovakia, but the minorities´ policy of Czechoslovak and Slovaks governments as well.[26] Subsequently, in February 1989 the following *Memorandum 33* (named after the number of signatories) was published. This document, signed mostly by the Hungarian intellectuals and politicians who were actively involved in the reform process during the so called "Prague Spring" in 1968 (L. Dobos, Rezső Szabó) didn't dispute the power monopoly of the Communist Party.[27] The circle of activists around K. Tóth became more and more involved in the broad pro-democratic movement emerging in Slovakia since the summer 1989. He together with L. Ollős and Eleonóra Sádor participated in the collection of the signatures under the petition *Few Sentences* in Summer 1989 and later, in Autumn 1989 all three activists published the protest against the persecution of the members of so called "Bratislava Five" (the group of dissident activists, containing Ján Čarnogurský, Miroslav Kusý, Hana Ponická, Vladimír Maňák and Anton Selecký).[28] The process of politicization of Hungarian independent activism was completed by the establishment of the Hungarian Independent Initiative on 18 November 1989 in Šaľa as the first independent political organization in Slovakia since the suppression of "Prague Spring" in 1968.[29]

The failure of the attempts to massive restrictions of the Hungarian minority rights was caused by the high level of the solidarity within the Hungarian minority. Therefore against the project of the Slovakization of the schools with the Hungarian language of instructions protested not only the Hungarian dissidents, but also the Central Committee of Csemadok.[30] Csemadok was subjected to the strengthened state and political control, as many times the platform of this organization was used for the presentation of the critical comments to the policy of CPCz towards ethnic minorities.

---

26 Dokument č. 34. Memorandum 1988. Memorandum Maďarov v Československu 1988. 20. 10. 1988, in: *November 1989 a Slovensko. Chronológia a dokumenty (1985 – 1990)*, ŽATKULIAK, Jozef – HLAVOVÁ, Viera – SEDLIAKOVÁ, Alžbeta – ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal (eds.), Bratislava 1999, 254–256.

27 AFIVM, *Memorandum 33*.

28 Personal archive of Vladimír Maňák jr.

29 Interview with L. Öllős and K. Tóth. Bratislava 12 May 1999.

30 Stanovy Csemadoku nejsou schváleny, in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 9, 22–24.

Hungarian dissent and (Czecho)Slovak response

The difficult historical heritage of the Slovak-Hungarian relationship, which is including Magyarization before 1918, Vienna arbitrage in 1938 and subsequently Beneš decrees and persecution of ethnic Hungarians in south Slovakia after the World War II, became evident in the character of the dialogue between the Slovak and Hungarian independent initiatives in Slovakia. As it was mentioned before, M. Duray preferred the contacts with I. Havel and later with V. Benda, i.e. with Czech dissidents, rather than the contacts with Slovak dissidents. The first reaction of Slovak exile politicians, however, sharply criticized the document of the Committee for Protection of Hungarians Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovak federation.[31] According to the declaration, signed by Emanuel T. Böhm, Rudolf Fraštacký, Imrich Kružliak, Martin Kvetko and Jozef Staško (i.e. both representatives of Czechoslovak and national option of Slovaks) in May 1989 in New York, the complaint of the situation of Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia may result in the weakening of the common defense in the situation when the Central and East Europe nations have to deal with common enemy and live under the common Soviet oppression. Duray and the Committee were criticized that they didn't criticize the shortages of human rights and civic freedoms, i.e. the problems which affect both Slovaks and Hungarians. Therefore, according to them, many problems in the document don't have an ethnic character. They gave an attention to the situation of Slovak minority in Hungary as well. However, they stressed that the problems of Slovak-Hungarian relations didn't emerge only since the federalization of Czechoslovakia: "There is an old Hungarian-Slovak hypothec."[32] Later, after the publication of the M. Duray´s book *Kutyaszoritó*, the dialogue between the main organization representing Slovak diasporas and political exile in the West ("World Congress of Slovaks") and European Congress of Free Hungarians was abandoned.[33]

The first steps towards the dialogue between Slovak and Hungarian dissidents before 1989 had been made after the second imprisonment of M. Duray in May 1984. The prominent Slovak dissident activists – Ján Čarnogurský, Miroslav Kusý, Milan Šimečka and Jozef Jablonický – sent the individual letters to the Prime Minister of Slovakia Peter Colotka and to the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Slovakia Jozef Lenárt. They protested against the persecution of Duray for his criticism, however they didn't agree with his views on the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Their letters were focused on the defense of the principle of the freedom of speech. The sharpest criticism towards Duray´s views was present in the letter written by J. Jablonický, who stressed that "there was Magyarization and there is the Slovak minority in Hungary as well."[34] Martin Kvetko, who was former

31 K sťažnosti Výboru pre ochranu práv maďarskej národnosti v ČSSR, in: *Svědectví*, XVI, 1980, 61, 139–142.

32 Ibidem

33 DURAY, Miklós: *Kutyaszoritó 1.*, New York, 1983; DURAY, Miklós: *Kutyaszoritó 2.*, New York, 1989; Sdělení VONS č. 317. M. Duray ve vazbě, in: *Infoch*, 6, 1983, 1, 8

34 Solidarita s uvězněným M. Durayem (dopisy Jána Čarnogurského, Jozefa Jablonického a Milana Šimečky předsedovi vlády SSR Petru Colotkovi a dopis Miroslava Kusého prvnímu tajemníkovi ÚV KSS Jozefu Lenártovi), in: *Infoch*, 7, 1984, 7-8, 23–24. See also: Maďarský výbor na obranu Miklósa Duraya se rozpustil, in: *Infoch*, 8, 1985, 10, 16-17.

representative of the Democratic Party (the main non-communist party in Slovakia in 1945-1948) and later in exile the Secretary Generally of the Permanent Conference of the Slovak Democratic Exulants, in the letter addressed in December 1985 to J. Čarnogurský, M. Šimečka, M. Kusý and J. Jablonický admitted that M. Duray shouldn't be persecuted for his activities, however he accused M. Duray of irredentism.[35]

Although M. Duray was a signatory of Charter 77, this most influential independent initiative didn't intervene in the Slovak-Hungarian affairs directly. Therefore its documents were concerned with the human rights affairs only. After the attacks of unknown perpetrators against the properties of Hungarian minority institutions in Bratislava (the headquarter of Csemadok, premises of the folklore assembly "Ifjú Szivek", editor´s office of "Új Szó" daily) in March 1987 the Charter 77 published the declaration adverted to the minorities´ rights definitions in the international documents.[36] Charter 77 condemned the violent attacks against the Hungarian institutions as well. M. Kusý and M. Šimečka gave support to the declaration, however J. Čarnogurský refused it and he condemned the statements of M. Duray about the spreading of neo-nazi moods in Slovakia in his letter to the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal.[37] He refused the statements according to which the reasons of attacks were the Anti-Hungarian moods. He stressed that such statements could raise the furors.[38]

However, Charter 77, Miroslav Kusý, Milan Šimečka as well as Ján Čarnogurský declared support to the document, addressed by the Committee for the Protection of Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia in the connection with the Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1988. The document contained the catalogue of the minorities´ rights. However, the Secretary General of Permanent Conference of the Slovak Democratic Exulants Martin Kvetko stressed the requirement of reciprocity as the principle of the solution of the minorities´ rights referring to the situation of the Slovak minority in Hungary.[39] The direct dialogue between Slovak dissidents and the representatives of Hungarian independent initiatives took place only at the beginning of October 1989 in Šaľa, after the release of M. Kusý from prison. The topic of discussion between M. Kusý, Ján Bycko (substitute of imprisoned J. Čarnogurský), M. Šimečka, Milan Šimečka jr., Ján Langoš, László Nagy, Kálmán Balla and E. Sándor. They discussed the perspectives of cooperation of the independent initiatives in Slovakia and on the alternatives of the future development of Slovakia.

The issues of the past and the different views on the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia were serious obstacles of the political cooperation between the independent initiatives in Slovakia representing the different ethnics living in the country. Therefore the attempts to prepare a common position regarding the minorities´ issues between Slovak

35 HÜBL, Milan: *Češi, Slováci a jejich sousedé*, Praha 1990, 126.

36 Protimaďarské incidenty v Bratislavě, in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 5, 6.

37 Korespondencemezi Chartou 77 a Výborem na ochranu práv maďarské menšiny v Československu,in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 6, 8–9.

38 Problémy maďarské menšiny na Slovensku, in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 10, 21. Compare with: AFIVM, *List J. Čarnogurského M. Durayovi, 10. 6. 1987*; Korespondencemezi Chartou 77 a Výborem na ochranu práv maďarské menšiny v Československu,in: *Infoch*, 10, 1987, 6, 8–9.

39 Dopis Martina Kvetka Chartě 77, in: *Infoch*, 11, 1988, 5, 9–10.

and Hungarian intellectuals in 1985-1987 failed.[40] Ethnicity remained a relevant division line within the Slovak society. The direct dialogue between ethnic Slovak and Hungarian dissidents took place only in a very late time, in the last months of the Communist regime.

Slovak-Hungarian relations as the part of the public discussion

The revival of Hungarian nationalism at the end of the 1980s and its performance in the public discourse took place simultaneously with the revival of Slovak nationalism. The new wave of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe was connected with the process of gradual decomposition of the Soviet block and the erosion of the Communist ideology. Inter-ethnic relations were rather marginal in the agenda of Slovak dissidents. The situation of Hungarian minority and the relations with the independent activists from the Hungarian environment in Slovakia were discussed mainly as an issue of freedom of speech. However, even the position of Slovakia within the Czechoslovak federation was discussed among the Slovak dissidents only seldom. Some aspects of the inter-ethnic relations in Slovakia were analyzed by M. Kusý[41], and authors like J. Jablonický or J. Čarnogurský discussed these issues mainly from historical perspectives. In the Slovak "samizdat", in the journals like "Historický zápisník" (Historical Diary) or "Hlas Slovenska" (The Voice of Slovakia) the ethnic relations were analyzed from the historical perspectives as well, not in the context of the present-day agenda. Certain exception was the "samizdat" journal "Myšlienka a čin" (The Idea and Act) published by the group of followers of Alexander Dubček, however this journal circulated only in the narrow circle of the former reform communists. The inter-ethnic relations were raised into the public debate mostly by the exile organizations, like the World Congress of Slovaks,[42] which had an influence on a certain part of Catholic dissent.

At the end of the 1980s the discussion on the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia exceeded the frameworks of the domestic policy and it became a part of the agenda of bilateral relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The political liberalization in the former Soviet bloc countries was accompanied by the rise of nationalism, in Hungary with the political instrumentalization of the agenda of Hungarians living abroad. The political liberalization in the former Soviet bloc countries which resulted in the collapse of Communism was perceived not only as the "restoration of the political freedom", but also as the restoration of the national and state sovereignty. Whereas in Poland the compatriots´ policy, especially the agenda of Polish minority in Lithuania, was in 1980s and 1990s de-prioritized in favor of the primary interest in the democratization of the European part of the former USSR, in Hungary at the end of 1980s and in the first half of 1990s prevailed the confrontational course which affected the atmosphere of the bilateral Czechoslovak-Hungarian (since 1993 Slovak-Hungarian) relations in general.

For the leadership of the CPCz the main threat was not only the revival of Hungarian

40 See further details in: SÁNDOR, Eleonóra: Zmena režimu maďarskými očami, in: *Maďari na Slovensku (1989-2004). Súhrnná správa od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, FAZEKAS, József – HUNĆÍK, Péter (eds.), Šamorín 2008, 32–33.

41 KUSÝ, Miroslav: *Na vlnách Slobodnej Európy*, Bratislava 1990.

42 BRAXÁTOR, František: *Slovenský exil 68*, Bratislava 1992.

nationalism, but also the process of democratization itself, as it already in the first months of 1989 got beyond the horizons of the moderate liberalization and economic reforms in Czechoslovakia and in the USSR. The Czechoslovak official propaganda tried to capitalize the document of Hungarian Television "Panoráma" broadcasted on 3 April 1989 dealing with the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The authors of the document used manipulative methods as they used the shots from Romanian region of Transylvania instead of Slovakia.[43] However the official propaganda in Czechoslovakia rejected any discussions about the minorities´ issues. The organized campaign, involving the resolutions of the „workers´ collectives" from south Slovakia, was organized instead of the open dialogue. A similar approach was used not only in this issue, but also against the activities of democratic opposition in Czechoslovakia.

The official propaganda attempted to connect the "national" agenda with the "counter-revolutionary" one. The counter-revolutionary agenda became a dominant in the communist propaganda of Czechoslovakia regarding Hungary. [44] The interview of Alajos Chrudinák with the symbol of "Prague Spring" Alexander Dubček in the following part of "Panoráma" was considered by the Communist power a bigger threat than the minority agenda.[45]

In May 1989 the new conflict issue between Slovakia and Hungary became the project of the water power plant Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros. The Hungarian government under the pressure of the public opinion decided to stop the construction of the dam on Danube River in Nagymaros. Regarding the protests in Hungary against the prepared dam, Pravda daily quoted the declaration of the local self-administration in the Hungarian village Nagymaros, according to it "the protest demonstration against the dam was only the pretext, the event became a political demonstration aimed against the contemporary politics and social system."[46] The Communist power and its propaganda attempted to mobilize the Hungarian minority in Slovakia as the dogmatic political force against the reform process in Hungary. Probably the leadership of the CPCz expected the repetition of the situation during the Hungarian revolution in October 1956, when Hungarian minority and its political representation remained either passive, or declared the support to the pro-Soviet course of CPCz.[47] However, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPCz Jan Fojtík after the official funeral of Imre Nagy (the Hungarian Prime Minister in October 1956, sentenced to death and executed in 1958) in June 1989 warned that "as a rule the counter-revolution attires itself into the nationalist robe."[48]

43 Zamlčaný protipól. Ohlas na reláciu MTV Panoráma, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 27, 8–9.

44 Lenka, J.: Fackovanie žurnalistickej etiky. Nad reláciami Panoráma Maďarskej televízie, in: *Pravda*, 1989, year 70, 26 April, 2.

45 See the series of the articles: Klamstvo núkajú za pravdu. Maďarská televízia nemá právo zasahovať do našich vecí, in: *Pravda*, 1989, year 70, 21 April; Útok na zásady internacionalizmu. Maďarská televízia nemá právo zasahovať do našich vecí, in: *Pravda*, 1989, year 70, 22 April; Nedopustíme ožívanie starých svárov. Odmietavé ohlasy na vystúpenie A. Dubčeka v Maďarskej televízii, in: *Pravda*, 1989, year 70, 24 April, 2.

46 Vilček, G.: Zámienka na protivládne akcie. Politické súvislosti vodného diela na Dunaji, in: *Pravda*, 1989, year 70, 18 April.

47 PEŠEK, Jan: Maďarské udalosti roku 1956 a Slovensko, in: *Historický časopis*, 41, 1993, 4, 430–442; MARUŠIAK, Juraj: Maďarská revolúcia 1956 a Slovensko, in: *„Spoznal som svetlo a už viac nechcem tmu." Pocta Jozefovi Jablonickému*, KMEŤ, Norbert (ed.), Bratislava 2005, 183–227.

48 KUSÝ, 116 –118.

The celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia were considered by the CPCz the opportunity to gain national legitimization. However, at the same time the part of the Slovak national oriented intellectuals presented their discontent with the position of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak federation. [49] Therefore the Secretary General of the Central Committee of CPCz Miloš Jakeš the possible changes of the state symbolic, whereas it was obvious that the matter was mainly the presence of Slovakia in the symbolic of Czechoslovakia.[50]

The anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia became an impulse for the formation of the national wing of the Slovak intellectuals. The newly established journal of the Union of Slovak writers "Literárny týždenník" (Literary Weekly) published the publications criticizing regime practices as well. The relevant role in this stream was played by the relatively young communist members of the Communist Party, who (except the former employee of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia Ján Bobák) didn't assume any relevant positions within the Communist establishment.

The discussion on the reform of Czechoslovak federation including the state symbolic was stopped in a short time.[51] However, the complicated historical heritage of Slovak-Hungarian relations, boosted by the negative stereotypes present in the part of Slovak and Hungarian historiography, as well as the radicalization of the nationalist anti-communist opposition in Hungary caused that the revitalizing Slovak nationalism raised the question of the Slovak-Hungarian relations on the first place. Hungarian writer Lajos Grendel warned against the confrontation of both Slovak and Hungarian nationalisms. According to him such confrontation was a result of the lack of information on the both sides, which "always preserves the suspicion and distrust".[52]

The erasing national wing of the Slovak intellectual and political debate avoided the open confrontation with the regime before November 1989. Therefore in 1989 the discussions about the reform of Czechoslovak federation were overshadowed by the issues of Slovak-Hungarian relations, i.e. regarding the issue of the construction of the water power plant Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros. The environmental activists in Bratislava disputed the project.[53] Similar position adopted 25 prominent signatories of Charter 77 who in September 1988 in a letter addressed to the Federal Assembly of ČSSR criticized the project from the environmental protection perspectives and required the revision of the project. Whereas "Literárny týždenník", including writer Ladislav Ťažký, who was one of the victims of the regime of "normalization" ardently defended the project, which became one of the symbols of the national pride of Slovaks,[54] in the case of construction of the dam in Nová Bystrica in

49 Slováci vo federácii. Beseda Literárneho týždenníka k 20. výročiu vzniku federácie, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 3, 12–14 (1st part); 4, 12–13 (2nd part).

50 ŽATKULIAK, Jozef: Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie v druhej polovici 80. rokov XX. storočia, in: *Historický časopis*, 56, 2008, 1, 161–190.

51 RYCHLÍK, 302.

52 GRENDEL, Lajos: Triezva múdrosť. Hovoríme s prozaikom Lajosom Grendelom, in: *Literárny* týždenník, 2, 1989, 9, 1 and 11.

53 See samizdat journal "Ochranca prírody", years 1988, 1989.

54 MORAVČÍK, Š.: Dunasaurus alebo rozprávanie o vodnom diele na Dunaji, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 1, 1988, 4, 12–13; ŤAŽKÝ, Ladislav: *Pred potopou*, Bratislava 1988.

the north-west Slovakia the same "Literárny týždenník" published an article criticizing the negative consequences of the project on the population of the region.[55]
Whereas the official communist propaganda, mainly in the daily newspaper of the CPS „Pravda" was focused on the increasing influence of the anti-communist opposition in Hungary, the "Literárny týždenník" weekly discussed mostly the minorities´ agenda. After the publication of documents criticizing the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia in Hungarian TV several articles were published about the situation of the Slovak minority in Hungary.[56] Some of the articles contained the confrontational formulations[57], some of them were the attempts to find the platform for Slovak-Hungarian dialogue.[58] However, "Literárny týždenník" as the single media in Slovakia allowed publishing the article written by the independent activists of Hungarian minority in Slovakia K. Tóth and E. Sándor.[59] The Hungarian policy towards the ethnic minorities within the country was criticized also by some former representatives of Hungarian minority in Slovakia, involved in the reform process in 1968 (L. Dobos, R. Szabó).[60] In spite of some exceptional critical remarks regarding the Czechoslovak policy towards the ethnic minorities (not only Hungarian, but also German and Croatian) [61], the atmosphere of confrontation prevailed in the Slovak-Hungarian discussion. J. Bobák, who worked since 1988 with "Matica slovenská" (the cultural institution focused i.e. on the cooperation with the Slovak diasporas before 1989), gave the lead in this confrontation[62] and he required the application of the principle of reciprocity in the minorities´ policies. If the representatives of Slovak minority in Hungary raised such requirement in order to improve the minority rights of the local Slovak community, J. Bobák required the enacting of such principle "into our political practice".[63]

Conclusions

The analysis of the political practices of the Communist elites of the Slovak Socialist Republic towards the ethnic minorities, in particular towards the Hungarian minority compactly living in south Slovakia, shows, that the SSR established on the grounds of the federalization of Czechoslovakia, contained the elements of so called "nationalizing state". On the national level, but also in the educational and cultural policy several steps were made in order to stress the dominant position of the Slovaks in the state and in order to promote the

55 MIKOLAJ, D.: Voda z Riečnice, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 1, 1988, 7, 12–13.

56 BOBÁK, Ján: Rozoznelo sa slovo, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 1, 1988, 13; Zamlčaný protipól. Ohlas na reláciu MTV Panoráma, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 27, 8–9.

57 HÔMY, S.: Len dereš?, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 32, 16.

58 PLEVKA, M.: O koexistencii, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 31, 16

59 TÓTH, K. – SÁNDOR, E.: List zo Šale, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 35, 12–13.

60 DOBOS, László: Otvorený list Imre Pozsgaymu, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 36, 2; SZABÓ, R.: Vlasť je len tam, kde je aj právo, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 36, 12–13; compare with: POZSGAY, Imre: Odpoveď Imre Pozsgayho na otvorený list László Dobosa, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 47, 13.

61 ŤAŽKÝ, P.: Slováci, Maďari, Nemci, Chorváti, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 37, 16.

62 SOBOTKOVÁ, M.: List z Bratislavy do Šale, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 43, 13; BOBÁK, Ján: Pól bez protipólu, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 41, 12–13.

63 BOBÁK, Ján: K odpovedi I. Pozsgaya na otvorený list L. Dobosa, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 48, 13.

policy of ethno-cultural homogenization of Slovakia. The role of the Hungarian minority´s institution was constrained and the Slovak communist elites attempted to weaken the influence of Hungarian minority in the politics of Slovakia. The most important measures towards the "nationalization" of Slovakia were taken immediately at the beginning of the regime of "Normalization", when some planned reforms of the minorities´ policy were abandoned, later in the period of the highest stability of the "Normalization" regime, after the suppression and successful isolation of Charter 77 and other independent initiatives (1978-1980) and, subsequently, the new attempts to restrict the Hungarian minority infrastructure took place at the decline of the regime at the end of the 1980s, when Slovak communists were seeking for the new sources of legitimacy instead of the Communist ideology which has withering away at that time.

However, Slovak Socialist Republic cannot be considered uniquely a nationalizing state, as the federalization of the Czechoslovak state was restricted at the beginning of the regime of so called "Normalization", when the discussions about the reform of Czechoslovak federalism were stopped already at the beginning of the 1970s. The requirements of the revaluation of the position of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak state and the attempts to re-introduce the Slovak national symbolic were refused even in the last years of Communist regime (1988 – 1989).

The relevance of the Hungarian minority, representing about ten percent of Slovakia´s population and relatively high level of its self-organization, didn't allow the implementation of the assimilation policies in full force. The relatively tolerant minority policy in the Communist Czechoslovakia, compared with the practices in some other Soviet bloc countries like Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria, was not a result of aims of the CPCz and CPS leadership, but its motivation was to prevent the open conflict with Hungarian minority which could become a threat for the political stability as well as for the international position of Czechoslovakia. However, the level of self-organization of the Hungarian community in Slovakia, the activities of both official and unofficial representation of the Hungarian minority played a certain role in the hampering of the aims of Czechoslovak/ Slovak communist establishment as well. However, the education and language policy of the Communist Czechoslovakia was the consequence of the legislation and practices of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938).[64]

As our research shows, the level of the protection of Hungarian minority rights was the result of the pragmatic calculation of Czechoslovak or Slovak political elites. However, the regime of so called "Normalization" still tried to found the way, how to reduce the existing level of the protection of minorities. The main aim of the regime of "Normalization" was to achieve the "state assimilation" of minorities. The issues of minority rights was reduced to the education and using of minority languages, on the other hand the Communist regime tried to minimize the political, cultural, economic and interpersonal contacts with the countries, where the respective ethnic group has a dominant position. Minorities were understood as a "new kind of national community", which is no more the organic part of the primary nation. According to the ruling ideology they should be connected with their ancestoral nation only by their name, language, origin and cultural values. However,

64 HUNČÍK, Péter: Maďarská menšina ve Slovenské republice, in: GABAL, Ivan a kol.: *Etnické menšiny ve střední Evropě: konflikt nebo integrace*, Praha 1999, 206–207.

from the social-economic and ideological perspective they were treated as the indivisible part of Czechoslovak society with some specific national characteristic and without the requirement to amalgamate with the "national majority".[65] On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the persecutions and oppressive measures against the Hungarian community in Slovakia were the part of the oppressive policies of the regime of so called "Normalization". The targets of persecutions were not only the ethnic minorities, but all individuals or groups who resisted the regime, or who were perceived by the regime as a potential threat. Therefore even regarding the independent initiatives of Hungarian minority in Slovakia cannot be analyzed only within the framework of national or ethno-national mobilization. They were the part of the democratization movement in the whole Czechoslovakia.

In particular, at the end of the 1980s the Hungarian minority issue in Slovakia became a part of the confrontation of the two reviving nationalisms – Slovak and Hungarian. Both of them in the conditions of the political liberalization in Hungary, but also to a lower extent in Czechoslovakia, started to elaborate the new concept of national identity. The beginning of such process took place when both Slovak and Hungarian societies recovered themselves after the long period of the atomization, typical for totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes. According to L. Grendel, the lack of willingness for the dialogue was caused not by anger, but "due to the deep disinterest towards each other".[66] The heritage of the post-communist way of thinking was not only the absence of the dialogue or lack of knowledge of the culture and arguments of the other side, but also unwillingness to know them. Such atmosphere was typical not only for the discourse on the current situation of minorities, but also in the discussion on the painful issues of the common Slovak-Hungarian history in 19th and 20th century. The thinking of Hungarian intellectuals was affected by the book "Years without the home" (Roky bez domoviny) written by Hungarian physician living in South Slovakia Kálmán Janics dealing with the period of so called "Re-Slovakization" after the World War II till 1948.[67] Although the most pluralist Slovak weekly at the end of 1980s „Literárny týždenník" published an article written by Slovak historian Štefan Šutaj, condemning such anti-Hungarian practices[68], in the first reaction to the arguments of K. Tóth and E. Sándor refused any discussion about this period, when ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia lost all civil rights.[69]

The independent initiatives within the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in 1970s and 1980s faced significant changes of the content and scope of their agenda. Whereas in 1970 and in the first half of the 1980s the dominating position had the narrow minority rights agenda, at the end of the 1980s they shifted their attention towards the issues of human rights and democratization. The phenomenon of the long-term isolation of Slovak Hungarians´

65 *Národnostné vzťahy v socialistickom Československu*. Bratislava, 1976, 399–400.

66 GRENDEL, Lajos: Triezva múdrosť. Hovoríme s prozaikom Lajosom Grendelom, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 9, 1 and 11.

67 JANICS, Kálman: *Roky bez domoviny. Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne 1945-1948*, Budapešť 1994.

68 ŠUTAJ, Štefan: O reslovakizácii (a nielen o nej), in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 41, 12–13.

69 Compare: TÓTH, K. – SÁNDOR, E.: List zo Šale, in: *Literárny* týždenník, 2, 1989, 35, 12–13; Od pólu k pólu, in: *Literárny týždenník*, 2, 1989, 35, 12–13.

dissident movement within the Slovak society and lack of direct communication even with the Slovak dissidents was caused not only by the nationalization of the Slovak-Hungarian debate, but also by the atomization of the Slovak society after the establishment of the regime of so called "Normalization". Therefore the particular groups of independent initiatives worked isolated. Therefore, in spite of specific contacts with the dissident movements in Hungary and with the samizdat in Hungary[70], the Slovak Hungarians´ dissent should be considered as part of Czechoslovak or more precisely Slovak dissent.

We need to stress, that the issue of the Hungarian minority rights and the overall Slovak-Hungarian relations was part of the domestic Slovak discourse. The different perception of such issues by the representatives of Slovak dissent and emerging national oriented current became apparent at the end of the 1980s, already before the political changes in November 1989 and they foreshadowed the upcoming political conflicts between the civic-liberal and national segment of the Slovak politics. Some protagonists of the latter had in the 1990s inclined to authoritarianism. The consequences of the insufficient reflection of the inter-ethnic relations within the Czechoslovak dissent became evident after the political changes in 1989 both in the case of Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-Czech relations. The democratic current in Slovakia in the 1990s was not capable at creating an effective alternative to the nationalist confrontation. The heritage of the (post)totalitarian way of thinking and already mentioned lack of empathy was, that according to the public opinion polls conducted in 1990 (Centre for Social Analysis) and in 1994 (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic) both Hungarian and Slovak communities living on the ethnically mixed territories expressed the dissatisfaction with the situation of their own ethnic group. Both of them believed that their problems could be solved at the expense of the other ethnic group. The source of escalation of the interethnic tensions was the awareness of the collective injuries, suspects, the concerns for the preservation and prestige of their national identities, which, additionally legitimized the confrontational behavior of the political representations.[71] The example how the unresolved issues from the period of the regime of so called „Normalization" affected the political processes after 1989 and, subsequently, how they were instrumentalized in the political disputes outside the space of minority agenda, was the case of the so called "language Act" (Act on the State Language of the Slovak Republic). In fact, the solution of this issue was supposed by the Constitutional Act on the Position of National Minorities (Act nr. 144/1968 Coll.). The ethnic tensions in southern Slovakia, reflected, but in many times exaggerated and instrumentalized by some segments of Slovak and Hungarian political representation, were in the 1990s perceived in the context of the escalation of the ethnic tensions in East-Central Europe and they became discussed within the framework of the international arrangement of the protection of minority rights, elaborated mainly by the Council of Europe and Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe.

70 Hungarian authors from Slovakia didn´t establish their own samizdat journal, however they published their articles in the samizdat journal Beszélő in Hungary and they participated at the Flying University in Budapest. See: Interview with L. Öllős and K. Tóth. Bratislava 12 May 1999.

71 FRIČ, Pavol et al.: *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku*, Praha1993, 219.

Abstract

The paper deals with the situation of Hungarian minority in Slovakia in the period of the regime of so called "Normalization" after the suppression of "Prague Spring" in 1970s and 1980s. The issue of minority policy of Czechoslovak / Slovak government is discussed as a specific aspect of the nationalizing policy. The paper is based on the archival research of the documents provided by Charter 77 and the Committee for Protection of the Hungarian minority rights in Czechoslovakia. The research question is, whether the Slovak Socialist Republic, established after the federalization of Czechoslovakia in 1968, was still a nationalizing state. Paper brings an analysis of the oscillation of the political initiatives within the Hungarian minority environment in Slovakia and the Slovak-Hungarian debate between the national and civic-democratic agenda. According to the conclusions, the Slovak Socialist Republic applied some nationalizing practices and policies, however due to the deformations of the Czechoslovak federation after 1969 it couldn't become a uniquely nationalizing state. The debate on the minority rights and on the Slovak-Hungarian relations in the dissident environment and later, since 1988-1989 in the wider public space has a significant impact on the shaping of the political cleavages in Slovakia after the political changes in November 1989.

Keywords

Slovakia, Hungarian minority in Slovakia, Committee for Protection Hungarian Minority Rights in Slovakia, dissent, Charter 77, Miklós Duray, nationalism

References

Interviews with M. Duray, L. Nagy, L. Öllős, K. Tóth

Archív Fórum Inštitútu pre výskum menšín (AFIVM)
Archive of the Fórum Minority Research Institute, Šamorín
fund Inheritance of József Gyönyör

Slovenský národný archív (SNA)
Slovak National Archive, Bratislava
fund ÚV KSS, predsedníctvo (Presidium of the Central Committe of the Communist Party of Slovakia)

Pravda, 1989, year 70

Literárny týždenník, vol.1, 1988; vol.2, 1989
Infoch, vol.6, 1983; vol.7, 1984; vol.8, 1985; vol.10, 1987, vol.11, 1988
Ochranca prírody, years 1988, 1989
Svědectví, vol. XVI, 1980, no.61

Dokument č. 15. Záverečný akt KBSE, in: *Medzinárodná ochrana národností. Európsky štandard v dokumentoch*, ŠEBESTA, Štefan (ed.), Bratislava 1997, 98.
Dokument č. 1. 1977, 1. leden, Praha – Základní (konstitutivní) Prohlášení Charty 77 o příčinách vzniku, smyslu a cílech Charty a metodách jejího působení, in: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977-1989, vol. I*, CISAŘOVSKÁ, Blanka – PREČAN, Vilém (eds.), Praha 2007, 1.
Dokument č. 34. Memorandum 1988. Memorandum Maďarov v Československu 1988. 20. 10. 1988, in: *November 1989 a Slovensko. Chronológia a dokumenty (1985 – 1990)*, ŽATKULIAK, Jozef – HLAVOVÁ, Viera – SEDLIAKOVÁ, Alžbeta – ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal (eds.), Bratislava 1999, 254–256.

BRAXÁTOR, František: *Slovenský exil 68*, Bratislava 1992.
BRUBAKER, Rogers: Nationalizing states in the old New Europe - and the new, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 1996, 2, 411–437.
DURAY, Miklós: *Kutyaszoritó 1.*, New York 1983.
DURAY, Miklós: *Kutyaszoritó 2.*, New York 1989.
FRIČ, Pavol et al.: *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku,* Praha 1993.
HÜBL, Milan: *Češi, Slováci a jejich sousedé*, Praha 1990.
HUNČÍK, Péter: Maďarská menšina ve Slovenské republice, in: GABAL, Ivan a kol.: *Etnické menšiny ve střední Evropě: konflikt nebo integrace*, Praha 1999, 204–218.
JANICS, Kálman: *Roky bez domoviny. Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne 1945-1948*, Budapešť 1994.
KUSÝ, Miroslav: *Na vlnách Slobodnej Európy*, Bratislava 1990.
MARUŠIAK, Juraj: Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike v rokoch normalizácie, in: *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, KMEŤ, Norbert – MARUŠIAK, Juraj (eds.), Bratislava – Prešov 2003, 222–279.
MARUŠIAK, Juraj: Maďarská revolúcia 1956 a Slovensko, in: *„Spoznal som svetlo a už viac nechcem tmu." Pocta Jozefovi Jablonickému*, KMEŤ, Norbert (ed.), Bratislava 2005, 183–227.
Národnostné vzťahy v socialistickom Československu, Bratislava 1976.
PEŠEK, Jan: Maďarské udalosti roku 1956 a Slovensko, in: *Historický časopis*, 41, 1993, 4, 430–442.
POPÉLY, Arpád :Maďarská menšina počas pražskej jari a v prvých rokoch normalizácie, in: *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 3, 2010, 2, 105–116.
RAGAČ, Radoslav: Intelektuál za rázcestím alebo ako som sledoval M. Duraya, in: *Euro Domino*, 1, 2008, 17, 36–38.
RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945–1992*, Bratislava – Praha 1998.
SÁNDOR, Eleonóra: Zmena režimu maďarskými očami, in: *Maďari na Slovensku (1989-2004). Súhrnná správa od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, FAZEKAS, József – HUNČÍK, Péter (eds.), Šamorín 2008, 29–58.
ŠIMEČKA, Milan: *Obnovení pořádku. Příspěvek* k *typologii reálného socialismu*. Köln 1984.
ŤAŽKÝ, Ladislav: *Pred potopou*, Bratislava 1988.
ZVARA, Juraj : *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1945.* Bratislava 1969.
ŽATKULIAK, Jozef: Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie v druhej polovici 80. rokov XX. storočia, in: *Historický časopis*, 56, 2008, 1, 161–190.