

ANDREJ HLINKA IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF SLOVAK PROTESTANTS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper maps the portrayal of Andrej Hlinka within the Protestant milieu during his lifetime. It also tries to answer the question of Hlinka's position in the hierarchy of symbols which were and are relevant for the formation of the Slovak Protestants' identity. Nowadays, ambivalent or expressly negative attitudes towards Hlinka prevail within the Lutheran community, however, similar attitudes prevailed also during the interwar and after-war periods.

In 1902 at the regional forum, A. Hlinka did not support the rights of the Slovak language which represented a major attribute of the national identity of Slovaks. Hlinka's attitude was then reminded in the Lutheran milieu in the situations when an idealized and mythologized portrayal of Hlinka as an uncompromising fighter for the national rights spread in particular via official propaganda. In fact, it served as a de-legitimizing instrument of Hlinka cult. During the existence of the Slovak State (1938/1939 – 1945) Slovak Protestants were massively confronted with the phenomenon of Hlinka and denied this historical figure in the position of the most significant national symbol. At the religious celebration of the national hero General Milan Rastislav Štefánik in May 1939, General Bishop of the Protestant Church Vladimír Pavel Čobrda compared both personages – Hlinka and Štefánik – and refused the symbolic governmental policy and propaganda which tried to make believe the whole society including Lutherans that Hlinka was a positive social example. He called Štefánik the greatest Slovak who became the symbol of antifascist resistance.

KEYWORDS:

Andrej Hlinka; national symbol; Slovak protestants; Slovak Protestants' identity; collective memory

Slovak national identity had been formed since the end of the 18th century on the background of mutual contacts, interactions, cooperation but also rivalry and competition of two by confession different “camps”. In various situations and contexts, they attained the form of religious and spiritual, cultural, ideological or political orientation, generation groupings, later on also mass movements or party’s and political subjects. Ideologically and mentally, they were more or less tied to the two largest institutional churches – the Roman-Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession.¹ The above fact determined also the process of constructing the Slovak national story and symbolic national pantheon: relevant (wide)national symbols are, as a rule, a product of inter-confessional consensus. This paper presents Andrej Hlinka, an outstanding personage of modern Slovak history – the Catholic priest and representative of the Slovak autonomist movement – from the said interpretation position. A. Hlinka left significant traces in the collective and individual memory of the population of Slovakia. In the past but also at present the viewing and evaluation of his personage was and is moving on the axis from uncritical admiration up to refusal.

While some other outstanding historical figures (e.g. Ľudovít Štúr, Milan Rastislav Štefánik²) are at present generally accepted by Slovak society and the process of positive identification with them goes across the political spectrum and across the confessional structure of Slovak population, in the case of Hlinka the situation is different: his acceptance or refusal depends much more on the political and ideological orientation of the population of Slovakia or alternatively on the confessional identity and allegiance to this or that church. Sociological research clearly shows that Hlinka is more accepted as a positive social example in the environment which is strongly influenced by the traditional Catholic religiousness, conservatism or prevalingly rural lifestyle.³

The aim of this paper is, on the one hand, to map the portrayal of Hlinka in the Protestant milieu during his lifetime and, on the other hand, it tries to answer the question of the position taken by Hlinka in the hierarchy of symbols which were and are relevant for the formation of identity of the Slovak Protestants/ Protestant

¹ More in: A. A. Baník, *O dialektickej podstate slovenského konfesionalizmu*, Martin 2000.

² Ľudovít Štúr (1815-1856): the leader of the Slovak national movement in the first half of the 19th century, the linguist who codified standard language, editor and publicist, teacher, deputy of Hungarian Parliament; General Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880-1919), astronomer, pilot, French Army officer, diplomat and politician, collaborator of T. G. Masaryk and E. Beneš in the Czechoslovak foreign resistance during the First World War, co-founder of the Czechoslovak Republic. Both personages came from Protestant background; they rank among significant national symbols.

³ For more, see: V. Krivý, *Kolektívne identity na súčasnom Slovensku. Pramenná publikácia dát zo sociologického výskumu*, Bratislava 2004, p. 21, 22.

Slovaks. Is Hlinka *a site of memory* according to the concept of Pierre Nora for this part of the Slovak population?

We can say in a very simplified way that ambivalent or even explicitly negative attitudes towards Hlinka currently prevail within the Lutheran community. A positive reflection of this historical figure in the Protestant milieu is rather of a marginal interest, more or less a rare phenomenon.⁴ I do not insist, of course, that everything that Protestants thought (or think at present) about Hlinka is an “absolute truth” which should not be subjected to a critical study. It should be realized, however, that even in the confessional (Protestant) discourse a definite portrayal of Hlinka was a product of various processes, including the stereotypization (similarly as the portrayals of other figures, e.g. Štúr or Štefánik), of course, as a rule with a “minus” sign. We can state that mutually connected processes of idealizing, mythologizing and sacralizing the figure of Hlinka, which were (and are) widespread in particular in the Catholic milieu, practically “stopped” at the confessional borders and influenced the collective memory of Slovak Lutherans only to a minimum extent. This happened even in spite of the fact that the above mentioned processes, mechanisms, media and instruments are almost identical when constructing the portrayals of two outstanding national personal symbols – (Catholic) Hlinka and (Protestant) Štefánik.



In 2007 there were attempts to push through the law on the merits of Andrej Hlinka in the Slovak Parliament, which were connected with public thematization of this historical figure as “Father of the Nation”. The representatives of the Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia reacted just to this fact. The collective representative body of the church, the general presbytery, issued a declaration where we can read: “We consider the imposing on all citizens of the Slovak Republic even the title “Father of the Nation” through the law to be very inadequate and unilateral. [...] We are against inadequate exaggeration of merits of the man with respect to whom a considerable part of the Slovak population has justified objections.” The representatives of the Lutheran Church pointed out the fact that Hlinka very often spoke in coarse language not only about Hungarians, Czechs, and Jews but also about Slovak Lutherans: “He considered us to be opponents, mucks and lice. Andrej Hlinka caused by such expressions a gradual split of the Slovak nation but not its unification.”⁵

⁴ L. Kandra, “Andrej Hlinka a evanjelici”, in: *Andrej Hlinka v slove a obraze. Zborník článkov a fotografií, ktorý na uctenie Hlinkovej pamiatky do tlače začal zbierať Ján Mešťančík.*, ed. by Jozef Kirschbaum, František Fuga, Toronto-Ružomberok 1991, p. 74-80.

⁵ “Stanovisko k návrhu zákona o zásluhách Andreja Hlinku”, *Evanjelický posol spod Tatier*, 2007, roč. 97, č. 41, p. 4.

As regards critical responses including also the declaration of the representatives of the Lutheran Church, a group of Slovak historians opposed in its Statement⁶ saying that “the adoption of the law on merits of Andrej Hlinka cannot be understood as [...] enforcement of an opinion to the entire population of the country. This is rather an appraisal of merits to be expressed by Slovak nationals through their elected representatives in the legal declaration.”

On the background of the initial suggestions and drafts of the law intended to make manifestations of disrespect to the proclaimed “Father of the Nation” prosecutable,⁷ this argument of the authors of the *Statement* is, to say the least, absurd. Anyway, the introductory part of this chapter outlined, however, that the phenomenon of Andrej Hlinka represents a very sensitive issue in the public life of Slovakia, which evokes at minimum a polemic. Hlinka’s name as such does not unite the present society at all, on the contrary, it rather contributes to its polarization. Critical objections to the personage of Hlinka heard nowadays are from certain positions very purposefully interpreted as anti-Catholic or even antinational/ anti-Slovak attitudes.

The authors of the *Statement* try to disprove or at least cast doubt upon or relativize critical opinions on Hlinka. These historians claim, on the one hand, that Hlinka’s relation to the Slovak Lutherans as a whole “was not [...] negative“. They say that Hlinka spoke out strongly only against the group of Slovak Lutherans which politically stood up for the Prague centralism and Czechoslovakism thus denying the independence of the Slovak nation.⁸ They argue, on the other hand, that the period of the first half of the 20th century when the political engagement of A. Hlinka reached the peak meant the development phase when ecumenism was not the order of the day not only in the Roman-Catholic Church but in the Lutheran Church either.

⁶ The exact title of this document is: *Stanovisko slovenských historikov k osobnosti Andreja Hlinku*, 23. október 2007 (further referred to as: *Statement*) Available at: <<http://www.postoy.sk/node/1149>>.

⁷ According to the initial bill the law should have contained the following wording (Sec 5): “The action resulting in a harm of Hlinka’s reputation in public can be punished in accordance with law.” It is not necessary to further explain that such legal norm would endanger free scientific research and critical interpretation of this controversial personality. Quoted according to the article *Lutherans do not want Lex Hlinka. What is in the bill of SNS*. [Online]: SME.sk, p. 2. <<http://www.sme.sk/c/3514405/evanjelici-nechcu-lex-hlinka.html>>, accessed 26 Aug 2014.

⁸ The above-mentioned manner of argumentation is expressly purposeful and mythologizing: there is a sufficient number of Hlinka’s statements which clearly prove his antipathy towards Slovak Protestants in general, i.e., regardless of their political orientation and membership. Of course, there are also statements or quotations which sound like Hlinka’s expression of admiration for the outstanding Lutheran representatives of Slovak culture and these are often quoted as a proof of Hlinka’s supposedly responsive and tolerant attitude towards Protestants. It is a paradox; however, that Hlinka himself often cast doubt upon them in his other statements and directed his words at these outstanding representatives (e.g. Ľudovít Štúr, poets Andrej Sládkovič, Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav etc.) by which he insulted not only them but all Protestants in Slovakia. Hlinka’s mentality is illustrated also by other statements of verbal aggression (various invectives and mockeries directed at impersonal Lutheran symbols, e.g., Juraj Tranovský’s hymnbook), the use of vulgar “coarse” demagoguery, and various lies.

It must be clearly understood, however, that in both cases more or less misleading statements are involved.⁹

In these connections, interesting is the following observation of the Lutheran priest Darina Bancíková of 1996: “As regards Andrej Hlinka, his religious intolerance cannot be held back. [...] several times he called Slovak Lutherans an ulcer on the body of the Slovak nation, or its curse. There exists also written evidence thereof. I admit that it is not always necessary to underline this Hlinka’s trait every time and everywhere. An attempt at censoring or even criminalizing [newspaper] articles whose authors dare talk about it is, however, incomprehensible.”¹⁰

On a symbolic level, however, the substance of the problem arises from the publicizing of the portrayal of Andrej Hlinka as the “Father of the Nation” in that period. It is questionable why the authors of the *Statement* do not mention this phenomenon, why they avoid such an important moment in the whole discussion about the significance and merits of A. Hlinka. It is not important that the above *epithet ornans*, which is legally vague but emotionally a very sensitive matter, was not included in the final wording of the law on merits of Andrej Hlinka. It is essential that he was thematised and presented in the media of those days and the Slovak public was somehow naturally expected to identify with him. The citizens / Slovaks should have not inspected or cast doubt upon the image of A. Hlinka as the symbolic father of the nation; they had to believe in it: it should have become a manifestation of their secular nationalistic belief.

In this context we can quite justly ask: Which of Hlinka’s deeds (not only words!) are of such nature that the whole Slovak public, and consequently including also Slovak Protestants, could understand them as an expression of paternal love, as symbolic gestures legitimizing going beyond mental barriers? In the Slovak nationalistic discourse, however, I understand by mental barriers in particular confessional barriers which prevent the formation of the feeling of (wide)national supra-confessional togetherness. We should become aware of the way in which modern national identity was formed during the 19th and 20th centuries: an important component of the national-historical narrative of Slovaks consists in particular of historical figures

⁹ During the interwar period the representatives of the Lutheran church joined the international ecumenical movement but it is questionable to what extent the principles of ecumenism took root in the domestic religious environment, or respectively on the level on inter-confessional or human relations.

¹⁰ Slovak National Library in Martin, Literary archive, fond Darina Bancíková, škatuľa 4, Práce vlastné, D. Bancíková, *Okresné pobočky Konfederácie politických väzňov... Nepovedaný príspevok na sneme KPVS v Bratislave*, 1 June 1996.

which went beyond these bounds in the interest of the national unity,¹¹ and this narrative generates the social concept of Slovaks as a two-confession national society. A breach of and going beyond these bounds thus represents a symbolic gesture acting as a standard-setting act which constitutes the social concept of the national unity. At the same time, however, it implies a permanent presence of the confessional (Catholic – Protestant) duality which is not deemed to be a necessary evil but a natural component of the national “organism”.

I dare remark that such gesture must be not only sufficiently transparent, readable but also communicated by media (and, as circumstances allow, permanently reproduced) in the form of symbolic representations disseminated among the population. After death of a particular historical figure it should be acceptable and accepted “nationwide” (meaning in both confessional circles) as a clear and unquestionable manifestation of inter-confessional consensus.

The authors of the *Statement* see such a symbolic gesture in Hlinka’s attempt at cooperation with Lutherans associated within the autonomy-oriented Slovak National Party. The political cooperation between the two autonomy-oriented parties – Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party (HSLS) and the Slovak National Party (SNS) – represented by their leaders, the Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka and the Protestant priest Martin Rázus, ended, however, without success. A breakup of the so-called autonomy-oriented bloc was caused by several factors, among others also by the fact that HSLS headed by Hlinka breached the pre-election agreement made between the two political parties.¹² During his visit to the Ružomberok Catholic Presbytery where Hlinka had his seat Rázus received the answer that HSLS did not intend to observe the agreement, because it was disadvantageous for it.¹³

In particular the relationship between the two political parties personified by Hlinka and Rázus were narrated in the Lutheran milieu and obtained the reduced form of a sort of folkloristic example which could receive a peculiar title “How Hlinka cheated Rázus”, which can be interpreted at the political and confessional levels as Hlinka versus nationalists /SNS/ or respectively Hlinka versus Protestants. Regardless of the interpretation form in which this micro-narrative appeared in historical

¹¹ The story of how (the Lutheran) Ľudovít Štúr with his fellows visited the (Catholic) poet Ján Hollý, the author of national heroic epic poems, to obtain his consent to the codification of the standard Slovak language (1843); similarly, the story about mutual cooperation between the Catholic bishop Štefana Moyses and the Lutheran bishop Karol Kuzmány, the representatives of *Matica slovenská* (Slovak Source) which was the most significant nation-representative institution of the nineteen sixties. Themmatization and publicizing of such micro-narratives and personal symbols had a legitimating function in the nationalistic discourse of the 20th century. It was used in particular by the representatives of national culture and from time to time also by some politicians.

¹² More in, e.g., J. Rogulová, *Slovenská národná strana 1918-1938*, Bratislava 2013, p. 294, 295.

¹³ M. Rázus, “Prčiny rozchodu Ľudovej a Národnej strany”, *Slovák v Amerike*, 1936, roč. 48, č. 34, p. 2.

memory of Lutherans (or as a case may be, still appears nowadays), I assume that we can consider it in a sense as a turning point. In the flow of “national” history under consideration, it represents a moment which ultimately buried a potential portrayal of Hlinka as the father of the nation in the Protestant circles. Rázus himself also re-evaluated his positive attitude towards Hlinka after all and stated in his private letter in February 1936 the following: “The cooperation with Hlinka seems impossible because of his strange moral principles.”¹⁴



The political cooperation between two autonomy-oriented parties, HSLS and SNS, was characterized from the very beginning by the declared inter-confessional conciliation and settlement, i.e. as the Catholic-Lutheran alliance creating the national and political unity of Slovaks. It was symbolically embodied by the so-called *Zvolen Manifest* dated October 16, 1936 adopted at the joint manifestation in Zvolen: “We are against any religious subjugation, pressure or disparagement of either of the parties. We exclude religious disputes from the Slovak politics and its journalism. We are for religious tolerance and parallel development of churches.[...]”¹⁵ Many of Rázus’s party colleagues, among them Andrej Mihal and Juraj Janoška Jr, turned his attention just to the fact which was in contravention of the spirit of the *Zvolen Manifest*, namely a breach of the obligation not to disparage, offend the other party to this agreement. Andrej Mihal addressed a letter to Rázus where he pointed out Hlinka’s inconsiderateness: “The cooperation between Catholics and Lutherans in national and political matters is certainly a cardinal principle of the national policy. We cannot agree, however, that [...] some representatives of the People’s Party would, first of all ‘the father and leader of the nation Hlinka’, disparage our Lutheran consciousness. [...] Hlinka [in the weekly magazine the *Tatranský Slovák*] [...] scolds Protestantism that it would sell its soul for a mess of pottage, that Lutheranism is of German origin, and therefore we [Lutherans] will be always closer to Czechs, Germans etc. [which means: than to Slovaks – P.M.] Experience shows that Hlinka will not change and as long as he is the ‘father and leader’, we should be prepared for the most hackneyed insults to our church and religion [...]”¹⁶

¹⁴ As quoted in: I. Šeňšel, “Pevný bud. Život a dielo seniora Ludovíta Šeňšela”, *Liptovský Mikuláš* 1998, p. 145.

¹⁵ *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II*. Bratislava 1998, p. 150-152, dokument č. 202, Zvolenský manifest (poznámka: v texte podčiarkol P. M.).

¹⁶ Slovak National Library - Literary Archive (Slov. Slovenská národná knižnica - Literárny archív, further as: SNK - LA), fond Martin Rázus, sign. 45 E 45, letter from Andrej Mihal to Martin Rázus, 5 Oct 1932.

Juraj Janoška Jr had also negative approach to the political cooperation between SNS and HSLS. Rázus was convinced that Janoška's point of view was determined by his personal antipathy to the Catholics in general. In his private correspondence, he blamed Janoška for his purported confessional (Lutheran) narrow-mindedness. Such reproaches outraged Janoška and he responded to the letter from Rázus by the following words: "You have written to me: '[...] When you see those Catholic reverends you are simply unable to keep your temper.' Can you understand the impact of such words?! Based on my attitude to Hlinka [...] don't make a general conclusion! [...] A high Catholic ecclesiastic official [not named] said to me about Hlinka: He hates this one, that one and Lutherans. As regards your father [i.e., Juro Janoško Sr, general bishop of the Lutheran Church], even before the coup d'état he hated his guts."¹⁷

Immediately afterwards, Janoška formulated his objections against Hlinka in a letter: "He called the Lutherans a curse of the Slovak nation¹⁸ and did not take it back. After the Zvolen Pact¹⁹ he impugned my dead father by infamous lies in the *Tatranský Slovák*. Catholic Slovaks from Ružomberok sent this [newspaper] volume to me. Two years ago in his radio lecture about Ružomberok he as a loving 'father of the nation' did not mention even a single one meritorious Lutheran [from Ružomberok]. He did not mention even the Makovickys! And last autumn he again offended Lutherans in Levice!"²⁰

When reading these lines one cannot pass over the ironic tone of Janoško's letter which contributes to casting doubts upon Hlinka as the father and leader of the nation just because of his "specific" show of love to Protestants. It should be emphasized, however, that this included no fabrications or unjustified defamation of Hlinka. The Polish consul Waclaw Łaciński, who met Hlinka in person in 1938, also noticed his antipathy to Lutherans. According to the consul's evidence "[...] the priest Hlinka is unable to speak peacefully about Lutherans but he shows much uncurbed hatred while making a boast of his successes in the field of Catholic propaganda [...]."²¹

¹⁷ SNK - LA, fond Martin Rázus, signatúra 45 D 11, letter from Jur Janoška Jr to Martin Rázus, 7 Feb 1935.

¹⁸ J. Janoška Jr refers here to the same source as A. Mihal quoted above - Hlinka's article in the weekly *Tatranský Slovák*. The exact wording of Hlinka's innuendo reads: "[...] Našou kľatbou je husitizmus a za misu uvarenej šošovice sa predávajúci protestantizmus. Tento bude vždy bližšie k Čechom, Nemcom, Švédom, ako ku Slovákom a vôbec ku Slovanom [...]." A. Hlinka, "Sneme, kde si?", *Tatranský Slovák*, 1932, roč. 2, č. 39, p. 3.

¹⁹ *After the Zvolen Pact* - means: after the declaration of the Zvolen Manifest, i.e. after October 16, 1932. In the original letter this was directly underlined by its writer J. Janoška Jr. He wanted to emphasise the fact that A. Hlinka insulted Slovak Protestants in public even after the declaration of political alliance between HSLS and SNS.

²⁰ SNK - LA, fond Martin Rázus, sign. 45 D 11, from Jur Janoška Jr to Martin Rázus, 7 Feb 1935.

²¹ M. Čaplovič, "Tri dokumenty k slovensko-poľským vzťahom z jari 1938", *Historický časopis*, 2000, roč. 48, č. 2, p. 341-344, dokument č. 1 (8. máj 1938, Praha - Správa č. 8/C/3 Vyslanectva Poľskej republiky v Prahe adresovaná poľskému Ministerstvu zahraničných vecí vo Varšave, v ktorej poľský konzul v Bratislave Waclaw Łaciński informuje o rozhovore s kňazom Andrejom Hlinkom v marci 1938 v Ružomberku. Tajné.).

Let's go back, however, to Janoško's letter. Interesting in this context is the information about Hlinka's lecture on the radio. Let's think for a while about a seemingly trivial reproach that in his lecture about Ružomberok Hlinka "forgot" to mention (besides other Lutherans from Ružomberok) the members of the Makovickys family. In this case, it should be emphasized that a "lapse" of Hlinka's individual memory can be hardly attributed to the insignificant status of that family. This is how a contemporary historian evaluates its contribution to history of Ružomberok and the whole Slovakia: "Although in Ružomberok there was [originally since the nineteen sixties – P.M.] only one Slovak [to be understood: engaged in national affairs – P. M.] entrepreneurial family, due to the scope of its activities it can be justly considered as the Slovak Buddenbrooks. [...] Thanks to this family Ružomberok became a really Slovak business centre."²²

In a mass of information collected by another researcher about the Makovickys family the reader can find also a reference to one student friendship of Andrej Hlinka. Dušan Makovický, later known as Tolstoy's follower (a personal doctor of Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy), was his classmate at the Grammar School in Ružomberok: Dušan, coming from the Slovak nationally-conscious family, "made friends with Andrej and [...] used to give [him] Slovak books for reading by which he awaken national consciousness in him."²³

A more detailed enumeration of the activities which connect the Makovickys family with the history of Ružomberok and the whole Slovakia but even with Hlinka's individual life story (however!) would clearly show to us that a disregard of this family in the radio lecture can be only hardly attributed to a momentary lapse of Hlinka's memory. On the contrary, this proves Hlinka's selective and manipulative manner of approaching the reality regardless of whether the present or past was concerned. The above-mentioned selection in this case was again evoked by Hlinka's personal antipathy to Lutherans.²⁴

A failure to mention the Makovickys family as a representative symbol of the Lutheran community in Ružomberok was not, however, an end in itself. Actually, this family stood at the birth (inter alia) of the Lutheran public school in this town. It was established in 1895 and maintained by the local Lutheran church – it was the only educational institution in Ružomberok of a purely Slovak nature with the Slovak language of instruction. At that time, Catholic church schools in Ružomberok were

²² R. Holec, *Tragédia v Černej a slovenská spoločnosť*, Martin 1997, p. 55.

²³ Z. Ďuriška, *Medzi mlynmí a bankami. Dejiny rodu Makovickovcov*, Martin 2007, p. 187.

²⁴ Of course, this selection was determined also by other factors - e.g. in 1934, at the time when Hlinka's radio lecture was broadcasted, many of the members of the Makovický's family were engaged in the political and associational structures which represented the "competing" camp against Hlinka and HSLS.

more or less Magyarized. Some Catholic families also used the Slovak Lutheran School within the town before 1918. They sent their children to this school (however!) with Hlinka's consent to avoid their Magyarization at a tender age. By the way, this was just the right moment from pre-coup d'état history of the town of Ružomberok to be utilized by Hlinka in his radio lecture as a historical argument in 1934, i.e. in the period when the political alliance between HSLS and SNS existed. He could have simply pointed out the Catholic-Lutheran cooperation at the local level already in the past. However, Hlinka failed to do so and we can only hypothetically reconstruct his reasons thereof.

Karol Sidor, the outstanding political representative of HSLS, emphasized quite naturally in Hlinka's biography of 1934 that A. Hlinka disregarded Apponyi's school laws which were considered to be a culmination of Magyarization of the education system before 1918. They say, on the contrary, that Hlinka "maintained at [Catholic church] schools [in Ružomberok] the teaching of religion in the Slovak language and a compulsory Slovak reading and writing."²⁵ The quoted sentence is a typical example of the fabrication of a positive portrayal of a personage where the methods like sanitization, equivocation, intentional and purposeful selection of facts etc. are normally applied. It is only natural that we will not find in this apologetic publication no mention of how Hlinka defended himself before court in the period of existence of Austro-Hungary when: "in witness of his [Hungarian] patriotism he stated that he donated to the [Slovak] pupils one thousand korunas from his own pocket for the purchase of Hungarian textbooks."²⁶ Whereas the aforementioned lecture is not preserved in the Archive of the Slovak Radio,²⁷ we do not know its exact content. I managed to identify that it was broadcasted on February 25, 1934 within the so-called Regional broadcast from Ružomberok in the evening hours.²⁸ When confronted with Janoško's reproach, the title of the lecture "The social, religious and political situation in Ružomberok before the coup d'état"²⁹ gives a premonition that a purposefully fabricated picture of Ružomberok before the coup d'état without Lutherans, or respectively without Lutheran national activists served to strengthen the social concept of the Ludaks and Catholics as the only human rights campaigners in the past before the coup d'état in 1918, as well as at present, after 1918.

There occurs an interesting phenomenon when Andrej Hlinka and the town Ružomberok become two intensively interconnected sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*):

²⁵ K. Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka (1864-1926)*, Bratislava 1934, p. 256.

²⁶ R. Holec, *Tragédia v Černej a slovenská spoločnosť*, Martin 1997, p. 100.

²⁷ In the Archive of the Slovak Radio Bratislava there are only three authentic documents in the form of digital records: Hlinka's speech on the persecution of Slovaks during the existence of Austro-Hungary (1934); a record of the visit of Edvard Beneš to Černová (1936); and a radio record from Hlinka's funeral (1938)

²⁸ "[Program] - Neděle, 25. února 1934", *Radiojournal*, 1934, roč. 12, č. 8, p. VII.

²⁹ Before the coup, i.e., before 1918 and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic.

in fact, two communicating vessels. The figure of A. Hlinka functions here not only as a site of memory but also as an object of memory processes, an object of symbolic instrumentation; in this correlation, Hlinka is functioning as a living personality, as a direct player, the subject of memory processes: he himself is actively participating in the creation of the collective memory and (also) with the help of his radio lecture of 1934 he tries to co-create a concrete picture of Ružomberok, which is relevant for the autonomist discourse and formation of the national story in its Ludak-Catholic version. When looking back into the past, the story and picture of Ružomberok is quite understandably intentionally “modelled”, the Ružomberok Lutherans are excluded from this story and marginalized. It is quite understandable that such picture of Ružomberok and Hlinka had to evoke negative reactions in the Lutheran milieu.



In 1902, at the time of the culminating Magyarization, A. Hlinka participated in the meeting of the Liptov District Committee. At this regional forum a cardinal dispute concerning the use of the Slovak language as an official language came up. The district governor ruled several times the Lutheran priest Pavol Čobrda out of order when he wanted to give a speech in the Slovak language. The representatives of SNS headed by the lawyer Emil Stodola pushed forward the voting on the right of any member of the Committee to speak his mother tongue. They referred to the so-called Nationality Law of 1868 by which such possibility was granted. The result of the voting, however, brought a defeat to the present Slovaks: while 24 members of the District Committee voted for the Slovak language, 80 votes were against the Slovak language. At the decisive moment when the rights of the mother tongue had to be supported, Hlinka abstained and declared in Hungarian: “Nem szavazom” (= I don’t vote).³⁰

This act of Hlinka made an embarrassing impression and absolutely disappointed the Slovak participants in the meeting. It is only natural that it was kept not only in their individual memory, but it spread also among the people, in particular in the region of Liptov.

In 1934 at the national conference of young teachers, the Minister of Justice Ivan Dérer mentioned this shameful vote by Hlinka. The editorial board of *Národné noviny* (*National Newspaper*), the press body of SNS which then proclaimed the cooperation between both autonomist parties, spoke out in defence of Hlinka and stated with exasperation that it was just a blatant lie. Dérer reacted to this invective by pointing out the period press coverage, namely the newspaper article which brought

³⁰ “Slovenčina v Liptove”, *Národné noviny*, 1902, roč. 33, č. 60, p. 1-2.

information about the Committee meeting and which was published in 1902 on the pages of *National Newspaper*. Thus, he adequately embarrassed the editorial staff who made excuses afterwards and emphasized that “[...] we drew our note [about Dérer’s alleged lie] from the verification of the daily *Slovák* (The Slovak) [= the press body of HSLŠ], which authentically denied that Andrej Hlinka had made [in 1902] such a statement [...]”³¹

It was quite understandable that the editorial staff of the daily *Slovák* who protected and disseminated an idealized, in fact sanitized portrayal of A. Hlinka slipped the twisted or explicitly untrue data to the “allied” editorial staff of *National Newspaper* and to the general public. It was unthinkable to reveal the truth, because it would make a dent in the idealized portrayal of Hlinka, the main symbol of the whole autonomist movement.

In 1938 this micro-narrative was published in the publication *Service to the nation* which mapped a share and merits of Lutherans in the development of the national and cultural life of Slovaks. The text contains a detailed description of the whole event. The author commented on Hlinka’s attitude by the words borrowed from the above mentioned newspaper article of 1902: Hlinka declared that “he must fulfil the will of those who empowered him by [...] the Committee mandate and their will is to keep [= abide by] the law on nationalities which is a gift of the Hungarian knightly nation (lovagias magyar nemzetnek)... Then it came to the voting. [...] Mr. Andrej Hlinka who in his speech [before] accentuated that [...] he demanded the right to the Slovak language, when his name was called on, he said: ‘nem szavazom’ (I don’t vote)”³²

After the breakup of the Czechoslovak Republic and formation of the Slovak state, the Lutheran church or respectively some of its structures and societies started to substitute the role of the political parties which ceased to exist and in which Protestants had a strong position. These segments of the society were gradually getting more and more into opposition to the ruling regime. In 1940, the XIX congress of the Union of Lutheran Youth took place in Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš. It was held under the motto: “Faithful to fathers’ heritage in church and nation”. The agenda of the congress contained a visit to the local cemetery where the graves of the prominent representatives of the national and religious life of Slovak Lutherans, including that of the general bishop Juraj Janoška, Senior, are located.

The Liptov senior Ludovít Šeňšel, in his speech addressed to the representatives of the Lutheran youth from the whole of Slovakia, raised a question: Who are “our” fathers and leaders? This was his reaction to the government propaganda of the Slovak

³¹ “K oprave p. ministra Déreera”, *Národné noviny*, 1934, roč. 65, č. 90, p. 4.

³² J. Janoška, Z domáceho odboja”, in: *Služba národu*, ed. S. Š. Osuský, Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš 1938, p. 209.

State which promoted Hlinka cult in society. He compared Juraj Janoška, Senior and Andrej Hlinka: “Janoška, just because he was a Slovak Lutheran [...] would never remained neutral hiding behind the word ‘nem szavazom’,³⁵ when the rights of his mother tongue were concerned only because the proposal had not been initiated by his confession.”³⁴

Hlinka’s statement ‘nem szavazom’ was thus, as a rule, purposefully activated and thematised in the Lutheran milieu when the Ludak party, in particular through the official propaganda, spread an idealized and mythologized portrayal of Andrej Hlinka as an uncompromising fighter for the rights of the nation and consequently for the rights of the Slovak language, as well. The above quoted phrase in its Hungarian form became an instrument to deconstruct Hlinka myth and in its distributors’ eyes it embodied Hlinka’s opportunism and his national unreliability. The above story along with the representative statement spread not only by oral tradition but also via the press, books, occasional speeches and lectures of those days. Its publicity, however, only rarely reached a mass dimension and moreover, it remained anchored in the Lutheran milieu.

We can hypothetically presume that the story about Hlinka’s (non)voting as a specific instrument to delegitimize Hlinka as a national symbol, as the father and leader of the nation, has been until now most fixed in the collective memory of only a rather small segment of Slovak population. This is connected with the fact that the publicity and reproduction of this narrative has not been very intensive in public life for the last half-century. This involves a social group which is currently most confronted with the phenomenon of Hlinka: I think that it can be quite logically defined within the intersection of several identities – national (Slovaks), confessional (Protestants), regional (population of the Liptov region) and professional (intelligentsia). I mean the social group which I characterize as the Liptov Lutheran intelligentsia, or possibly its specific subset – the Liptov Lutheran clergy.



The Lutheran population experienced a mass confrontation with the phenomenon of Hlinka in 1938/1939-1945 when Hlinka became one of the main symbols of the Slovak State and non-democratic regime.

Vladimír Pavel Čobrda, the general bishop of the Lutheran church, declared on 9 February 1939 at the meeting of the general presbytery that A. Hlinka was unacceptable to Lutherans as a national symbol, but on the other hand, he warned that

³⁵ To be understood: he would not be able to try to pass the buck by abstaining from voting.

³⁴ I. Šenšel, *Pevný bud. Život a dielo seniora Ludovíta Šenšela*, Liptovský Mikuláš, 1998, p. 129.

directivity of the society, dismantlement of the political and associational plurality, which is in fact an institutionalized liquidation of the democratic system, is symbolically defended in particular by the name of Hlinka.

The memorial treatise on the matters of the Hlinka Guard of 21 November 1939 caused a stir in the governmental circles. Lutheran clergy addressed it to the President, Government and Parliament. The treatise reacted to the regulation on a general and compulsory membership in the Hlinka Guard while the text repeated also critical remarks about the person of Hlinka as such which had been expressed before: “[...] the name of Andrej Hlinka is, unfortunately, connected with many of his statements for the last 20 years, whether written or oral, which are very unfair and offensive with respect to us, Slovak Lutherans and our church, which have never been taken back and which will never be forgotten, the statements which could have possibly made Andrej Hlinka a belligerent leader of his church which, however, make absolutely impossible for us Lutherans to consider him, celebrate him even as a religiously coloured cult and set him as an example as the ‘Leader’ or even ‘Eternal Leader’ of the entire nation including the Protestant part of the nation. Such things cannot be dictated to the soul by any regulation. [...] on this occasion, we must also state that the enforcement of such cult caused [...] since the last October [i.e. since October 1938 (since the establishment of autonomy of Slovakia) – P.M.] most misunderstanding and annoyance in the circles of Slovak Protestants.”³⁵

It was V.P. Čobrda who had the main speech at the religious commemoration of Štefánik in May 1939 organized by the Union of Protestant Youth. The whole event gave the impression of a manifestation of Protestant cohesion and identity but also of a grandiose manifestation for democratic and humanistic ideals. The bishop emphasized in his speech: “It was right at this place where two weeks ago [i.e. at the official national celebrations – P.M.] it was heard that Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation and Slovak Lutherans unjustly appropriate him. I also agree that Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation, because as long as he lived he had the entire Slovak nation in his heart. Štefánik [...] did not segment the nation according to the confession, Štefánik did not bind the future, the existence of Slovakia to allegiance to one confession, Štefánik did not want to exclude anyone from the society of the Slovak nation and he has never called anybody a curse of the nation or an ulcer on the body of the Slovak nation just because of his different religious belief [...] oh yeas, this Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation, because he had the entire Slovak nation in his heart [...]”³⁶

³⁵ *Služba národu II*. Red. S. Š. Osuský, Liptovský Mikuláš 1947, p. 135.

³⁶ V. P. Čobrda, “Reč povedaná na Bradle dňa 21. mája 1939”, in: *Štefánikove oslavy na Bradle 20. a 21. mája 1939*, Myjava 1939, p. 5, 6.

Due to bishop's speech the commemoration ceremony devoted to Štefánik took the form of a mass demonstration against the Ludak regime, or respectively against its symbolic policy. The protest was marked by a conflict of two symbols, Hlinka versus Štefánik. Although the name of Hlinka was not heard at all at this event, majority of the participants knew that the general bishop was comparing in his speech in particular Štefánik and Hlinka. The attending audience could decipher his speech in the following sense: "It was right at this place where two weeks ago [i.e. at the official state celebrations – P.M.] it was heard that Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation and Slovak Lutherans unjustly appropriate him. I also agree that Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation, because as long as he lived he had the entire Slovak nation in his heart. Štefánik [...] did not segment the nation according to the confession [as Hlinka did – P.M.], Štefánik did not bind the future, the existence of Slovakia to allegiance to one confession [as Hlinka did – P.M.], Štefánik did not want to exclude anyone from the society of the Slovak nation and he has never called anybody a curse of the nation or an ulcer on the body of the Slovak nation [as Hlinka did – P.M.], just because of his different religious belief [...] oh yeas, this Štefánik belongs to the entire Slovak nation, because he had the entire Slovak nation in his heart [in contrast to Hlinka – P.M.]."

I want to remark that V. P. Čobrda formulated his objections against Hlinka already in 1939: his position was then published by the church press but it was included also in the annual church report which had a mass circulation among Lutheran population.³⁷ So he did not say anything not known to Lutheran believers. A novelty was that he declared his attitude towards Hlinka at the sacred place, at Štefánik burial mound at Bradlo where this national hero is buried. Čobrda's message was strict and clear: Slovak Lutherans cannot and do not want to recognize Hlinka as the greatest Slovak. A forcible promotion of Hlinka as the most significant symbol is considered by them not only as a violation of their identity but also as a dishonour to the memory of Štefánik. The greatest hero of the Slovak nation is General Milan Rastislav Štefánik who is the embodiment of ideals, love, tolerance, humanism and democracy but not hatred and fanaticism. Of course, this was also a partially idealized portrayal of the historical figure but it fell on fertile ground of the collective memory and the approving position of the groups of population which refused to submit to a totalitarian directivity. Ultimately, it was just M. R. Štefánik who became the symbol of antifascist civil resistance.

TRANSLATION: Eva SCIRANKOVÁ

³⁷ L. Suško, "Evanjelická cirkev augsburského vyznania na Slovensku 1938/39 v zrkadle cirkevnej tlače", *Historický časopis*, roč. 49, č. 1, 2001, p. 67.

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