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## Historiography and the revolt history teaching

### Abstract

This presented study deals with the basic grounds for historiography especially with regard to the historic awareness and the revolt history teaching under present conditions of so called postmodern period in development of Slovakia. The author briefly glosses the fundamental levels of the Slovak revolt history presentation in context of the national, regional, and of the research of so called daily history, of prospective resource base as well as of their relevance for both the educational process and the presentation in public.

*Key words; historiography, history, historic awareness, revolt history teaching and historiography*

No serious reflection of our theme can be considered apart from some basic notions which undoubtedly include the category of historic awareness. Present postmodern time foregrounds also the attitude of traditional positivistic understanding of the role of both historiography and history of philosophy, namely in its broad time dimensions of the Slovak history. While accepting the basic methodological approach to "historic awareness as a structured complex of history opinions" (K o r m a n , 2000, pp. 55 ff), we consider it productive to also discern prospective individual, group, national and global levels of the historic awareness with respect to standing differentiation of history as world, national and regional. We presume it possible to assign also local as well as individual (personal, private) histories to this basic differentiation which, however, remain to be "zero tillage" in the historic writings, Slovakian in particular.

Neither world nor national history has in fact any task or duty linked up to the historic awareness and, in spite of that, they provably influence it. They do it most significantly through mediators of these historical events and phenomena, e.g. through professional historic public which cannot be limited to historians only, since it means a broad diapason of activities beginning with basic historic research, through archives, museums, the area of conservation, teaching

of history in schools, interdisciplinary background and glaxis of historiography, the measure of plurality, "the degree of democracy and life quality in society" (K o r i m a n, 2000, p. 55,) and so on. Therefore, if we agree that history itself has neither formative nor utilitarian tasks, there are many for historiography. The said problem was quite felicitously described by Czech scholar Vaclav Veber having written: "The time has come to ponder what history is all about, how to expose, explain and present it; even if history does not make sense, we must give it any" (V e b e r, 2001, p. 16).

He properly noticed that, wrongfully, the political history continues to be the forefront of historians' interest and the 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography was most negatively marked by two Europe-centric visions, namely the extreme nationalist Nazi as well as internationalist communist visions. He also defined two key problems for the European historiography:

- 1) to write the history of European civic society as well as the development of democracy,
- 2) and to free the European historiography from so called captivity of national history (especially in Eastern Europe).

In accord with N. Davies (*Európa - dejiny jedného kontinentu*, Praha 2000, he rigorously criticizes the ally understanding of history, a very subjective perspective of the 20<sup>th</sup> century big wars victors, which is in Western Europe traditionally frequent (V e b e r, 2001, pp. 16 ff). Its ground is the faith in the uniqueness of western (Euro-Atlantic - V.K.) civilization considered as the top of human history. It is why, in connection with the processes of European integration, the primary task is to engage in Euro-history including European history teaching as well as writing of basic textbooks of European history.

Those facts and starting points must be taken into account when reflecting the history of the anti-fascist revolt as well as Slovak National Uprising (SNU), their teaching in schools, public presentations, scholarly discussions and the like. Let us consider the given topic from the three-basic-levels point of view, namely: the world (European) history, national history and regional (or local) history.

Let us start with indisputable fact that the base of almost all the discussions and polemics on the Slovak anti-fascist revolt history is their hanging ideologization in both units of opinion, namely, within those glorifying as well as within those fully rejecting it. The reliable guideline for polemics against both extremes is to understand the close relation between anti-fascism and democracy, and especially to understand that anti-fascism was the democracy of the given epoch. According to my opinion, we have to discern the basic and central meaning of both histories of anti-fascist revolt and Slovak National Uprising in that idea. In case that the legitimacy of such opinion fails to prevail in the public history

awareness, the conflicts of views will continually shift from professional level to either ideological or political (utilitarian) levels.

The tendency of the dominance of political revolt history is methodologically wrong because by applying it, the human dimension of historical event is lost, namely its social and culture aspects, since "cultural and social backgrounds produce political events" (Kanovsky, 1997, p. 33), not vice versa. This fact, too, opens the way both to limit the scholarly discussion and to displace it towards politicization of the problems. This note does not apply to the basic geopolitical context of anti-fascist revolt in the Pan European as well as world frame because geopolitics was the decisive frame for the territory of the then Czechoslovakia in the years of the Second World War, what we quite often do not manage or do not want to admit. The hanging views of the importance or even exceptionality of this territory for both war events and international political situation belong to the category of pious desires because the lines of force of world as well as European politics must be traced in different strategic development dominants.

Integration, or more properly, no integration of the Slovak history into the Central European, Hungarian and Czechoslovak context remains to be an important issue. Another words, Slovak national question was not born as late as in the years of the Second World War, therefore the revolt history as well as the SNU cannot be viewed in the close connectedness to the history of the Slovak Republic in the years 1939-1945 and their mutual contradictory interaction. The continual understanding of the Slovak history is quite closely related to this problem as the life of a man, of human beings as well as of the whole nations is such. It is, therefore, necessary to thoroughly end that way of both presentation and teaching of history which favors the introduced slogan: "revolutions are the locomotives of history" as if extra them nothing important happened.

Certain unjust underestimation of the revolt and SNU can be experienced from a certain part of the historic community when integrating them into the context of Slovak national history. It can be obviously seen in the problems of Slovak statehood wherein the "rudak concept" (Eudak was a member or sympathizer of former Hlinka's Slovak folk party) is posed against the "upheaval concept" of the Slovak statehood solution. In this context, it is necessary to mention the unsatisfactory processing of the theory and application of Czechoslovakism, Slovak nationalism and political Catholicism which are joint vessels in the Slovak history of that period.

The next problem comes with certain elusiveness in the relation between the all-nation revolt history and the regional revolt history. This question comes especially forward in the region of Banská Bystrica and its surroundings because in the times of the revolt and SNU, the most important events took place

there, top authorities resided there, but also, the historical events had their own local development as well as specifics similar to other places.

The revolt historiography also suffers of certain thematic unbalance. Together with so called "old myths" such as the leading role of the Communist Party or the overestimation of the guerilla movement role (of Soviet troops with their commanders), there is unsatisfactory processing of both civic revolt history (from its differentiation aspect especially) and socio-democratic revolt stream (lingering archaic fractioning into leftist and rightist socio-democrats), as if new myths were born, including purpose-built presentism exalting the Western help to the SNU, the newly introduced myth of the Democratic Party leading role (this party did not even exist in the revolt and the SNU times), the insufficient differentiation within the guerilla troops (both Slovak and Soviet), and it goes as far as the thesis on domestic Czechoslovakian revolt in Slovakia which is an artificial utilitarian construction. Historians pay just minimal attention to the "history of the SNU history" as well as to the revolt participants fates after the year 1945 in particular, but also to the echoes of the SNU in the international press as well as to the whole context and meaning of the SNU with the decisive military formations' operations in the Second World War years or to the conviction pluralism among the international revolt and SNU participants. They have made only first pioneer steps in the research of both so called daily history and the civic life history of the revolt territory with its historical connection to the societal situation in the Slovak Republic; we have an acute lack of empirical analyses in the area of social stratification of the population (cooperation with relevant scientific disciplines such as sociology, politicalology, ethnography, philosophy, demography, statistics, psychology and others).

We discuss on these problems because they immediately touch not only historiography as science but they do it in the same manner to the teaching of the revolt and the SNU history in all kinds of schools. The sinking level of popularization of this history in both mass-medias and in public generally surprises as well. However, the question can also be raised in the following way: What about the attraction of the revolt themes worked out in mass-medias and in public; to what extent didactic validity is attractive in the educational process in both educative and educational institutions. How many historians, research workers and teachers (university, high school and basic school pedagogues) do professionally and scholarly give time to these problems and how frequently they do it especially for young people? To what extent are we able to accept (if at all) the idea that "( ... ) the role of an historian (and let me add, of the educator in the broadest sense of the word too) is to raise questions, to burden rather than give complete answers to questions" (K a m e n e c, 1997, p. 37). In this context I state the remaining black and white, non-conflict evaluation and appraisal of

the revolt personalities, the use of the developmental view absents. For instance, neither Jozef Tiso, the most controversial personality of that period, is the same person (in sense of historicity) before the year 1938 and in period of his being the prominent representative of the martial Slovak State.

The relatively complex source basis for the research and studies of the Slovak revolt absents. This basis must be elaborated at all times since life continually brings new, until now unknown documents and testimonies which help to complete the variecolored mosaie of this historical period. A publication of a document edition is not foreseeable yet. Therefore no wonder those working with documents lacks in the educational process as well as ways of interpretations are quite often different or even conflicting. Pupils and students must study the given historical textual source themselves with the help of the teacher what helps them, so to say, to become a part of the action. In the professional historiography, the politics of the action-originitive subjects of the given time is often derived from the declared aims of basic program documents only, what is absolutely wrong because there is no plastic image of the consequences and impacts of their politics in everyday life. Human testimonies, their utterances, so called oral history, they are very important for the revolt history because they broaden our knowledge of the civic history, the history of everyday life. The differentiated and complicated martially cataclysm, so difficult to understand for an ordinary man, included both heroes - actors and "non-heroes" those who worked but never gain attention of the historical writings' and history textbooks' authors. They are a part of the past too, the history also worked around them, in them as well as together with them. "Feelings and reflections of people in the rebellious region are until now not yet credibly reconstructed, mapped and explained": to quote Ivan Kamenec (1999, p. 30), the historian of the revolt and the SNU, who called this phenomenon euphemistically but aptly as "the history hidden in heads":

The European context of the anti-fascist revolt in Slovakia should thematically and methodologically become significant area of interest in the suggested relations. While relevant states with a strong revolt tradition (e.g. France) have overcome the period of discussions on "revisionism or negationism" seeking to define value parameters of resistance and its place in both national and world histories aiming to help present day, the unemotional "non-ideological" polemics in Slovakia is late from various reasons. This is quite difficult to understand in this time of broad opinion pluralism. The Polish experience that "the national memory is sometimes explained instrumentally, state governments manipulate it and misuse it for its own political goals" (Drynko, 1994, p. 25) is being confirmed through Slovak reality. In this period of integration effort of various European countries, there is an urgent task for the Slovak historiography to

complexly work out the international aspects of the anti-fascist revolt, too. In context to it, and especially in connection with the teaching of history, the reflection of the problems of Slovak revolt at least in the Central European milieu remains to be an important task.

The view of the revolt and the SNU history in the textbooks of our neighboring states gives no reason to contentedness. While the authors of textbooks in the Czech Republic give proportional place to the revolt history in Slovakia as well as they positively appraise the Slovak National Uprising, in the Austrian textbooks it is a taboo theme despite the fact that there are sections on the revolt in occupied territories of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, France, Poland, Austria and Germany. Hungarian authors also pay a little attention to the years 1938-1945 in Slovakia and, both Austrian and Hungarian textbooks present parsimonious historical events of this period mostly relatively tendentiously accompanied with factual inaccuracies (F r e m a l, 1999, pp. 434 ff). Following the Czech Republic in context of our theme, we may most positively value present Polish textbooks of history. In some European states (allied or satellite during the Second World War), the negative or fascistoid, or even fascist picture of this Slovak history period is emphasized, while there is no mention of the revolt and SNU activities (F r e m a l, 1999, pp. 434 ff; S u c h o f i s k i, 1999, pp. 428 ff).

We note at the close: the presented considerations in our contribution besides their information goals and aims, they are also offered as a base for, or an impetus of, a possible broader discussion on questions of the attitude of historiography and revolt history teaching.

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