

Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III

Re-thinking the meaning
of Symbiosis -Past,
Present and Future

Edited by

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and

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Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III
Re-thinking the meaning of Symbiosis—Past, Present and Future

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Upheaval of 1918/1919 in Pressburg/ Bratislava

– An example of differing representations of a common past in Historiography¹

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In my previous paper published the frame of the project *Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube*², I focused on the differences in the historical memory of Slovaks and Hungarians and on how the historiography is an important tool for fixing those differences. Even though Hungarians and Slovaks experienced the same events within the same state (Kingdom of Hungary), their interpretations are contrastive due to biased historical national narratives. Competing national narratives fixed in collective memory create mental borders which separate nations and states. For this paper, I have chosen a characteristic example of an event which Slovaks and Hungarians interpret completely differently and with an emotional connotation. The event is the process of deciding to which state the city Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok will belong after the First World War. At the time, it was one of the provincial cities of Austria-Hungary; however its geographical position on the Danube river and on the border be-

1 Research for this contribution was done at the Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, within the International Slovak-Hungarian project MAD “Shifting Borders - Living through the Changes“ and the project VEGA No. 2/0111/17.

2 DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela: Controversial interpretations - controversial past? Some cases from the Slovak-Hungarian history and historiography. In IEDA, Osamu - NAGAYO, Susumu (eds.): *Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danulbe: II. Road to a Multidimensional Ethnic Symbiosis in the Mid-Danube Region*. Sapporo, Hokkaido University - Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, 2015, pp. 29-44, URL: http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no29_ses/index.html.

tween Austria and Hungary was evaluated as a decisive factor.³ I will focus not on the actual decision-making process during the change of state power, but on the main lines of its interpretations in Slovak and Hungarian historiographies, as well as by historians from other countries.

The issue of the disputed status of the city between the years 1918 and 1919 is closely connected to the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and the emergence of new states - Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria. Similar to the different interpretations of the end of WWI in Hungarian, Slovak and Czechoslovak historiographies, particular historiographies portray the situation of Pressburg, which was officially renamed Bratislava during March 1919, very contrastingly. The differences in interpretation are also expressed in the terminology which is used to describe the change of state power within the city. On the one hand, Hungarian literature denotes it mainly as a violent *breaking-away* from the motherland, i.e. Kingdom of Hungary, which is the interpretation fixed in Hungarian historical memory.⁴ On the other hand, Slovak and Czechoslovak literature from the time of 1918/1919 and the interwar period uses the term *incorporation*, in the sense of integrating the city into the administration of the new Czechoslovak Republic. A term used less frequently is the *connection to Czechoslovakia*⁵. The completely different depiction of the event stems from its

3 More on the “border-position“ of Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok/Bratislava during the WWI: DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Eine Stadt an der Grenze im Grossen Krieg : Am Beispiel Pressburgs. In *Der erste Weltkrieg an der “Heimatfront“: Tagungsband der 33. Schlaininger Gespräche 22. bis 26. September 2013*. Rudolf Kropf (Hg.). Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Abteilung 7- Landesmuseum, 2014, pp. 113-148.

4 However, in his new interpretations, Hungarian historian L. Szarka uses neutral terms: *assumption of power by Czechoslovak authorities; power changes in 1918 - 1919*; or *the building of the Czechoslovak state*. SZARKA. László. Etnické zmeny v Bratislave a mestská administratíva v období medzi svetovými vojnami. In CZOCH, Gábor - KOCSIS, Aranka - TÓTH, Árpád (eds.). *Kapitoly z dejín Bratislavy*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006, pp. 419, 412, 414, 413.

5 See for example, the title of documents' edition “Bratislava, the Slovak capital. The connection of Bratislava to the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 - 1919” (*Bratislava, hlavné mesto Slovenska. Pripojenie Bratislavy k Československej republike roku 1918-1919. Dokumenty*. Eds. Vladimír Horváth, Elemír Rákoš, Jozef Watzka. Bratislava: Obzor, 1977) and of the introductory study to the volume “The incorporation of Bratislava to Czechoslovakia after the First World War“ (KROPILÁK,

inclusion in Slovak and Hungarian national narratives, in which the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and the formation of Czechoslovakia have opposing assessments. For Slovaks and Czechs, the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the monarchy is a story with a positive end. According to this interpretation, after a period of a “1000 years long national oppression” in the Habsburg Monarchy came “national rescue” by means of the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, Hungarian historiography interprets the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy as a defeat, underlining the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary, the loss of several territories and big parts of the population. In line with these controversial interpretations, other dates are accentuated: for Slovaks and Czechs, the creation of Czechoslovakia in October 1918 is more important, while Hungarians focus on June 1920, the Treaty of Trianon.

Different evaluations appear also in the chronology of the situation in Pressburg/Bratislava. In the logic of parallel ethnocentric stories, the method of power transfer in the city was also interpreted in an opposite manner. The Czechoslovak national narrative depicted the power transfer as a natural progression and a non-violent and irreversible act. In the words of the Slovak historian Marián Hronský: “The act of gaining the city was not, in itself, a forced annexation, but a result of the national and democratic revolution in Slovakia.”⁶ Hungarian literature and even some professional historians still interpret the same event as an annexation, occupation, or in the words of a Hungarian literary historian Tamás Gusztáv Filep: a “Czech occupation”⁷.

Both historiographies partially reflect the utterly different policies of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the fight for the determination of new state borders. The placement of Czechoslovak offices for the administration of Slovakia in February in 1919 into Prešporok - a city lying on the new border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia - as well as its renaming to Bratislava, has been evaluated by Slovak literature as a legitimate part of the power transfer which result-

Miroslav. Začlenenie Bratislavy do Československa po prvej svetovej vojne. In *Ibidem*, pp. 17-29).

6 HRONSKÝ, Marián. *The Struggle for Slovakia and the Treaty of Trianon*. Bratislava: Veda, 2001, p. 156; see also: HRONSKÝ, Marián. *Trianon. Vznik hraníc Slovenska a problémy jeho bezpečnosti (1918 - 1920)*. Bratislava: Veda, 2011, p. 186.

7 FILEP, Tamás Gusztáv. Na strane vlády, ale v opozícii. In CZOCH, Gábor - KOC-SIS, Aranka - TÓTH, Árpád (eds.). *Kapitoly z dejín Bratislavy*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006, p. 456.

ed from the Paris Peace Conference. According to Marián Hronský, an expert on the period 1918/1920 in Slovakia: “Enforcement of the name Bratislava was closely connected with application or affirmation of the authority and sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state in this geopolitically important area.”⁸ On the other hand, Hungarian literature emphasizes the same opinions presented by the Hungarian politicians at the time, that borders were decisively determined only on June 4th 1920 by the Treaty of Trianon and that the situation was unsettled before that. The case of the demarcation line signed on 6 December 1918 between Slovak politician Milan Hodža and Hungarian Minister of War Albert Bartha (upon which the city Pozsony remained in Hungary) are interpreted also differently: according to Czechoslovak literature and historiography, it was not valid because Hodža did not have permission from the central government and the Entente⁹ (and there was no doubt at the Paris Peace Conference that Pressburg would be part of Czechoslovakia¹⁰); while according to the Hungarian side there is evidence that the border had not been definitely set at that time and that there was still place for its changes including the city Pressburg.¹¹ The newest interpretations of Slovak historians agree that under the influence of local Hungarian authorities and the press, local inhabitants saw the situation as uncertain and believed the decision about the future Czechoslovak-Hungarian border - as well as the question where Pressburg will belong to - was still under the consideration of Entente powers and they had to wait until the very end of the peace

8 HRONSKÝ, *Trianon*, p. 186.

9 ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Osvobodené Slovensko. Pamäti z rokov 1918 - 1920. Druhý zväzok*. Bratislava: AEP, 2004, pp. 315-317, 322-323; HOUDEK, Fedor. *Osvobodenie Slovenska*. Bratislava, vl. nákladom, 1929, pp. 27-29; HRONSKÝ, *Trianon*, pp. 182-187; KROPILÁK, Začlenenie Bratislavy. In *Bratislava..., Dokumenty*, pp. 20-21.

10 According to Dušan Kováč, the problem to which state Pressburg would belong was not an issue at the Paris peace conference and Pressburg appeared within the borders of Czechoslovakia since the very first plans of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. KOVÁČ, Dušan. Medzi Prešporkom a Bratislavou: premeny mesta v revolučných mesiacoch 1918-1919 In ŠVORC, Peter - HEPPNER, Harald (eds.). *Veľká doba v malom priestore: zlomové zmeny v mestách stredoeurópskeho priestoru a ich dôsledky (1918-1929)*. Prešov; Graz: UNIVERSUM, 2012, pp. 132-134.

11 SZARKA. László. Etnické zmeny v Bratislave a mestská administratíva v období medzi svetovými vojnami. In In CZOCH - KOCSIS - TÓTH (eds.). *Kapitoly z dejín Bratislavy*, pp. 418-422.

conference.¹² It is clear that the choice of the city as the center for Czechoslovak offices in Slovakia, and its renaming to Bratislava was a strategic act and a signal for the Paris Peace Conference - Vavro Šrobár, chief of the Czechoslovak government in Slovakia, admits to this in his memoirs.¹³ Danish historian Peter Bugge, the author of a pioneering article on the renaming process of the city to Bratislava¹⁴, shares Šrobár's opinion. It is also true that older Slovak historiography emphasizes a relatively peaceful process of the power transfer in the city, but it does not conceal the passive resistance of some inhabitants or the expressions of discontent of mainly Hungarian and German inhabitants. Publications now openly write about the casualties, the internment under martial law.¹⁵ Especially Slovak urban ethnologists in their works on the cohabitation of ethnic groups in Pozsony/Bratislava underline the complicated situation during the 1918/1919 power transfer as well as the fact it was not without violence and casualties.¹⁶

12 LUTHER, Daniel. Etnicita a mesto. Polarizácia bratislavskej spoločnosti v prevrate roku 1918. In SALNER Peter - LUTHER, Daniel (eds.). *Etnicita a mesto*. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie SAV, 2001, pp. 17-26; KOVÁČ, Dušan. Medzi Prešporokom a Bratislavou, In *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 140-142; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Z „druhého mesta Uhorska“ na „hlavné mesto Slovenska“. Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok v závere prvej svetovej vojny a jeho premena na Bratislavu. In ŠVORC - HEPPNER (eds.). *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 120-125.

13 ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Oslobodené Slovensko. Pamäti z rokov 1918 - 1920. Druhý zväzok*. Bratislava: AEP, 2004, p. 142 and 137.

14 BUGGE, Peter. The Making of a Slovak City: The Czechoslovak Renaming of Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok, 1918-19. In *Austrian History Yearbook 2004*, pp. 205-227.

15 MICHELA, Miroslav. Maďari v Bratislave 1918 - 1948. In NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard a kol. *Národy a etnické čistky v Bratislave v 20. storočí. Národy a ich osudy v Bratislave 1918 - 1948*. Bratislava: Marenčin, 2011, p. 196; KOVÁČ, Dušan. Medzi Prešporokom a Bratislavou, In *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 140-142; DUDEKOVÁ, Z. „druhého mesta Uhorska“, pp. 126-127.

16 LUTHER, Daniel. Polarizácia bratislavskej spoločnosti, pp. 11-32; LUTHER, Daniel. *Z Prešporoka do Bratislavy*. Bratislava: Marenčin, 2009, p. 24-25; LUTHER, Daniel. Bratislava a mýtus multikultúrnej tolerancie. In *Mýtus - „realita“ - identita. Státní a národní metropole po první světové válce*. Eds. Blanka Soukupová, Miroslav Hroch, Harald Christian Scheu, Zuzana Jurková. (Ed. Urbánní studie, sv. 3). Praha: Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy, 2012, pp. 111-113; SALNER, Peter. Mýtus (alebo realita?) trojjazyčného mesta. (Bratislava 1919 - 1938). In

Foreign historians also studied the upheaval in Prešporok/Bratislava, but not all were able to get beyond the scope of national narratives. A monography of a literary historian Tamás Filep is, unfortunately, an example of a one-sided interpretation which remains in the schemes of the Hungarian national narrative and furthermore, it does so from an extremely nationalist standpoint. His book is a list of grievances, which the Czechoslovak power committed on Hungarians in Pozsony. Such a narrow viewpoint - which excludes context and newer findings in professional literature - is rather logical, since the author uses as his source almost exclusively articles from a Hungarian nationalist local journal *Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó*.¹⁷ Reviews¹⁸ to the monography written by Dutch Historian Pieter van Duin about Social democrats in Pressburg¹⁹, criticize the same problem - but from the other national perspective. As the authors of these reviews criticize, van Duin used predominantly German-language sources and follows mostly only the attitudes of those inhabitants of Pressburg with a German identity. Bálint Varga, in his review to both mentioned books, named the results of such a methodology as “one-sided pictures of Pressburg”.²⁰ Regardless of this, the positive side of van Duin’s book is that he works with many sources that were unused before. A book and articles by a young German historian Iris

Ibidem, p.121-133; SALNER, Peter. Rabín Akiba Schreiber a pán Eugen Singer (paralelné biografie ako jeden z možných uhlov pohľadu na bratislavskú židovskú komunitu v 20. storočí). In *Fenomén Bratislava. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie*. Ed. Matej Medvecký. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2011, p. 113.

17 The fact Filep used almost Hungarian sources only, underlined also the Hungarian reviews of his book: GAUCSÍK, István. Főhatalomváltás Pozsonyban. Filep Tamás új könyvéről. In *Irodalmi Szemle online*, 4. 12. 2012, URL: <http://isz.bici.sk/lapszamok/2012/2012-december/1524-gaucsik-istvan-fhatalomvaltas-pozsonyban>

18 NOLTE, Claire. Pieter C. van Duin. Central European Crossroads: Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867-1921. *The American Historical Review*, Volume 116, Issue 3, 1 June 2011, pp. 894-895, URL: <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/116/3/894/45408>; LARSON, Jonathan L. Review of Duin, Pieter C. van, Central European Crossroads: Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867-1921. In *HABSBURG, H-Net Reviews*, June, 2010. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=29925>

19 VAN DUIN, Pieter. *Central European Crossroads: Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867-1921*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.

20 VARGA, Bálint. Egyoldalú Pozsony-képek. In *AETAS*, 2001, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 206-209.

Engemann significantly contributed to the subject of power transfer in the city. She writes about the Slovakization process of Bratislava while taking into account the varying viewpoints of inhabitants based on their ethnicities. She concludes that people's attitudes were pragmatic: they chose the waiting strategy and showed loyalty to the new state formally, while waiting for the eventual power changes.²¹ Similar to Bugge, she focuses on the process of "national changes" through the symbolic possession of the city and its important institutions. In the afore-mentioned article about the renaming of the city to Bratislava, Peter Bugge concludes: "Indeed, by officially codifying Bratislava in March [1919] - before the end of the peace conference - the Czechoslovak authorities had also demonstrated their linguistic possession of the city. The introduction of the name *Bratislava* symbolically 'Czechoslovakized' the city."²²

A symbolic possession of the city became political practice before and after 1918. Newest research of the ethnic coexistence in Pressburg/Bratislava before and after 1918 showed that each of the ethnicities there created their own image of the city and integrated it in their national historical narrative. For Hungarians it was not Pressburg, but the Hungarian *Pozsony*, while they emphasized the significance of the city for the Hungarian nation and state. According to their interpretation, *Pozsony* presented the most western stronghold of the Hungarian nation in the Kingdom of Hungary since it was situated on the border of Austria and Hungary. In the Hungarian national narrative, the city also carried significance as the scene of struggle for independence in the 1848/49 revolution - the so-called March laws were announced there. In addition to Germans and Hungarians, Slovaks and Jews made up a smaller but stable part of the population of the city. Since before 1918 Slovaks represented a non-dominant fraction in the city not only in numbers but also in political and commercial power, the inclusion of the city in their national narrative became significant only after the emergence of the Czechoslovak Republic. The ethnic composition of the population changed mostly due to migration but also as a result of a the change in declared ethnic identity. Multiethnicity and an ambivalent "national character" of the city was the subject of disputes before and after the dissolution of Hungary and it

21 ENGEMANN, Iris. Die Slovakisierung Bratislavas. Universität, Theater und Kultusgemeinen 1918-1948. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2012; ENGEMANN, Iris. Slovakizácia Bratislavy v rokoch 1918 - 1948. Úvahy na príklade mestskej rímskokatolíckej obce. In *Fenomén Bratislava*, pp. 11-28.

22 BUGGE, The Making of a Slovak City, p. 221.

was purposely politically manipulated. One of the most important arguments used between 1918 and 1919 was the issue of the national and ethnic composition of the population and the question “which nationality dominates the city”. However, the struggle for the “national character” of the city had already been under way for several decades, and it was strengthened largely from the 1870s onward. The strife can also be illustrated by the city’s name in different languages: German *Pressburg*, Hungarian *Pozsony*, Slovak *Prešporok* and after February 1919, *Bratislava*. On one hand, the varying names expressed tolerance and coexistence among the city’s inhabitants, but on the other hand they were an expression of national competition and nationalist state politics of the state - a change of name represented a symbolic victory over the city. The name became an expression of affiliation and loyalty to the state as well as to the dominant nation.²³

As for the nationalist character of the city, even in the second half of the 19th century, *Pressburg* was a city in which Germans dominated in numbers as well as commerce. Nationalities which followed were Hungarians and Slovaks, while German culture was further strengthened by Vienna’s proximate location. Vienna served as a cultural role model and local elites kept in close touch with it. After the Austro-Hungarian Settlement of 1867, local Hungarian cultural and political elites began to push for a Hungarian character of the city. They tried to strengthen it by building monuments to Hungarian national heroes, by renaming streets and other public areas, as well as by organizing public events which used Hungarian national symbols. This effort was supported by state policies, which targeted to create a united political nation in Hungary according to the so-called French model, and this way politically emancipate from the Austrian part of the monarchy. The problem was that only people declaring Hungarian ethnic identity fell under the meaning of “political nation” in Hungary, while members of other nations, which comprised more than half of Hungary’s population until the end of the 19th century, were defined only as cultural minorities which use a different language. The asymmetry of this hierarchy was expressed in the terminology from the time: the Hungarian *nation* vs. non-magyar speak-

23 MANNOVÁ, Elena. Historiografia Bratislavy. Diferencovaná prezentácia minulosti multietnického mesta po politických zlomoch 19. a 20. storočia. In CZOCH - KOCSIS - TÓTH (eds.). *Kapitoly z dejín Bratislavy*, pp. 49-62; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela a kol. *Medzi provinciou a metropolou. Obraz Bratislavy v 19. a 20. storočí*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2012.

ing *nationalities*. At the time when Hungarian political elites tried to assert the model of a Hungarian political nation, its application was already impossible - the nation-building processes in the Habsburg Monarchy were so advanced, that it was not possible to create a common supranational identity in the Kingdom of Hungary. Furthermore, this kind of supranational identity was meant as an ethnic Hungarian (Magyar) identity and national ideology.

Statistics of ethnic composition of the population also became an argument for proving the national character of the city before and after 1918. However, the censuses are not credible sources in defining the ethnic composition of inhabitants for several reasons. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, Magyar elites made an attempt to weaken the domination of Germans in Pressburg and present this also in the statistics. According to the censuses, the proportion of Germans in the city decreased from 66 % in 1880 to 42 % in 1910, while during those 30 years, the percentage of Magyars had grown from 16% to 41%. The Slovak population was stable, but small in the city (its number decreased from 16% to 15% during the same period). These differences cannot be explained only as an effect of migration and modernization, but the assimilation and purposeful changes in declaration of ethnic identity, mostly in cases of bi- or tri-lingual persons. Moreover, the questions on ethnic belonging were changed in the statistics: in the 1880 census, the question on the mother tongue was decisive by stating ethnic identity, while after 1900 it was the main “language of communication”. Due to migration, but also because of intentional changes of ethnicity in statistics by multilingual inhabitants within the new state, there were big differences between the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of Pressburg before and Bratislava after WWI. According to the 1919 census, there lived 36% Germans, 29% ethnic Magyars and 51% “Czechoslovaks”.²⁴

Discussions about the unreliability of statistics of the ethnic composition of populations in Hungary and Czechoslovakia are well known - as well as disputes, which on one hand consider them a “statistical Hungarization” before

24 SVETONĚ, Ján. Od maďarizácii k reslovakizácii Bratislavy. In *Slovanská Bratislava I. Sborník príspevkov k dejinám hl. mesta Bratislavy*. Bratislava 1948, p. 269; FRANCOVÁ, Zuzana. Obyvatelia - sociálna a konfesijná skladba. In *Bratislava, Ročenka Mestského múzea v Bratislave*, 1998, Vol. 10, p. 22; MANNOVÁ, Elena - DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Komu patrí Bratislava? Multietnické mesto ako miesto lokálnej, národnej a nadnárodnej reprezentácie. In DUDEKOVÁ a kol. *Medzi provinciou a metropolou*, pp. 19-20.

1918, but on the other one as “statistical Slovakization,” or “statistical Czechoslovakization” after 1918.²⁵ This is also true for statistics of the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of Pressburg before 1918 and Bratislava after 1919. Both Slovak and Hungarian historians held long discussions about this issue.²⁶ Both sides agree that a purposeful interpretation or more precisely, misinterpretation existed when the statistics were first created. Both states had an interest in emphasizing the identity they asserted - in case of the Kingdom of Hungary a growing number of Hungarians and in case of Czechoslovakia of Slovaks and Czechs. New research on collective identities show that the state’s effort to forcibly change the identity of the city and its inhabitants was enforced with difficulty and slowly during both regimes. Members of minorities frequently chose a pragmatic strategy: on the outside, they expressed the expected loyalty and identity (be it by participating in national celebrations or by filling a “nationality” line in a statistic), while in private they communicated in a different language and cultivated their minority culture. New research examines ethnic and national identity as part of a personal identity, which can be changed for a specific purpose or according to a given situation. Frequent and sudden changes of political regimes, especially in the 20th century, resulted in people declaring one nationality on the outside but practicing a different one in private.²⁷

When evaluating people’s attitudes in the uncertain period of the turn of 1918 and 1919, changes in loyalties towards the state which were caused by

25 MÉSÁROŠ, Július. Deformácie vo využívaní sčítaní ľudu v novodobých maďarsko-slovenských sporoch. In MÉSÁROŠ, Július. *Zložitá hľadanie pravdy o slovenských dejinách*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2004, pp.196-210; MÉSÁROŠ, Július. *Maďarizácia a asimilácia*. In *Ibidem*, pp. 211-220.

26 SZARKA, Etnické zmeny v Bratislave, In CZOCH - KOCSIS - TÓTH (eds.), *Kapitoly z dejín Bratislavy*, pp. 411-421; ZEMKO, Milan. *Slovakizácia Bratislavy v 20. storočí podľa štatistik*. In FERENČUHOVÁ, Bohumila a kol. *Slovensko a svet v 20. storočí. Kapitoly ku 70. narodeninám Valeriána Bystrického*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2006, pp. 26-33; HOLEC, Roman. *Zmeny národnostného zloženia miest na Slovensku po roku 1918 a možnosti ich interpretácie*. In ŠVORC - HEPPNER (eds.), *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 13-29.

27 KAMENEC, Ivan - KREKOVIČOVÁ, Eva - MANN, Arne B. - MANNOVÁ, Elena - ŠUTAJ, Štefan - TANCER, Jozef. *Identita a menšina*. In KILIÁNOVÁ, Gabriela - KOWALSKÁ, Eva - KREKOVIČOVÁ, Eva (eds.), *My a tí druhí v modernej spoločnosti. Konštrukcie a transformácie kolektívnych identít*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2009, pp. 343-497.

WWI, are not sufficiently taken into account. The emergency war regime and its negative social implications strongly influenced people's attitudes - loyalty towards the regime weakened during the war. Reasons for the weakening loyalty to the state regime were primarily not national disputes or the effort of national liberation of non-dominant nations. During the war, social differences significantly increased as a result of the economic crisis among people from the lower as well as middle classes. The perception of social injustice resulted in the radicalization of peasants and workers, as well as the middle classes of townsmen including clerks and the intelligentsia. What people expected from the state regime was not only a quick end to the war, but also compensation for their war suffering - significant state reform including the solution of ethnic problems.²⁸ Instead, new states emerged in October 1918, and Hungary and southern Slovakia became subjects of the fight between the Czechoslovak state and revolutionary leftists, the so-called "Hungarian Soviet Republic". New research of the circumstances in cities of today's Slovakia (besides Bratislava²⁹ for example

28 For the social consequences of WWI in Pressburg and radicalization of its inhabitants see: DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Veľká vojna v meste a jej sociálne dôsledky - príklad Prešporka/ Bratislavy. In MICHÁLEK, Slavomír a kol. *Slovensko v labyrinte moderných európskych dejín. Pocta historikovi Milanovi Zemkovi*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV v Prodamu, 2014, pp. 49-65; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Výnimčnosť alebo normalita? Každodennosť Veľkej vojny v Prešporku/Bratislave. In *Theatrum historiae*, 2015, Vol. 16, pp.193-211.

29 On how uncertain the situation in Pressburg/Bratislava during the Béla Kún's regime in Hungary was perceived even by the highest Czech and Slovak politicians (as well as French military chief commanders), see the newest study: BOISSERIE, Étienne. "Markovič zdeluje..." Úryvky z korešpondencie Ivana Markoviča medzi Parížom, Prahou a Bratislavou na jar 1919. In *Slovensko a Európa medzi demokraciou a totalitou: kapitoly z dejín 20. storočia k jubileu Bohumily Ferenčuhovej*. Eds Matej Hanula, Michal Kšíňan. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV vo Veda, 2017, pp. 29-43.

Nové Zámky³⁰, Banská Bystrica³¹, Lučenec³², Prešov³³, Košice and others³⁴) - which experienced armed conflict for the new Czechoslovak-Hungarian border and especially those in which the Hungarian leftist order established a radical regime in the summer of 1919 - show that the cities' inhabitants perceived the situation as chaotic and difficult to comprehend. On one hand, the population was informed about the creation of Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak offices took over power. On the other hand, they constantly received news from Hungary that state borders were not yet finalized. Many lived through repeated changes of Czechoslovak and Hungarian troops, many were subject to terror and they saw the fights as a continuation of the war, since men were in turns conscripted to the Czechoslovak and Hungarian armies. The situation in Bratislava, was considered definitely more stable in comparison to cities in eastern Slovakia, where the extreme leftist Hungarian leaders established the new regime and persecuted the supporters of the Czechoslovak Republic.

In this context, it is important to consider the temporary emergency measures which the Czechoslovak power put in place on the basis of martial law. This was enacted on March 25, after the establishment of the Hungarian leftist regime on March 21, considering it as necessary during the threat of armed conflict. During such a disturbing situation of power transfer, Šrobár and his

30 DIKÁČZOVÁ, Diana. Boje o Nové Zámky v rokoch 1918-1919. In *Historické rozhľady* (Zborník príspevkov Katedry histórie FF UCM v Trnave), 2005, pp. 111-143.

31 KURHAJCOVÁ, Alica. Od monarchie k republike: Symbolické utváranie verejného priestoru a „nových“ identít na príklade Banskej Bystrice (1918 - 1922). In *Historie - Otázky - Problémy*, 2016, No. 1, pp. 33-50.

32 MIČIANIK, Pavel. Vznik Česko-slovenskej republiky a vpád maďarskej červenej armády v hornom Novohrade 1918 - 1919. In *Zborník z druhého ročníka Stretnutia priateľov regionálnej histórie, Hradište 16. november 2016*, pp. 121-151.

33 ĎURIŠIN, Martin. Prešov ako centrum „revolúcie“ - Slovenská republika rád (1919). In ŠVORC - HEPPNER (eds.). *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 179-200; ŠVORC, Peter. Prešov v Prevrate a po ňom. In ŠVORC, Peter a kol. *Veľká doba a jej dôsledky. Prešov v 20. rokoch 20. storočia*. Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2012. pp. 11-68; ĎURIŠIN, Martin. Prešov a „Slovenska Radova Republika“ (1919). In *Ibidem*, pp. 69-94.

34 ŠVORC, Peter. Mestá východného Slovenska v čase prevratu (1918) a po ňom. In ŠVORC - HEPPNER (eds.). *Veľká doba v malom priestore*, pp. 31-54; FURMANÍK, M. Slovenská republika rád na Spiši. In: *Z minulosti Spiša*, ročenka 2014, pp. 135-148.

ministry for Slovakia often made ad hoc decisions, as in the case of renaming Pressburg to Bratislava.³⁵ The renaming of the city was discussed since February 1919 between the Ministry Plenipotentiary for the Administration of Slovakia (MPS) and the Prague Presidium of the government, while the problem whether to make “Czecho/Slovakization” of the name or not was not seen as an issue, but its grammatical form (Bratislava instead of Bratislav).³⁶ Since February 1919, the name Bratislava started to be published in the decisions of Czechoslovak authorities in posters.³⁷ The decision about the new name of the city was made by Vavro Šrobár himself, or to be more precise, within the (MPS).³⁸ It was

35 As it was documented chronologically by Susumu Nagayo: NAGAYO, Susumu. When did Bratislava become Bratislava? - A Reflection on the Name of a City in the Borderlands (Part II.). In *Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: II. Road to a Multidimensional Ethnic Symbiosis in the Mid-Danube Region*. Ed. by IEDA, Osamu and NAGAYO, Susumu. (Ed. Slavic Eurasian Studies No. 29). Sapporo, Hokkaido University, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, 2015, pp. 45-69.

36 According to the circular letter of the Presidium of the government (Presidium Ministerské rady) in Prague addressed to all ministeriums (written in Czech): “In the Presidium of the Ministerial Council on 19. 2. 1919 it was decided, that for the indication of the city Prešpurk [the Czech variant of the Slovak name ‘Prešporok’] the name ‘Bratislav’ was used.” Circular letter No. 3304 of Presidium to “all ministeriums”, 22. 2. 1919. Národní archiv, Praha, Presidium ministerské rady, 1918-1945, karton 3335, No. 746/2. After Šrobár’s request from 13.3. 1919, the Presidium changed his previous decision (stated in the fore-mentioned circular letter from 22. 2. 1919) and in his circular letter No. 4562 from 16. 3. 1919 made his final decision to use “Bratislava (instead of Bratislav)”. Národní archiv, Praha, Ibidem. (both documents are published in: *Bratislava, hlavné mesto Slovenska. Pripojenie Bratislavy k Československej republike roku 1918-1919. Dokumenty*, No. 151, p. 301 and No. 166 p.317).

37 The first poster with the name *Bratislava* is dated February 12, 1919. In this poster - a declaration of V. Šrobár published with the subtitle “The Czechoslovak state has the right of total sovereignty over the occupied territory!“, it is stated: “As it is clear from the note [of the Entente Powers from 18 January 1919], Bratislava belongs and will belong to the Czechoslovak republic.” Nóta dohodových mocností o Slovensku. Archív mesta Bratislavy, Zbierka plagátov a drobných tlačí, Prvá svetová vojna, rok 1919, karton 25. (Published also in: *Bratislava, hlavné mesto Slovenska. Pripojenie Bratislavy k Československej republike roku 1918-1919. Dokumenty*, pp. 275-276.)

38 In his letter to the Presidium of government (dated Bratislava, March 13, 1919), Šrobár requested the revision of the Presidium decision, which stated “the official

done quickly and Šrobár as MPS started to publish the name Bratislava in the local official materials, but he published the final decision about renaming the city to Bratislava not until the definite decision of the central government in Prague. Finally, Šrobár officially codified the renaming to Bratislava by publishing it as a law article on the same day as he enacted the martial law status.³⁹ For him, it was an important symbolic sign toward Hungary as well as the Paris Peace Conference that the city definitely belongs to Czechoslovakia.⁴⁰

For Šrobár, the inclusion of Pressburg into the new Czechoslovak state was a “matter of national prestige”. In his memoirs, he described the importance of this border city for the new state clearly: “We had to build a strong guard on the Danube [to protect] against revolutionary Hungarians at home and beyond the Danube. Not to go to Prešporok [i.e. not to create a seat of the Czechoslovak offices for Slovakia in Pressburg in February 1919] signified to give up the Danube, Žitný ostrov⁴¹ and all of southern Slovakia. The mistake from 6th of December [that is the above-mentioned Hodža-Bartha demarcation line from 6. 12. 1918] was to be definitively removed; this was to be done as soon as possible, because Károlyi, the Prime Minister of the Hungarian government, sent those in Prešporok a note, that the Hungarian nation will never renounce their Hungari-

name shall be Bratislav” and asked to use “right historical name *Bratislava*”. He added that this decision was made “a month ago already”: “In the session of government councillors [‘v zasedání vládních poradců’ - i.e. within the MPS] Bratislava as the official name for Prešpurk was accepted a month ago already.” Letter of V. Šrobár as the MPS to the Presidium of government, 13.3.1919, Národní archiv, Praha, Presidium ministerské rady, 1918-1945, karton 3335, No. 746/2.

39 Šrobár’s decision about the law status was dated March 25 1919 and published on March 27. For publication of the MPS decision about “fixation of the name Bratislava” see: Ustálenie mena Bratislavy / Bratislava névnek megállapítása. In *Úradné noviny župy prešporskej / Pozsonyvármegye Hivatalos Lapja*, 27. 3. 1919, p. 67 (for a photocopy of the article see: DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela a kol. *Medzi provinciou a metropolou*, p. 248.)

40 See Šrobár’s declaration in footnote 36; ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Oslobodené Slovensko, Druhý zväzok*, p. 137; KROPILÁK, Začlenenie Bratislavy. In *Bratislavy... Dokumenty*, p. 26.

41 *Žitný ostrov* (in Slovak), *Csallóköz* (Hungarian), *Great Rye Island* (English) – a territory near Bratislava and along the Slovak-Hungarian border, named after its location between rivers Danube and Little Danube.

an brothers living in Prešporok and Košice.”⁴² As part of an official ceremony organized by the Czechoslovak government on the occasion of its arrival into Prešporok, Šrobár evaluated the presence of foreign delegates as very important: “they increased the importance of the historical fact that Slovaks and Czechs have permanently settled in Prešporok, and that the Danube line became the final border, at home and abroad.”⁴³ According to Šrobár’s memoirs, at the beginning of the leftist regime in Hungary, some Slovak politicians in their meetings on March 22 and 25 1919, suggested to move the central Czechoslovak offices in Slovakia from Bratislava elsewhere due to the danger of a direct attack of the Hungarian army on the city. Šrobár resolutely rejected the idea, seeing the presence of the offices as evidence of the definitive inclusion of Bratislava and of the southern border-region of Slovakia into Czechoslovakia. In his words: “If I give approval for the departure of central government offices from Bratislava to our high-ranking employees and officers and heads of our administrative departments, we will lose Bratislava and Žitný ostrov forever. If our government leaves Bratislava, who will take lead of a city of eighty thousand? Definitely not Slovaks. ... I had the full, unlimited power over Slovakia. If I approve this departure, Slovakia’s fate is sealed. Who knows how much they will cut away from it? ... If we leave Bratislava, the whole of Slovakia will be abandoned.”⁴⁴ In this context we have to evaluate Šrobár’s decision to slovakize the new official name of the city.

The very complex period of 1918/1919 in Prešporok/Bratislava still requires new analyses from a multinational perspective. What looks promising is new research of changing identities and loyalties, which can be a way to overcome the fundamental differences in interpretation of Slovak and Hungarian historiographies. However, historiography has a smaller impact than we might think. Historiography, especially on a professional level, is only one of many elements which influence mass media and public opinion in general. Film and modern multimedia are able to impact significantly larger populations than scientific literature. The path towards understanding is in learning about both sides through the optic of pluralism and the democratic principle. Including stories of minorities in national narratives is a logical precondition towards a “reconcilia-

42 ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Oslobodené Slovensko, Druhý zväzok*, p. 14.

43 ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Oslobodené Slovensko, Druhý zväzok*, p. 15-16.

44 ŠROBÁR, Vavro. *Oslobodené Slovensko, Druhý zväzok*, p. 137.

tion.” Even if historiography now mitigates the spikes of misunderstanding and tension between Hungary and Slovakia, state policy of historical memory remains a much more effective instrument. We, as historians, are responsible for an effort to reconstruct the past without prejudice and stereotypes based on objective analysis of multiple, and not one-sided sources. Scientific discussions create an opportunity for the reconciliation of different interpretations. We should make an effort not only to understand these interpretations without the lenses of national ideologies, but also to remain clear about the political agenda surrounding them.