

Controversial interpretations – controversial past? Some cases from the Slovak – Hungarian history and historiography.¹

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To begin with, I ask a question which many papers are trying to answer in this volume: Do different interpretations of the same events imply a different reality? And from the perspective of history: do controversial interpretations suggest a conflicting reality in the past? The question arises from the differences in the framing of the Slovak and Hungarian history, especially their common experience in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Hungary.

Reading any literature about the history of territories populated by Hungarians and Slovaks, you can see differing *national narratives*: on the one hand, the story of the Hungarians and on the other, a different history narrative of the Slovaks. Even though these narratives have the same structure and they are connected by centuries of shared history in a common state, each one emphasizes different

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moments. Some are highlighted and even exaggerated while others are overlooked. Frequently the same events are often evaluated oppositely. From this stems a different *terminology* and partly also *chronology* of the common history. But, both the form and the aim of the narrative are the same: it is a series of political events which are considered as key in the development of one's own nation and a national state.

In my paper, I want to briefly outline basic differences in the interpretation of Slovak and Hungarian history of the 19th and 20th centuries. I will point out some controversial cases from the Slovak-Hungarian historiography.

Competing national narratives

Different portrayals of the past come from the character and the purpose of the formation of history writings, which are created as narratives of a nation's past from the standpoint of modern nationalism. This holds not only for Slovaks and Hungarians, but also for nations inside and outside Europe. Like other nations in Europe, Hungarian and Slovak history narratives were created in the nation-building period from the standpoint of modern nationalism. They were rival stories since the beginning, and they developed in confrontation and opposition. Within the framework of the Habsburg monarchy, both Hungarian and Slovak history narratives confronted each other; but at the same time, they challenged nationalist narratives of other nations in the Habsburg Monarchy – German, Czech, Polish, Croatian, Romanian etc.

Political turmoil in the 20th century caused the controversial national interpretations to strengthen further. The dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 was a significant change in the domination of particular ethnic groups. The former non-dominant nations became dominant in the new states. But, it was not the case of ethnic Magyars in Czechoslovakia and Romania, where they became a national minority. Borders of its new states (national states) were

impossible to determine on the basis of ethnic borders. For this reason, certain former dominant ethnic groups became national minorities.

The national character of new states – Czechoslovakia and Hungary was decisive for further interpretations of Slovak and Hungarian history. Even though the civic principle was established in the law, interpretations of the past were still decided by the national principle. Both Slovaks and Hungarians included the dissolution of the monarchy in 1918 in their history narratives, but with an opposite results. For the Slovaks and Czechs, it is a story with a positive, victorious end: after a period of national oppression in the monarchy came so-called national rescue in conditions of democratic Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, Hungarians consider the end of the Habsburg Monarchy as a defeat – the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary resulted in the Trianon trauma.

After the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy

After the First World War, old myths were repeated or new ones were produced in order to consolidate the identity and integrity of the new national states. These purposely used the argumentation from the 19th century. The most pronounced of the simplified interpretations was the myth of a thousand-year long oppression of Slovaks in the Kingdom of Hungary, which was successfully put across by Slovak and Czechoslovak historiography (both amateur and professional). On the Hungarian side, it was a deformed interpretation of the causes of the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and of the politics towards minority nations in the Kingdom of Hungary. These were spread by popular and scholarly writings in Hungary. On both sides, ideological national constructs and propaganda were purposely targeted abroad. The Hungarian irredentist propaganda demanded border revision of the new states and interpreted their creation as a violent separation from the fundamental Hungarian territory. According to the propaganda, new states and their borders were not formed by its citizens and by domestic politicians, but rather were an unjust dictate

of the Great Powers after The First World War.

According to these controversial interpretations, other history events and dates are accentuated. For Slovaks, the creation of Czechoslovakia in October of 1918 is marked as the most significant milestone. For Hungarians, it is June 1920, the final border establishment by the Treaty of Trianon. What is common is a small accent on the date of the end of The First World War in November 1918; and little interest in the social consequences of the war regime on the population's loyalty. In my opinion, the weakening loyalty is the true reason why the population demanded and accepted a change of political regime in the form of the establishment of new states. The loyalty to the Habsburg monarchy changed during the war not only within the so-called small or non-dominant nations, such as Slovaks and Czechs, but in the lower classes in general, regardless of their ethnic identity. And, what is important, the loyalty to the war regime was weak also among the middle class including civil servants, which are traditionally considered the main supporters of the state. Slovak historiography has examined this problem only in the last decade²,

2 Focus on changes in loyalty to the war regime during the First World War in Slovakia and the Kingdom of Hungary were made by Slovak historian Elena Mannová, Gabriela Dudeková and László Vörös, in connection to social-economic crisis Roman Holec and to political oppositon Dušan Kováč. See the synthethis on WWI and Slovakia: KOVÁČ, Dušan a kol. *Prvá svetová vojna 1914 – 1918*. Ed. Slovensko v 20. storočí, druhý zväzok. Bratislava : VEDA, 2008 and for example: MANNOVÁ, Elena. Koncept lojality. Postoj k autoritám na Slovensku počas prvej svetovej vojny. In *Historický časopis*, 2007, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 681 - 698; MANNOVÁ, Elena. Zmeny vo vedomí slovenskej spoločnosti za prvej svetovej vojny. In PODRIMAVSKÝ, Milan – KOVÁČ, Dušan (eds.). *Slovensko na začiatku 20. storočia. Spoločnosť, štát a národ v súradniciach doby*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV 1999, pp. 199-212; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Dvojsečná zbraň. Vojnové nadšenie, perzekúcie a problém lojality Slovákov v prvej svetovej vojne. In IVANÍČKOVÁ, Edita a kol. *Kapitoly z histórie stredoeurópskeho priestoru v 19. a 20. storočí. Pocta k 70-ročnému jubileu Dušana Kováča*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2011, pp. 243- 268; DUDEKOVÁ, Vojenská cenzúra korešpondencie. Niekoľko úvah o vzťahu armády a spoločnosti za prvej svetovej vojny. In SEGEŠ,

whereas the Hungarian historiography, which is more advanced in the area of social history, is lacking the social history of the First World War.³ Here, I see an opportunity for a correction of traditional interpretations both for the Slovak and Hungarian historiography and a chance for bringing opinions closer together.

Wrongdoings during and after WWII

After World War I, the Slovaks and Hungarians became competing neighbors in two different national states. The main stress tension was Hungarian effort to revise borders of the new states. This attempt was partly satisfied under the influence of power of Hitler's Germany

Vladimír – SEĎOVÁ, Božena (ed.). *Miles Semper Honestus. Zborník štúdií vydaný pri príležitosti životného jubilea Vojtecha Dangla*. Bratislava : Vojenský historický ústav 2007, pp. 125-135; JAKEŠOVÁ, Elena – DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela –MANNOVÁ, Elena. Spoločnosť: kultúrny a spoločenský život. In KOVÁČ, Dušan a kol. Prvá svetová vojna 1914-1918. Ed. Slovensko v 20. storočí, druhý zväzok. Bratislava : VEDA 2008, pp. 161-230; VÖRÖS, László. Slováci: “najvlasteneckejší Uhri” alebo “slobodný národ”? Sociálne reprezentácie Slovákov v maďarskej tlači v rokoch 1914 – 1918. In VÖRÖS, László. *Analytická historiografia verus národné dejiny. “Národ” ako sociálna reprezentácia*. Pisa : Plus-Pisa University Press, 2010, pp. 125-154; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Vojnové nadšenie alebo odpor? Reakcie na vypuknutie I. svetovej vojny. In *Historická revue*, Vol. 25, 2014, No. 7, pp. 24-30.

3 In all editions of synthesis on the social history of Hungary, the period of the First World War is absent: GYÁNI, Gábor – KÖVÉR, György. *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*. Budapest : Osiris kiadó, 2006. Several particular studies on loyalty were written by Szabó Dániel, see: SZABÓ, Dániel. A magyar háborús lelkesedés az első világháború kitörésekor. In *Sfársít si inceput de epocă. Korsakvég – korszakkezdet*. Zaláu – Sâtmărean, 1998, pp. 75-88; SZABÓ, Dániel. Magyarország nem volt, hanem lesz. Háborús lelkesedés a populáris színielőadások tükrében. In SZABÓ, Dániel (ed.). *Az első világháború*. Budapest : Osiris Kiadó, 2009, pp. 727-739; SZABÓ, Dániel. Katonadalok és az első világháború. In *Aetas*, Vol. 22, 2007, No. 1, pp. 44-62; SZABÓ, Dániel. Hogyan fogadták a magyarok az első világháborút? In *Emlékezés egy nyár-éjszakára*. In *Tiszatájonline.hu – irodalom, művészet, kultúra*, 4. Sept. 2014, online: <http://tiszatajonline.hu/?p=60827>

in November 1938 (Vienna Arbitration). It is natural, that the border change was perceived in a conflicting way: from the viewpoint of Hungarians, this served as a satisfaction for a part of the lost land after WWI. On the contrary, Slovaks viewed it as an unacceptable and temporary occupation. On the Slovak side, this experience shaped into a permanent concern that Hungary has territorial demands in southern Slovakia. On the other hand, Hungarians feel injustice – for repeated loss of territories and wrongdoings during the forced displacement of Hungarians on the basis of collective guilt after the Second World War. Wrongdoings from this period are still alive in the family memories of Slovaks and Hungarians on both sides of the state border. Experiences and wrongdoings from the period after the arbitrage are still vivid in personal testimonies of Slovaks and in their family memory; for Hungarians, it is the forced displacement from Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. Several of these topics were tabooed or misinterpreted during the communist dictatorship.

Nationalization of historiography after 1989

After the fall of the socialist state regime in 1989, two trends characterized the Slovak and Hungarian historiography. First, undoubtedly a positive trend, was an effort for an objective interpretation of the past, freed from the deformations of Marxist ideology. However, nationalization of history reemerged as a trend at the same time. Comparisons of historiographies of post-socialist countries showed that not even mandatory application of Marxist theses about class oppression and internationalism eliminated certain nationalisms.⁴ Application of Marxism in so-called socialist countries did not mean an end of national narratives. Instead, each historiography integrated the prescribed Marxist constructs into

4 IVANIŠEVIĆ, A. - KAPPELER, A. - LUKAN, W. - SUPPAN, A. (eds.). *Klio ohne Fesseln? Historiographie im östlichen Europa nach dem Zusammenbruchs des Kommunismus*. Wien – Frankfurt – Berlin – Bern - Oxford 2002 (Österreichische Osthefte, Sonderband 16).

its existing nationalist narrative. After the fall of communism, the freedom and plurality of opinions brought also a return of extremist nationalist sentiments from the pre-communist period. In Slovakia, these were advocates for the regime of the independent Slovak Republic, which was formed in 1939 (14. March) as a by-product of Hitler's Germany's expansion eastward. The regime lost its credibility not only by collaborating with Fascism, but also by its non-democratic persecutions against its own citizens, especially the Holocaust.

Historical interpretations are significantly influenced by politicians depending on the political situation at the time. Tension in the Slovak-Hungarian relationship materializes when public interest is focused on the status of the minority in the neighboring state, i.e. the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Slovak minority in Hungary.

After the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993, the government was interested in building a national state of the Slovaks, strengthened by the historical narrative about the route to independence. This led to further nationalization of not only amateur but also scholarly history writing and even to clashes between historians and historical departments. In Hungary, the old revisionists' resentments are present in the public discourse. Several organizations with the support of Government aim for the so called historical Hungary with borders from before 1918 and 1920. In 2010, the Hungarian parliament codified the so called Trianon Law, which means the official interpretation of the historical event defined by politics, not by the autonomous history experts.

A Common dialogue

Despite political controversies and nationalist history interpretations in Hungary and Slovakia, several initiatives toward a common dialogue emerged in the last two decades. They should serve to discuss the problems of shared history and to create a useful social platform. Cooperation on an academic basis was developed mainly by the bilateral Slovak-Hungarian committee of historians since

1993, which coordinated a couple of research projects, conferences and publications.⁵ Both leaders of this committee – Prof. Šutaj and Dr. Szarka are the best experts to summarize the results of such the cooperation. Key initiatives were also created by the members of the young historian generation.

But, the call for Slovak – Hungarian discussion about common history was published already in 1991 by Slovak Historian Július Mésároš, who was persecuted during the “normalization” period of communism and who was a specialist on the history of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 19th century. As a starting point of a common dialogue, he proposed to start a discussion about the results of the newest Hungarian and Slovak synthesis of history.

According to his evaluation, Slovak conception abandoned the myth of the thousand year oppression of Slovaks in the Kingdom of Hungary and the stereotype of Magyars as the enemies of Slovaks. It disproved “a general opinion that Hungarians, as a supposed ruling nation in the Hungarian state are our age-long oppressors and bitter enemies.” In the Hungarian historical syntheses, Mésároš recognized a higher objectivity compared to older historiography. However, he criticized that Hungarian historians identify the history of the Kingdom of Hungary with the history of the Hungarian nation, although this monarchy was a multinational state.⁶ In this context, he pointed to another controversial issue – the terminology, specifically the name of the state, which still remains controversial.

5 More on the activities of the Slovak-Hungarian committee of historians see: ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Slovak and Hungarian history – Common, different, and conflicting Histories. In ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Key issues of Slovak and Hungarian History. (A View of Slovak Historians). Prešov : Univerzum, 2011, pp. 8-13.

6 MÉŠÁROŠ, Július. Deformácie vo vedomí slovenskej a maďarskej národnej pospolitosti o spoločných dejinách a ich zdroje. In Historický časopis, 39, 1991, č. 3, s. 316-322. Reprint in: MÉŠÁROŠ, Július. *Zložité hľadanie pravdy o slovenských dejinách*. Bratislava : Veda 2004, pp. 189-195, here p. 191.

Controversies in terminology

Hungarian historiography uses the term *Magyarország – Hungary* for the history since medieval times to these days; whereas Slovak and some other historiographies use a special term for the Kingdom of Hungary until 1918 – *Uhorsko*. By contrast to Hungarian, they use the name *Maďarsko – Magyarország – Hungary* for the Hungarian national state after 1918 only. For the same reason, the use of adjectives describing government institutions before and after 1918 is controversial. While Hungarian historiography labels, for example, the parliament before and after 1918 with the same ethnic association “*maďarský*” – *magyar*, Slovak historiography calls it “*maďarský*” only after 1918. Before 1918, it is the “*uhorský*” parliament referring to state territory, which would be analogous to the Hungarian term “*magyarországi*” or the German term “*ungarländische*”. However, the English translation is more problematic. Several specialists on the history of the Kingdom of Hungary distinguish the period before and after 1918 in English as *Hungarian* and *Magyar* to differentiate between a territorial-state and an ethnic name. Similarly in German, they differ *ungarische/ungarländische* (in territorial-state sense) from *magyarische* (ethnic). The problem is that this does not happen consistently and the terms are frequently used as synonyms. For the country before and after 1918, the majority of English and German literature contains terms *Hungary*, *Ungarn*, even though an adequate translation of the word *Uhorsko* before 1918 would be *the Kingdom of Hungary*.

Neutral terms?

Hungarian historians argue that the term *Magyarország (Hungary)* for the Kingdom of Hungary from the Middle Ages until the present is justified, because it represents the continuity of the Magyar national state. On the other hand, they criticize Slovak historiography for using the term *Slovensko (Slovakia)* before 1918, because the territory

of today's Slovakia was only one of the regions of the Kingdom of Hungary. Even now, a part of the literature uses the term *Felvidék* – *Upper region* for Slovakia, which has been the name of the region within the Kingdom of Hungary with a dominant Slovak population until 1918. While Slovaks consider the term *Felvidék* degrading and disrespectful of the current state borders,⁷ according to the young Hungarian historian István Kollai, Hungarian society perceives it as a neutral name of the territory before and after 1918, including present. However, he rejects the term *Uhorsko, uhorský*, while Slovak historians consider this term to be the neutral one. Kollai suggested as a compromise solution to use a “politically correct label” – the term *történelmi Magyarország – historical Hungary* and instead of the name *Slovensko/Slovakia* before 1918, to use the term *territory of today's Slovakia*.⁸ As a helpful step from the Hungarian side, Kollai suggested replacing the term *Felvidék* by the term *Slovensko* or the literary label *Felföld (Upper Land)*.⁹

7 For an explanation of the negative attitude of Slovaks to this term see: MARSINA, Richard. K problematike slovenskej historickej terminológie. In *Verbum historiae* I, Prešov 2009, pp. 39-43, here pp.41-42; ANDRUŠKA, Peter. Otázky názvoslovia v každodennom jazykovom prejave (a niektoré ďalšie problémy s nimi súvisiace.) In BARNA, Ábrahám (ed.). *Maďarsko – slovenské terminologické otázky. Materiály medzinárodných konferencií usporiadaných 8. júna a 1. decembra 2006 v Ostrihome*. Pilišska Čaba; Ostrihom, Katolícka Univerzita Petra Pázmánya Filozofická fakulta; Ústav slavistiky – strednej Európy; Výskumná skupina strednej Európy Svätého Vojtecha, 2008, Edícia Pons Strigoniensis IX, pp. 34-37, here p. 37.

8 KOLLAI, István. O vzťahu maďarského a slovenského verejného myslenia. In KOLLAI, István (ed.). *Rozštiepená minulosť. Kapitoly z histórie Slovákov a Maďarov*. Budapest : Terra Cognita, 2008. Fultext: <http://madari.sk/publikacie/o-vztahu-madarskeho-a-slovenskeho-verejneho-myslenia-1-cast>

9 On controversies in using different geographical terms (including Carpathian Basin) with connections to teaching history in schools, see: HALÁSZ, Ivan. Historické dedičstvo strednej Európy. Problém rozdielnosti priestorovej perspektívy pri výuke post-uhorských – maďarských a slovenských – dejín. In *HOP: Historie – Otázky – Problémy* (Praha, Univerzita Karlova), 2, 2010, No. 2 pp. 69-76.

Here, one can see that the differences in terminology are rooted in different national narratives and that each side insists on a consistent application of their own ethnocentric concept. Because of this, Slovak historian Peter Macho suggested “to analyze the term dichotomy *maďarský – uhorský* in context of the Slovak-Hungarian relationships in comparison with the similar pair *tschechisch – böhmisch* in context of the Czecho-German relationships.” Macho emphasized that the problem of dealing with these controversial terms is not purely terminological, it is a social construct in the process of forming the modern national identity.¹⁰

The argumentation of using examples of terminology applied in 19th and 20th centuries is not decisive, because it can be used on each side. Such an example is used by István Kollai, when he argues, that Slovaks also did not use the term *uhorský* only in the transnational sense.¹¹

It is well documented, that since the late 18th century in Slovak language and literature the differentiation between the name of the territory (*Uhorsko*), the territorial identity (*Uhor*) and ethnic identity of magyars (*Magyar*) were present. While this differentiation was used simultaneously until the first decades of the 19th century, it was applied consequently since 1840.¹² As proof of the differentiation between the terms *Hungarian – Magyar* in English, we could use examples not only from the publication of Robert Seton-Watson from 1908, who some Hungarian politics accused of being tendencious,¹³ but also of Hungarian scholar and politician Oszkár Jászi in *The*

10 MACHO, Peter. Poznámky k výskumu kolektívnych identít v 19. a 20. storočí na Slovensku. In *Historický časopis*, 52, 2004, No. 2, pp. 362-363.

11 As an example he uses the name of the dictionary from Anton Bernolák “Slovár Slovenskí, Česko-Latinsko-Nemecko-Uherskí” z roku 1825 – 1827. See KOLLAI, p. 19.

12 MAJTÁN, Milan. Slová Uhor a Maďar v staršej slovenčine. In BARNÁ (ed.). *Maďarsko – slovenské terminologické otázky*, pp. 41-46. and: In Žigo, P.; Majtán, M. (ed.): *Vlastné meno v komunikácii*. Veda, Bratislava 2003. pp. 137-144.

13 Scotus Viator [Robert Wiliam Seton-Watson]. *Racial problems in Hungary*. London 1908, reprint 2012.

Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy published in the USA in 1929.¹⁴

Searching for compromises

A terminological compromise was accomplished by an initiative of young Hungarian and Slovak historians in their publications in Hungarian language called *Sic itur ad astra* in 2006. The authors abandoned the term *Felvidék* as well as the term *Slovakia* before 1918; this was replaced by the term *Slovak region* (*slovenský región, slovenská zem /Szlovák régió, Szlovákföld*). They translated the Slovak term *Uhorsko* into Hungarian as *Magyarország*, but as an equivalent for the Slovak adjective *uhorský*, they use *magyarországi*.¹⁵

In the introduction to another volume searching for common dialogue and compromise in the Slovak – Hungarian terminological controversy, Ábrahám Barna not only claims that there are differences in terminology, which often contain qualitative judgments, but also that these differences are a major obstacle in a dialogue and a common understanding between Slovaks and Hungarians. According to Barna, “These problems could certainly be solved through professional discussions, but the very paradigm, i.e. coordinated systems of these two historical experiences, are so different in their elementary concepts, that they are not means of understanding, but rather obstacles to a deeper dialogue. Therefore, the endless conflict of opinions does not stem from the confrontation among those who discuss or their national preconceptions, but rather in a linguistic reflection of contrasting nation-forming processes which have taken two hundred years.”¹⁶

14 JÁSZI, Oscar. *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*. Chicago & London : The University of Chicago Press, 1929, Third Edition, 1964.

15 A *Sic Itur ad Astra* szerkesztősége/Redakcia *Sic Itur ad Astra*: Lectori salutem! In *Sic itur ad Astra (Fiatal történészek folyóirata)*, XVIII, 2006/3-4, pp. 5-7.

16 BARNA, Ábrahám. Előszó. In BARNA, Ábrahám (ed.). *Magyar – szlovák terminológiai kérdések*. Piliscsaba – Esztergom, Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem; Bölcsészettudományi Kar; Szlavisztika – Közép-Európa Intézet; Szent Adalbert Közép-Európa Kutatócsoport, 2008, pp. 7-9, quotation p. 8.

In this volume, some Hungarian experts on the Slovak-Hungarian relationship and the history of nation-building process argue, that it is necessary to distinguish – at least in scholarly literature – between Hungary before and after 1918 and to use proper terminology. László N. Szelestei explains the reason for the difference in Slovak terminology (*Uhor – Mad'ar*)¹⁷ and suggests to prefer equivalent to Slovak *uhorský* in Hungarian as *magyarországi* (*Hungarian/ from Hungary*). He mentions, that this practice has been applied by several scholars in Hungary. There are also controversies about which form of other territorial names connected to a common Slovak-Hungarian past (i.d. names of cities, villages, rivers) to use, whether in their contemporary Slovak or Hungarian form or in its historical original form.¹⁸

While there is some achievement in the congenial terminology, the differences in interpretations of history mentioned above failed to be eliminated. A part of the history writings in Slovakia and Hungary still see their common past as a list of wrongdoings and identify themselves in the victim's position. Certain examples of these wrongdoings are not only used by national extremists but by professional politicians. For example, the memorial tablet in Bratislava became controversial because of the way how it commemorates the Magyarisation of Slovak children in the Kingdom of Hungary. According to the inscription, Slovak children were

17 According Szelestei in Hungarian part of bilingual volume: “A magyarországi szó a Hungarusnak megfelelően a mindenkori területi elvet veszi figyelembe; a magyar elsődleges jelentése nyelvi, faji.” (SZELESTEI, László N. *Hungarus – Hungaricus/Magyarországi – magyar*. Közös múltunk és a magyar nyelv. In BARNA (ed.). *Magyar – szlovák terminológiai kérdések*, pp. 50-54, quotation p. 51); in translation to Slovak in the the same volume: “Kým pojem *uhorský – magyarországi* zodpovedá slovu *Hungarus* a vyjadruje teritoriálne chápane spoločenstva, tak význam pojmu *maďarský – magyar* odkazuje na jazyk a etnikum.” SZELESTEI, László N. *Hungarus – Hungaricus/Uhorský - maďarský*. Naša spoločná minulosť a maďarčina. In BARNA (ed.). *Maďarsko – slovenské terminologické otázky*, pp. 47-52, quotation p. 48.

18 More see in: ANDRUŠKA, p. 36.

deported to Hungarian territory and purposively denationalized: “In commemoration of 1462 children from Nitra and Trenčín counties and further tens of thousands of Slovak children deported to the Hungarian territory and purposively denationalized in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.”¹⁹ The tablet recalls the negative attitude to the minority politics of the Kingdom of Hungary prior to 1918, but not in an adequate way, and despite critical evaluation of such politics both from Slovak and Hungarian historiography. Even though the topic was researched in the monograph of László Szarka about minority politics in the Kingdom of Hungary (1999),²⁰ it is an issue worth deeper analysis. Moreover, the memorial tablet is placed just in front of a Holocaust memorial in Bratislava, so the term “deportation” is automatically associated with the deportation of Jewish people in the Holocaust. This particular issue should be more analyzed from both the Slovak and Hungarian side and corrected so that it cannot further be manipulated politically.

Limitations are also present in other controversial topics and affairs, however they are perceived differently even within its own historiography. What evokes controversy and disapproval from the Hungarian side is largely the way of writing names of individuals and geographic names in Slovak literature.²¹ According to the present rules of Slovak grammar, which are compulsory for authors and publishers in Slovakia, historical names of individuals who operated on Slovak territory until 1918 must be Slovakized, or more precisely, changed

19 The memorial tablet is placed on the building of Bibiana, a state cultural institution for children. Bibiana declares itself as an “International House of Art for Children”. See: <http://www.bibiana.sk/index.php?id=1&L=2>

20 SZARKA, László. *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés – magyar nemzetiségi politika / Slovenský národný vývin – národnostná politika v Uhorsku 1867 – 1918*. Bratislava : Kalligram – A Magyar köztársaság Kulturális Intézete, 1999, pp. 229-230.

21 To this problem see for example: ANDRUŠKA, p. 36; KÓNYA, Peter. K niektorým problémom slovenskej historickej terminológie obdobia raného novoveku. In BARNA (ed.). *Maďarsko – slovenské terminologické otázky*, pp. 29 - 33.

into their Slovak transcription. The problem is, these current rules are not set clearly enough, so their consistent application is not possible. Because of this, several Slovak historians employ a principle of original transcription, i.e. writing names from the Kingdom of Hungary in their original, historical form, which can be seen in sources from a given time period. Such Slovakization of Hungarian names until 1918, remains a major issue in Slovakia, which many Slovak historians do not accept. However, they are forced to use Slovakized forms of names by the publishing houses, because this praxis is a norm in the Slovak standard grammar rules.

Still, the most controversial issue remains the interpretation of the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary and Trianon. On the Slovak side, historian Roman Holec, who always resolutely supported Slovak-Hungarian cooperation, pointed out the problem in a provocative article published in *Historický časopis*.²² He reacted to the unmistakable politicization, which developed into a law about the interpretation of Trianon in Hungary. The attempt at a common interpretation of the Trianon problem from the Slovak and the Hungarian side was ended by an editor of the shared publication with this conclusion: Our analyses show that these are parallel narratives, which display minimum common points. The authors did not agree whether this can be changed.²³ About the search for compromise, Prof. Šutaj and Dr. Szarka, the editors of the common Slovak-Hungarian history texts, can give their expert opinions.²⁴ Even conferences and publications within the framework of the Japanese project “Road to

22 HOLEC, Roman. Trianonské rituály alebo úvahy nad niektorými javmi v maďarskej historiografii. In *Historický časopis*, Vol. 58, 2010, No. 2, pp. 291-312. In english: HOLEC, Roman. Trianon rituals or considerations of some features of Hungarian historiography. In *Historický časopis – Historical Journal*, Vol. 56, 2011, Supplement, pp. 25-48, online: <http://www.historickyacasopis.sk/pdf/HCSupplement2011.pdf>

23 MICHELA, Miroslav. Záver. In MICHELA, Miroslav – VÖRÖS, László a kol. *Rozpad Uhorska a trianonská mierová zmluva. K politikám pamäti na Slovensku a Maďarsku*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 307.

24 Š. Šutaj it already has done, see: ŠUTAJ.

a Multidimensional Ethnic Symbiosis” likely has a common goal – to motivate a discussion and consider the current situation. In many aspects, common discussion and certain compromises are made in history writings about a common Slovak-Hungarian past. The scientific exchange is able to be without emotions and prejudices, but it is regularly interrupted by politicization of the bilateral relationship.

As a conclusion, let me go back to the question which I posed at the beginning of my paper. Is the past of nations spent in a common state shared? Is it split? Is it possible to reconcile different controversial views? My answer as a historian, who is not focused primarily on political history, is clear: while history exists in a form of a national narrative, conflicting interpretations will dominate; and individual national narratives will exist as parallel, regularly competing explanations. Until then will the initiators and the “emissaries of reconciliation” be unacceptable for both sides. However, it is not enough to abandon the ethnocentric approach; the position of dominance and political as well cultural superiority is also supported by the concept of political history.

A solution would also be: 1. to investigate not only the period of nationalism, but the pre-nationalism, without use of the argumentation and terminology applied in the nationalist period (explaining instead of using it is crucial); and 2. to study the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary from the perspective of social and cultural history. Some Hungarian and Slovak historians have already called for a social history without prejudices. The search for a bilateral understanding requires respect and knowledge of both cultural contexts, but also a self-critical viewpoint. Moreover, a favorable political climate is required. The most important factor is the *politics of remembering, including historiography*. While we start from different starting points and aim for different goals, our past will remain controversial.