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POLITICS OF HISTORY IN SLOVAKIA (1989–2018)

Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe and analyse the politics of history in Slovakia after the Velvet Revolution and gaining independence. Although the Slovak authorities do not have a compact vision of the politics of history, in many aspects and fields it is conducted both by central institutions and other players in public life. This study delivers a synthetic analysis of the Slovak debate on identity, changes in symbolics, lustration, “de-communisation” and education. It defines points of fundamental dispute and disagreement on history in Slovak society. The overview presented in the paper shows the complex nature of the politics of history in Slovakia.

Keywords: Slovakia, politics of history, remembrance, Slovak national identity, de-communisation

Introduction

The contemporary Slovak state emerged on January 1, 1993 after the split of the Czechoslovak federation. For the last quarter-century it has created its own policies, including the so-called “politics of history” or “politics of memory”. However, it is possible (and even necessary in my opinion) to move back to 1989, and also include in the analysis of the Slovak politics of history the period between the fall of communism and the division of the state. On the one hand some common, Czechoslovak solutions of dealing with the past came into power in the independent Slovakia, on the other hand, historical controversies had great influence in the process of division of Czechoslovakia.

Slovak authorities do not lead complex politics of history, what is more, the term itself is rarely used in the public discourse. It is not included in any basic document of the government or president, nor is there any specialized department in the state authorities (in any ministry, parliament or presidential office) that would be responsible for that area. Two institutions in Slovakia deal with politics of history (mostly in the internal dimension) – *Matica slovenská* (MS) and the Institute of National Remembrance (*Ústav pamäti národa*, ÚPN). Although both were created in completely different situations and historical moments (MS in 19th century, as a response to “Magyarisation”, ÚPN in the 21st century to deal with the communist past), they operate on the basis of recent laws, adopted in the independent Slovakia: the Law on *Matica slovenská* of 1997 (Law on *Matica Slovenska* 1997) and the Law on Nation’s Memory of 2002 (Law on ÚPN 2002). There are however also other important institutions that deal with similar topics, and are involved in the discussion on Slovak national identity and history. Just to mention a few: The Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (*Historický ústav Slovenskej Akadémie Vied*), The Institute of Military History (*Vojenský historický ústav*, VHÚ) and the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising (*Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania*).

Shaping National Identity

The Slovak case is different to that in other Central European nations from the Visegrád Group as they have no medieval or early modern tradition of an independent kingdom or statehood. This situates Slovaks in a different moment of a nation's development. Shaping national identity after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and establishing an independent Slovak state is a dynamic process, in which history and remembrance plays vital role. Slovaks are confronted however with the fact that their history,

“taking into consideration only what is confirmed by historical research evidence, is exceptionally poor. In contrast with histories of their neighbours (with exception of Ukrainians), Slovaks never had their »golden age«, great and decisive moments, dramatic reversals of historical action, great heroes—kings, princes or even legions of internationally recognized medieval scientists.” (Zenderowski 2007, p. 140).

Some of the political elites in Slovakia, hand in hand with some historians, try to overcome this limitation by building a kind of bridge between modern Slovakia and Slovaks on the one hand and Great Moravia (the Slavic tribal monarchy in Pannonia, existing in 9th c. AD) on the other. Of course, such an approach did not appear in the 21st century, though it had been present during 19th century romanticism and in the Czechoslovak times. Subjects of king Svätopluk I from the 9th century are often called “old Slovaks” (*starí Slováci*), “proto-Slovaks” (*Protoslováci*) or “Sloviens” (*Slovieni*), however there are also historians who claim that any distinction is not needed, and they should be called simply “Slovaks” (Zenderowski 2007, p. 417).

The best example of this approach can be seen in Bratislava Castle, where in June 2010 (just a week before the parliamentary elections) a monument of King Svätopluk I (b. about 844, d. 894) was unveiled. Its height is 7.80 meters, which means it is 60 cm taller than Saint Venceslas' monument in Prague. Its unveiling was a strong political message that Great Moravia was the first Slovak state and



Svätopluk I was a king of the Slovaks. In his speech Prime Minister Róbert Fico stressed: “Svätopluk was here long before St. Stephen and St. Venceslas.” (*Svatopluk* 2010). Some additional controversies were raised by the author of the monument – Ján Kulich, who created it, was an influential “Normaliser” in Czechoslovak culture decades earlier (“Normalisation”, during 1969–1989 was the Neo-Stalinist period in the Czechoslovak history after the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968. In cultural terms it meant a return to communist orthodoxy and censorship as well as the prohibition of publication for many artists).

Such a perspective gives Slovaks top position in comparison with their neighbours—they become an older nation than the Czechs, Hungarians and Poles, Milan Ďurica claims that it is the oldest nation in the whole of Central Europe. Still, however, for next thousand years there was no Slovak state, and Slovaks were living within the Hungarian kingdom. In the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century it meant being subordinated to the restrictive national policy of “Magyarisation”, which was led by Budapest against the waking national identity of Slovaks. It was the main reason, why Slovaks did not want to continue their coexistence with Hungarians and were looking for alternatives during the World War I. One of them was to unify with tsarist Russia under Romanov rule, as was promoted by one wing of Slovak nationalists under Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, who claimed that “if he could not be a Slovak, he would rather drown in the Russian sea than in Czech swamp” (Chmel 2002, pp. 11–12). However, after the October Revolution in Russia, it became impossible, and it was one of factors which allowed the idea of a common state with Czechs to prevail.

As a result of the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire, in October 1918 the Czechoslovak state emerged. Its founding idea was “Czechoslovakism”—the existence of one, Czechoslovak nation (Ukielski 2007, pp. 26–27). It was crucial from the point of view of interests of both parties—it legitimised the idea in the winning powers’ eyes, as the newly emerging countries were supposed to be established on a national basis. It also helped Czechs to separate themselves from Germans, and Slovaks from Hungarians, and made

King Svätopluk's Monument,
placed in front of Bratislava
Castle (Ján Kulich, 2010).
Bratislava, Slovakia. 2019.
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“Czechoslovaks” to be over 2/3 of the population; whereas Czechs alone would establish only about half, and Slovaks would be less numerous than Germans (Ukielski 2007, pp. 31–32). However, soon it became a problem in bilateral relations, as Czechs began to treat the rule as obvious and fundamental, while Slovaks saw it as a tactical trick and began to demand autonomy.

The above analysis shows three traits of vital importance for understanding today’s politics of history in Slovakia. First, and the most important, is opposition to Hungary or Hungarian identity, which is the strongest distinctive feature for contemporary Slovakia, much stronger than opposition to Czech identity. It is caused by brutal Magyarisation and strong revisionism in Hungary during the interwar period. Not without meaning is also the fact that sentiments towards the Greater Hungary are still present among Hungarians.

The second feature, as stated above, is weaker, although also present. This is the opposition to Czechs and idea of “Czechoslovakism” (or, also, the problem with foreign perception of Slovakia as a part of former Czechoslovakia—the question of the nation’s visibility was one of the most important problems in Czech-Slovak relations during the existence of the common state). Conflicts with Czechs never reached comparable level of emotions, Prague did not lead a conscious policy of Czechisation and the division of state was carried out in very peaceful way (the often-named “velvet divorce”).

The third component of Slovakia’s remembrance today is a deeply rooted Russophilia combined with sympathy with, or at least understanding of, Panslavic ideas. The 19th century ideas of the Slovak national movement considered liberation by Russian “Slavic brothers” and the 20th century experience did not weaken these ideas very much. Slovakia was not invaded by the Soviet Union as a hostile country during the World War II (even though Carpathian Ruthenia was in 1944 incorporated by the Soviet Union) and the liberation by the Red Army is still perceived very positively. Therefore it is still celebrated very much and Soviet monuments with communist symbols are present in Slovak towns (Burakowski, Gubrynowicz and Ukielski 2009, p. 236).

The last trait is also combined also with the Slovak attitude to communist times, which is ambivalent. Slovaks notice some positive aspects in the period of the regime, such as rapid industrialisation and economic development (they almost reached the level of the Czech Republic) as well as better national recognition (final overthrow of “czechoslovakism” and federalisation of the so-far unitary state during Prague Spring). The suppression of the Prague Spring and the following “normalisation” was also a lesser trauma for Slovaks than for Czechs and persecutions in Slovakia were much milder than in the Czech Republic (Rýchlik 1998, p. 281). In opinion polls conducted in 2003–2005 in Slovakia, respondents said that the period of “normalization” had been the best time for the country in terms of the economy, living conditions, education, and culture, which indicates a clear success for the Husák version of “goulash socialism” (Pekník 2006, pp. 43–44).

Although formally promotion of totalitarian symbols is prohibited in Slovakia, communist symbols, such as hammer and sickle on Soviet monuments are preserved by the state. The most symbolic was the case of Luboš Lorenz, an artist from Košice, who was detained by police for removing hammer and sickle signs from the monument devoted to Soviet soldiers who liberated the city. He spent several days in custody and after few months he received a suspended sentence of two months in prison for the defamation of a cultural heritage monument (*Výtvarník Luboš Lorenz* 2018).

In this context is easy to notice that the fall of communism and the year 1989 does not play a vital role in Slovak politics of memory and history. Martin M. Šimečka remarked in 2001 that politicians unwillingly comment on the events from 17 November, usually uttering a *cliché* such as “it was an important day in our history”. In his opinion it was not a coincidence that ten years after those events a politician appeared who when asked what he was doing that day gave an unusual answer: “Perhaps it sounds terrible, but I do not remember, I had other things to do then” (Šimečka 2007, pp. 263–272). Those were the words of Robert Fico, one of the most popular and influential politicians in Slovakia, Prime Minister of the state for many years.



Slovak State (1939–1945) vs. Slovak National Uprising

The most vital and fundamental conflict from the Slovak identity point of view is between two traditions—the Slovak state from years 1939–1945 and the Slovak National Uprising (1944). The Slovak state emerged in March 1939 as a result of the break-up of Czechoslovakia and German invasion on Czech territory combined with Hitler's ultimatum. The state became a close ally of Nazi Germany, however it was the first Slovak modern statehood (leaving aside attempts to explain mediaeval Great Moravia as such). On the other hand the Slovak National Uprising was instigated against the Slovak state and in favour of the reestablishment of a common Czechoslovak state (although not on basis of Czechoslovakism anymore).

Supporters of the Slovak state tradition stress the meaning of the first Slovak statehood, which is often presented as a realisation of the eternal Slovak dream of emancipation and independence and a kind of founding ground for the contemporary Slovak state (after 1993). Most of them do not try to claim that the regime was democratic or gave people full freedoms, however they stress that it became an oasis of peace in the wartime (the adherents of this thesis do not refer to Jews and Roma). Also the argument that only few democratic states existed in that time is raised (Zenderowski 2007, pp. 444–447).

Critics stress the fascist nature of the Slovak State and its participation in the Holocaust, persecution of the Roma and Sinti as well as its participation in the World War II and collaboration with Germany. They claim it was necessary to react (and such a reaction was the Slovak National Uprising) to save the face of the nation. They believe that no argument can be raised to defend that Slovak state in any aspect, as it was wrong from its very basis (Zenderowski 2007, pp. 449–453). Of course, there is also a big variety of opinions “somewhere in between”, claiming that it should be no taboo and both positives and negatives have to be analysed and presented. They evoke both the above-mentioned negatives and positives of Slovak statehood during the World War II (Zenderowski 2007, pp. 447–449).

The Slovak National Uprising is the other side of the coin. Those who support the tradition of the Uprising, underline its whole-national character, influence on relations with the Czechs (positive, as its aim was to restore the Czechoslovak state) and on the position of Slovaks in democratic world (as it helped Slovakia not to be perceived as an ally of Third Reich). Critics of the Uprising claim its anti-national character and fratricidal nature. An important issue is also the interpretation against whom (or what) it had been organised—was it against Germans/Germany or Slovak statehood, with many other interpretations (against fascism or the Ludak regime—the one party rule in the Slovak state 1939–1945). The debate is also biased by decades of communist propaganda, which have influenced the interpretation of the Slovak National Uprising (Zenderowski 2007, pp. 469–485). Although in the Stalinist times it had been condemned, as an effect of Slovak “national deviation”, after the thaw began in the 1960’s it was rehabilitated, and the role of the communists and Soviets was stressed. The Museum of the Slovak National Uprising was established then.

Although both traditions are contradictory and from a logical point of view are impossible to combine, somehow they exist in Slovak politics. Politicians from national parties, who rather support the Slovak state tradition, participate in celebrations of the Slovak National Uprising anniversaries and pay tribute to the insurgents. The modern Slovak state has however formally chosen one of those traditions by establishing a national holiday on the anniversary of the beginning of the Uprising, whilst the anniversary of the proclamation of independence in 1939 did not receive that honour (Bajda and Ukielski 2008, p. 228).

Changes in National Holidays



The fall of communism demanded deep changes in the symbolic sphere, which included state holidays. In communist Czechoslovakia, the 9 May was a state holiday (Czech: *státní svátek*, Slovak: *štátny sviatok*): Liberation Day. Other public holidays (Czech: *dny pracovního klidu*,

Slovak: *dni pracovného pokoja*) on which people did not work were as follows: New Year's Day, Easter Monday, 1 May (Labour Day), 28 October (the Day of the Establishment of Czechoslovakia), and the two days of Christmas. Other important days (Czech: *významné dny*, Slovak: *významné dni*) were the 25 February (the anniversary of the communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia in 1948), 29 August (the Slovak National Uprising) and 7 November (the Great October Revolution). The national commemoration days (Czech: *památné dny*, Slovak: *pamätné dni*) were the 5 and 6 July (the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius—two Byzantine Christian Missionaries in Great Moravia—and Jan Hus Day, commemorating his burning at the stake in 1415), see (Law on Public Holidays 1951). The last two categories of holidays were working days.

In 1975, the act was amended: the 28 October lost the status of a non-working day and was moved to the category of 'important days' (where it remained until 1988, when it was designated as the second state holiday).

After the Velvet Revolution, many significant changes were made to the hierarchy of state holidays and public holidays. Independence Day (28 October) and Liberation Day remained state holidays (although in 1991 the date of Liberation Day was moved from the 9 to 8 May). In 1990, the 5 July (the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius) and 6 July (the Jan Hus Day) also became state holidays.

The anniversary of the Great October Revolution and the Czechoslovak communist *coup d'état* in 1948 were removed from the list of important days.

Shortly after gaining independence, Slovakia also took care of statutory regulations regarding the list of state holidays, public holidays, and commemoration days. In October 1993, a relevant act was passed which replaced all of the former regulations adopted during the federation era (Law on Public Holidays 1993). Pursuant to the new act, the following days became state holidays: 1 January, the Day of the Establishment of the Slovak Republic; 5 July, the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius; 29 August, the Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising; and 1 September, the Day of the Constitution of the Slovak

The Gate of Freedom Memorial (*Brána Slobody*), Devín (Peter Meszároš, 2005). The Memorial is placed at the banks of Morava (German: March) and Danube rivers, at the former Czechoslovak-Austrian border. 2019.
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Republic. A later amendment adopted in 2001 added to the list a day commemorating the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (17 November), which became the Day of the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy. The public holidays are as follows: 6 January, Epiphany; Good Friday; Easter Monday; 1 May, Labour Day; 15 September, the Day of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, the Patron Saint of Slovakia; 1 November, All Saints' Day; and also Christmas Eve and the two days of Christmas. In 1996, 8 May was also added to this list, as the Day of the Victory over Fascism. The Slovak list of commemoration days, that are working days, became very long according to new regulations. The list includes the following commemoration days: 25 March (the anniversary of the Candle Demonstration in 1988) as the Day of the Struggle for Human Rights; 13 April (the anniversary of the dissolving of male monasteries in Czechoslovakia in 1950) as the Day of the Unfairly Persecuted; 4 May, the Anniversary of the Death of Milan Rastislav Štefaník (1919); 7 June, the Anniversary of the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation (1861); 5 July, the Day of Slovaks Living Abroad; 17 July, the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Independence of the Slovak Republic (1992); 4 August, the Day of *Matica Slovenská* (established in 1863); 9 September, the Day of the Victims of Holocaust and of Racial Violence (the anniversary of the introduction in the World War II Slovakia of what is referred to as the Jewish Code in 1941); 19 September, the Day of the Establishment of the Slovak National Council (1848); 6 October, the Day of Dukla Pass Victims (on the anniversary of the battle of Dukla pass in the Carpathians in 1944); 27 October, Černová Tragedy Day (the symbol of Slovak oppression in the Habsburg times, 1907); 28 October, the Day of the Establishment of an independent Czechoslovak State (1918); 29 October, the Birthday of Eudovít Štúr (1815); 30 October, the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Slovak Nation (1918); 31 October, Reformation Day (on the anniversary of the day when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg in 1517), and 30 December, the Day of the Declaration of Slovakia as an Independent Ecclesiastic Province in 1977.

The Gate of Freedom Memorial (*Brána Slobody*), Devín (Peter Meszároš, 2005). The Memorial is placed at the banks of Morava (German: March) and Danube rivers, at the former Czechoslovak-Austrian border. 2019.
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Lustration/de-Communisation

Like in other post-communist states, one of the fundamental problems that a free Czechoslovakia had to face was the issue of the activity of the secret service, the StB. This body was formally dissolved on February 1, 1990 and the activity of the secret political police became one of the main topics in the political life of the country. That was mostly due to the work of the commission investigating the role of the StB in a number of events, which took place during the demonstration of 17 November.

Lustration in Czechoslovakia started relatively quickly. Before the first free election planned for 1990, the government adopted a special resolution that set out the rules for the lustration of the candidates for the parliament. Pursuant to this regulation, the archives of the ministry of the interior could issue lustration certificates to party authorities, but only with the consent of individual candidates. All political groups running in the election, except for the communists, exercised the right to obtain such certificates. It is hard to estimate the outcome of those procedures, but it is generally considered that in many cases they were effective as an element that deterred former security service collaborators, a tool that helped parties make some adjustments to their planned electoral lists (Łabuszewska 2005, p. 7).

On October 4, 1991, the Federal Assembly adopted lustration and de-communisation laws, signed by President Havel three days later. They covered three categories of people: functionaries and collaborators of the StB; persons who had studied in the KGB academy in Moscow and similar Soviet institutions, and party activists at the level of county committee and above. Those who were “positively verified” did not have a right to apply for executive positions in the state administration, the army, the counterintelligence services, the police; in the chancelleries of the president, the government, and the parliament; in the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Tribunal, the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences, public media, and in organisations, enterprises and companies in which the state has a majority stake (Law on Lustration 1991). Initially, the law was to be binding until the end of 1996, but

in 2000, after two amendments, its effectiveness was extended in the Czech Republic for an indefinite period.

After the dissolution of the federation, Slovak settlements with communism took a different course to Czech ones. When the lustration laws inherited from the federation expired in 1996, Slovakia did not extend their effectiveness and never adopted any similar solutions. Being a former StB collaborator does not have any legal consequences and does not limit access to any offices in the state administration (unlike in the Czech Republic). Even concealing that fact does not involve any negative consequences (unlike in Poland). One of the most glaring examples of the Slovak attitude towards the issue of punishing functionaries of the communist regime is the case of Alojz Lorenc, the deputy minister of the interior responsible for the security services in the late 1980s. In 1992, he was sentenced to four years in prison by a court in Prague, but he did not serve his sentence, as after the division of the federation, being a citizen of Slovakia, he refused to do so. In Slovakia, the case was dismissed in 1998; then in 2002, Lorenc received a three-year sentence, suspended for five years. Until December 2010, he was an advisor in the Penta fund (the owners of which are graduates of MGIMO in Moscow).

After several years of legal vacuum regarding the opening of the former Communist secret services archives (which made them *de facto* completely inaccessible), finally some legal solutions were adopted that ensured an extensive disclosure of the archives. This demand is supposed to be guarded by the Institute of National Remembrance (*Ústav pamäti národa*—the ÚPN), established by the act of August 19, 2002 and active since 2003. The act also regulates the issue of making available the files of security services from 1939–1989. Pursuant to its provisions, every citizen has the right to address to the Institute an inquiry as to whether the StB had any files on him; in the case of an affirmative answer, he/she should have an opportunity to inspect those files. This act also imposed an obligation on all institutions with access to security service materials to make those available to the ÚPN free of charge. The founder and first director of the Institute was Ján Langoš, an democratic opposition activist for many years, a former Czechoslovak interior minister (1990–1992), and the co-author of the lustration procedure in Czechoslovakia.



Ján Langoš Monument,
Námestie SNP
(Ján Hoffstädter, 2007).
The monument is placed
in front of the first seat
of *Ústav Pamäti Národa*.
Bratislava, Slovakia. 2019.
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Pursuant to the act on the ÚPN, he published on the internet a list of persons who were in the Slovak register of the StB. This register was divided into three categories: people who were checked upon, people who were enemies of the system, and collaborators (in total 81,000 names). Simultaneously, the website of the Institute published the list of StB employees. These materials were the subject of much controversy and many conflicts, and led to lawsuits filed against the Institute. The most heated debates have surrounded the names connected with the Church.

Christian circles had provided the strongest support for the opposition movements in Slovakia and therefore the communist services had tried to infiltrate them in the deepest manner. The list of names published on the internet contained such people as Archbishop of Trnava Ján Sokol and General Bishop of the Evangelic Church Julius Filo (Łabuszewska 2005, pp. 12–14). Both of them flatly rejected the accusations. In a special statement, Abp. Sokol wrote, “I declare once again and confirm that I never intentionally collaborated with the StB, and I never consciously passed any information to StB that would harm the Catholic Church or any of my compatriots.” (Mons. Sokol’s Statement 2007). However, in May 2009 new ambiguities appeared concerning Sokol: according to the information acquired by the ÚPN, in 1998 he had allegedly given half a billion Slovak crowns to former StB agent Štefan Náhlik (Niewiadomski 2009).

In the years 2002–2006, when the right-wing coalition was in power, there was a political consensus regarding the ÚPN; however the situation of this institution got much worse after the 2006 election, when the leftist-nationalist coalition was established. The change of government coincided with the death of the charismatic and popular Langoš that further weakened the ÚPN. As a result of the decisions taken by the coalition, the SNS was supposed to propose a candidate to succeed Langoš and after much hesitation (some potential candidates refused to accept the post), it put forward the candidacy of a young historian, Ivan Petranský, who was officially appointed to this post by parliament on February 1, 2007. It soon turned out that director Petranský was too “independent” and the Institute was attacked by the coalition, particularly the SNS, which in April 2008 submitted a motion for the dissolving of the ÚPN

(which was connected with the fact that the Institute published the name of Jan Slota, the leader of the SNS, in a criminal context). This wave of harassment of the ÚPN by the coalition was also evident when in January 2007 the Ministry of Justice terminated the lease agreement for the building occupied by the Institute and it had to move to another location. Although the Institute survived, the atmosphere around the ÚPN created by the governing parties was very tense. On the other hand, liberal circles accused the Institute managed by Petranský of excessively extolling the Slovak Republic in the years 1939–1945. (One of the most prominent case was historian Martin Lacko, author of numerous books and articles, who had not only a positive attitude towards the 1939–1945 regime, but also engaged himself in the far-right party of Marian Kotleba. In 2016 Lacko was fired from the ÚPN by director Ondrej Krajňák, which caused waves of protests from nationally oriented circles in Slovakia), and rehabilitating the Ludák regime and Father Josef Tiso (Vagovič 2013; Szatmary 2013).

The appointment of the new head of the ÚPN in 2012 and 2013 was connected with more trouble. In the end, Ondrej Krajňák became the new director (Eliášová 2013) and he had to face a huge challenge right at the beginning of his term: a court dispute with Andrej Babiš, a powerful Czech oligarch and politician. An examination of the archives kept in the Institute revealed that he had co-operated with the StB, and Babiš reacted by filing a lawsuit against the Institute. In June 2014, the court in Bratislava ruled that he was right, because his name had been placed in the security files with no legal grounds; ÚPN filed an appeal (Eliášová 2013; *Babiš vyhrál* 2014). It has been successful, so in October 2017 the Constitutional Court issued a verdict, that former StB officers are *a priori* untrustworthy while testifying about their collaborators. This verdict caused return of the case to the Regional Court in Bratislava, where Babiš's lawsuit against his StB registration has been dismissed (*Court rejects* 2018).

In 2017, the Slovak parliament adopted an amendment to the law on the nation's remembrance, which changed the way of governing the ÚPN (Law on ÚPN 2002). On 1 November Krajňák resigned from the post, claiming that he was deprived of his powers. The decision came just few days after the success of ÚPN's appeal in Babiš's case.



Education

History is not very much present in the educational program of Slovak schools. After the reform of the educational system in 2008 in Slovakia, the number of history lessons in primary schools (5–9 class) has been reduced by 50% and in vocational schools by 75%. After the reform only one lesson of history a week is taught in classes 5–8, and two lessons in the last, ninth class of primary school (which was changed to three in 2017) (Education Framework Appendix 2017).

The basic document that describes general aims of education and key competences of student after the course is the State Educational Program. The guidelines and goals of history as a subject of education in primary schools are defined in the annex ISCED 2 (ISCED 2 2011), while the same for secondary schools is contained in the annex ISCED 3a (ISCED 3A 2010). As defined in the introductory part of both documents:

“the main function of history is the cultivation of a historical conscience by the student as a complex personality and preservation of continuity of historical remembrance that is understood as transfer of historical experience either from a city, region, Slovak, European or world perspective. Part of this transfer is above all the consecutive learning about such historical events, facts, phenomena and processes in area and time that influenced Slovak society in a fundamental way and to reflect on this picture of our presence. Stress is put on the history of 19th and 20th centuries, where the roots of most of contemporary phenomena and problems can be found.” (ISCED 3A 2010).

The history of Slovakia and Slovaks is largely separated from world history, however it is taught in parallel—for example after the topic “Birth of the modern era and nationalism” students have the topic: “Modern Slovak nation” and after “World War I” they learn about “Slovaks and the creation of Czechoslovakia”. The Slovak Republic is taught in a bloc of topics and students are supposed to discuss authoritarian rule, the Holocaust or different attitudes towards the Slovak

National Uprising. There is almost no space for regional or local history in the program, and no separate points are devoted to minorities (ISCED 3A 2010).

To sum up, although the politics of history or politics of remembrance/memory officially is not present in activities of Slovak authorities, it is often led *de facto* by politicians, parties or other players on public scene. History plays important role in the self-definition of identity by Slovaks and debates on specially sensitive issues are often emotional and turbulent.

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