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Family Networks and the “Generational Key” in the Renewed Approaches of Social Questioning of the Slovak Elite at the Beginning of the 20th Century

IZVLEČEK

DRUŽINSKE VEZI IN »GENERACIJSKI KLJUČ« V PRENOVLJENIH PRISTOPIH K DRUŽBENEMU VREDNOTENJU SLOVAŠKE ELITE NA ZAČETKU 20. STOLETJA

Do devetdesetih let 19. stoletja so večino javnih zadev glede slovaških elit urejali v majhnem mestu Turčiansky Svätý Martin v okraju Turiec v skladu z dolgoročnim programom, zasnovanim leta 1861, ki se je z uporabo klasičnega pristopa iz 2. polovice štiridesetih let 19. stoletja osredotočal predvsem na jezik in državno individualnost Slovakov v odnosu z Madžari in Čehi.

V začetku 20. stoletja je prišlo do preobrata, ki je korenito spremenil glavno os javnih in družbenih dejavnosti v okolju izobraženih Slovakov. Ta preobrat je sovpadal z nastopom nove generacije, na katero so vplivale osebne izkušnje, pridobljene v tujem okolju med študijem v imperiju, posebno na češkem ozemlju, pa tudi v tujini. Pri tem so imele velik vpliv tudi dolgotrajne družinske vezi in lokalna oziroma regionalna solidarnost. Članek preučuje, kako in v kakšnem obsegu so ti dejavniki korenito prenovili pristop k družbeni refleksiji v večinoma slovaških okrajih v Kraljevini Ogrski v prvem desetletju 20. stoletja.

Ključne besede: Slovaška, kulturna zgodovina, Kraljevina Ogrska, češko-slovaška vzajemnost

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ABSTRACT

Until the 1890s, most public affairs surrounding the Slovak elites were managed from the small town of Turčianský Svätý Martin in the Turiec County, based on a long-lasting programme drawn up in 1861 that was mainly focused, in a classical approach from the late 1840s, on the language and national individuality of the Slovaks vis-à-vis both Hungarians and Czechs.

A shift occurred in the early 1900s, having since deeply modified the main axis of the public and social activities in the educated Slovak milieu. This shift coincided with an emerging new generation influenced by a foreign experience observed personally during their studies in the Empire, especially in the Czech Lands, and sometimes abroad. Furthermore, it was based on long-standing family ties and local/regional solidarities. This paper studies the manner and extent to which these factors renewed the approach of social reflection in mostly Slovak Counties of the Kingdom of Hungary in the first decade of the 20th century.

Keywords: Slovakia, cultural history, Kingdom of Hungary, Czech-Slovak mutuality

Social and family relationships in the Slovak patriotic milieu in the second half of the 19th century have not yet been studied methodically through an approach combining the kinship dimension and “generation dynamics”.

The notion of “kinship fronts”, as used by Giovanni Levi, is fruitful in both its dimensions: the first links families in the sense of non-co-resident groups with kinship ties, relations by marriage or the emerging fictional kinship relations. The second dimension, which is vertical, is comprised of “clienteles, protections and loyalty networks” which explain the behaviours and strategies of families or individuals from a historical perspective, keeping in mind that each family nucleus acts in a composite social network. The notion helps document the hypothesis of deep continuity in the Slovak patriotic milieu and its local and regional dimensions. It also enables the observation of the diversification and transformation of patriotic activities, all from the cultural and literary sphere to the sphere of politics in the wider sense, including the economy and education.

The “generation” question is observed by keeping in mind the limits of an overly strict approach as highlighted by Jean-Pierre Azéma,¹ and we refer rather to what can be called an “ideological system” defined as “what belongs to all and is the dominating question of the moment, the question that emerges during the ‘period of receptiveness’ and formation.” It must be underlined that “philosophical answers and political stances can be diverging or contradictory, but they nevertheless form a system.”² The cohort as such is insufficient; many singularities have to be taken into

1 Jean-Pierre Azéma, “La clef générationnelle,” [The generational key] *Vingtième Siècle*, 22 (1989): 3–10.

2 Michel Winock, *L'Effet de génération. Une brève histoire des intellectuels français* [The generational effect. A brief history of French intellectuals] (Paris: Thierry Marchaisse, 2011), 11.

account, such as references to different founding events and social profiles. It has to be approached cautiously, but it does offer keys to analyse the divisions and dynamics of this milieu.³

Having set aside the kinship dimension in its quantitative aspects, we will here insist mainly on two aspects: the first one is the evolution of networks from the geographical point of view, and the second one is the turn of generations, i.e. the pillars and tools of the new approach that can be observed from the mid-1890s until the middle of the following decade.

The Genesis of the Intellectual Shift

Towards a Geographical Extension

One of the weaknesses of a cultural and voluntary action lies in its narrow geographical base. This action was historically based in three small counties at the north of the Kingdom (Liptov, Orava, and Turiec) and connected with the mid-sized cities in the surrounding counties. The main patriotic activities were concentrated in this area, especially in Martin, with the Slovak National Party or SNS (founded in 1871), the press (mostly one daily and one monthly newspaper that can be considered as the sole political and cultural papers), and the main non-confessional associations.

The leading position of Martin was challenged in the 1890s. This challenge came from networks built and developed in Prague and Vienna, where a handful of Slovak students had organized themselves in small groups and had been developing connections and solidarities for about a decade. Coming mostly from the Orava-Liptov-Turiec triangle, they were inspired by what is usually called “the spirit of Martin” [*Martinský duch*]. Some others were from what is called “Western Slovakia”⁴, where connections with Vienna and South Moravia were more frequent. The region, which was less influenced by the “historical core” of the movement and more connected to non-Hungarian parts of the monarchy, had already been organized based on the economic proximity and agricultural networks. Moreover, it was one of the regions active in creating cooperatives in the mid-century period and was close to Pressburg, where active upper-middle class Slovak patriots worked mostly as lawyers, organizing critics of the “conservative” or “old” centre, i.e. Martin. To name but two of those involved in what Pavol Blaho later called “the Awakening of the West”⁵: Jozef Dérer and Miloš Štefanovič, who were both lawyers in Bratislava and close friends. Although they had connections with the Party in Martin, they both developed harsh

3 Jean-François Sirinelli, “*Génération et histoire politique*,” [Generations and political history] *Vingtième Siècle*, 22 (1989): 71.

4 In the narrow sense of the word, “Western Slovakia” is the region located to the North-West of Bratislava, extending to the border with Moravia. In the broader sense, it refers to the long strip of land situated between the two rivers of Váh and Moravia.

5 SNA, BA, of. Blaho, carton (c.) 76, inv. č. (No.) 2059.

criticism towards what is frequently referred to as the “old” centre”, especially the latter of the two, who is seen as *enfant terrible* of the Slovak politics.⁶

Both of them are also interesting as representatives of what can be considered in hindsight as the transitional generation or “the intermediate outside-Martin generation”, embedded between a classical, language-focused approach to the national question and its further development. Both men belonged to families involved in the main cultural and political events, including the voluntary actions from the 1840s to the 1850s. Miloš Štefanovič was one of the most prominent figures of this generation. His patriotic pedigree was irreproachable: his father Samuel was one of the 22 members of the Permanent National Committee founded after the adoption of the 1861 Memorandum in Martin.⁷ The importance of Miloš Štefanovič in patriotic action relied on the two-fold long-standing family involvement in it – the manner in which he challenged the options adopted in the 1870s and the manner in which he shook the entire patriotic landscape. This is also a clue to the increasing role of the Western counties, including Pressburg, in the Slovak politics at the beginning of the 1890s. Miloš Štefanovič was a lawyer working in the city from 1887, having started his career at Dula’s office in Martin. He was highly esteemed and one of the “four stars” of the Slovak lawyers, alongside the Mudroň brothers and Štefan Fajnor.⁸

Both Jozef and Miloš took in young people coming to Pressburg in the 1890s, and both were in touch with the Viennese and Moravian activists and openly challenged the classical mode of action.

The Hlas and Its Impact

The 1890s were a time of renewal instigated by critics of the passive politics which was initiated in the 1870s. The most important impetus for the renewal of political action in the broader sense of the word was the creation of the *Hlas* review in 1898. *Hlas* attracted and brought together a new generation. Critical of Martin, this generation was headed by two former figures of the voluntary milieu of Vienna and Prague in the preceding decade, i.e. Pavol Blaho and Vavro Šrobár. Both were medics, the first from the West, the second from Liptov; both were born in 1867; the first studied in Vienna, the second in Prague; and both either founded or led the most representative Slovak students’ associations in the respective cities: the “Národ” in Vienna, and the “Detvan”

6 About Miloš Štefanovič and his role in redefining the Slovak national programme, see Milan Podrimavský, *Slovenská národná strana v druhej polovici 19. storočia* [The Slovak National Party in the second half of the 19th century] (Bratislava: SAV, 1983).

7 See *Slovenské národné zhromaždenie v Turčianskom Sv. Martine 1861* [The 1861 Slovak national assembly of Turčianský Svätý Martin] (T. S. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1941). František Bokes, *Dokumenty k slovenskému národnému hnutiu, I* [Documents on the Slovak National Movement. 1st volume] (Bratislava: SAV, 1962), 323.

8 Ivan Thurzo, *Medzi vrchmi a na rovine* [Between the hills and in the plains] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1987), 51. About Fajnor and his role as a lawyer, see also Štefan Janšák, *Život Štefana Fajnora* [Life of Štefan Fajnor] (Bratislava: Biblioteka, 1935), 172–75.

in Prague.⁹ Both men were brought up in the classical conservative atmosphere of the late 1870s and the early 1880s.¹⁰ As Anton Štefánek later pointed out about Šrobár, “when he arrived in Prague, [...] he was a nationalist in the old meaning of the term. He read the *Národní Noviny* [National journal], admired Hurban-Vajansky’s poetry and the Russophile trend, and read Russian writers extensively, mainly Tolstoy”. Both Blaho and Šrobár though were deeply influenced by the political transformations they observed in Vienna and Prague respectively, particularly by the emergence of the “progressive” current in the Czech Lands: a more radical, nationally and socially focused trend in the Czech politics that challenged the classical “activist” orientation of the still dominant Young-Czech elite.¹¹

Some of their early “political” activities were linked to the Detvan association created in 1882. Nevertheless, until the end of the 1890s, Detvan was dominated by “the spirit of Martin” [*Martinský duch*] and reluctant to support the idea of a review that would challenge the official politics of Martin.¹²

The *Hlas* was published after quite a long period of preparation. It had initially been conceived in 1896. In Šrobár’s words, its “aim was to shake the youth so that they could shake the people.”¹³ Personal and financial problems delayed its publication, which took place only in 1898. Besides Šrobár and Blaho, the *Hlas* involved the young Fedor Houdek (born in 1877) whose position in the business families of the Liptov is well known.¹⁴ Šrobár had no doubt as to the significance of this creation. In a long letter to Žigmund Pauliny-Tóth, who belonged to one of Martin’s most important Slovak families and headed the first Slovak bank – the Tatra banka – at the time, he was quite clear on that point: “I think we are opening a new era in Slovakia, a new period of awakening, a new era of the Slovak life reformation. But, for now, it is still far away.”¹⁵

The main target of those called “hlasists” was “Štúrism”, named after Ľudovít Štúr, who codified the Slovak language. Combined with the mighty Russophilia that impregnated the Slovak movement, “Štúrism” was considered an ideology that led to a weakening of political and cultural action and to sterile conservatism. Because of it, the “really practical” and “concrete” work was forgotten for years, if not decades,

9 About *Národ*, see SNA, of. Blaho, c. 76, No. 2038. About the Detvan, see LA SNK, Martin, C 1438.

10 LA SNK, 42 X 22, “Šrobár a jeho doba.”

11 Jiří Kořalka, *Češi v habsburské říši a v Evropě 1815–1914* [The Czechs in the Habsburg Empire and in Europe] (Prague: Argo, 1996). Jan Křen, *Konfliktní společenství. Češi a Němci 1780–1918* [Conflicting Societies. Czechs and Germans 1780–1918] (Prague: Academia, 1990). In English, see Bruce M. Garver, *The Young Czech Party 1874–1901. The Emergence of a Multi-party System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

12 “Z korešpondencie predsaviteľov českého a slovenského národného hnutia na prelome 19. a 20. storočia,” [From the correspondence between Czech and Slovak national movement at the turn of the 20th century] *Historický časopis*, 17 (1969): 270–84.

13 LA SNK, 37 BB 11.

14 Fedor Houdek’s mother was a Makovický, a member of one of the most influential families in the Slovak business environment of the Liptov County. – See Zdenko Ďuriška, *Medzi mlynmi a bankami. Dejiny rodu Makovickovcov* [Between mills and banks. The history of the Makovický family] (Martin: SGHS, 2007). He studied at the Prague Academy of Commerce between 1894 and 1897 and was a member of the “Detvan”. He then returned to Liptov to work in his father’s firm and at the Credit bank [Úverná banka] of Ružomberok.

15 LA SNK, A 1505, Šrobár to Pauliny-Tóth, 13 June 1898.

and the Slovak mainstream gradually moved away from the people. This people’s dimension of politics had to be reintroduced in any kind of activities under the motto of “concrete small social work”, which was adapted from the Czech Lands; it implied the education and information campaigns, creation of cultural or educational associations on a very local basis, and spreading of technical and scientific knowledge among people. The *Hlas* was also a weapon against renouncement, with the political passivity of the SNS being analysed as such.¹⁶ When assessing the preceding decade in 1908, Šrobár underlined that, “at that time, there was absolutely no autonomous political movement in Slovakia. The Slovak intelligentsia was declining year by year as the cruel Hungarian liberal regime had pushed it out of public politics and restricted it to the private sphere. Between the Slovak intelligentsia and the Slovak people, an unbridgeable rift was growing; people had lost their leaders, and their leaders had lost the battle. [...] Some were certain that our liberation would come from the East, others assured with the same certainty that it would come from the West, from the dynasty. This had only one consequence on the Slovak life: it fell asleep”.

At the turn of the century and a few more years afterwards, the *hlasists* worked along another new trend in the Slovak intelligentsia, the Catholics¹⁷, in order to develop what was called “concrete small social work”. This was the Slovak version of the Czech “small work”, which mostly consisted of evening lectures and conferences, and establishment of cultural and educational associations and cooperatives, especially in the rural milieu. Despite the ambitious aims, a low level of professionalism in the editing board remained a problem and so did the lack of fervour as well as the passivity. Houdek openly expressed his deepest concern regarding the overall evolution of the Slovak activist landscape in a letter sent to Masaryk in November of 1901. “As a careful observer of our [Slovak] life, you certainly did not miss a sad fact: those who came back to Slovakia with the best ideas in their heart and full of moral fervour fell into lethargy, into moral and physical laziness. Some of them fell more slowly, others more rapidly. Slovakia looks like a fairy-tale castle where princes come to undo the spell but are bewitched themselves and remain prisoners.”¹⁸

In the same letter, he deeply regretted Šrobár’s “disappointing” attitude during the last months and his disagreements with Blaho that weighed on the *Hlas* action. Houdek also stated that the “awakening work” too often fell on the individuals’ shoulders, more than on the organized groups.¹⁹ This assessment was in many ways confirmed by Šrobár himself who, one year later, wrote to Masaryk: “Blaho let [the *Hlas*] fall, as he said, because of the lack of co-workers. The real reason though is that during the last period, the *Hlas* sailed into the waters of the clericals and, as

16 Vavro Šrobár, “Počiatky slovenského obrodzenia,” [The beginnings of the Slovak awakening] in: *Sborník slovenskej mladeže*, [Slovak youth collection] 1909, 141.

17 R. Holec, *Tragédia v Černovej a slovenská spoločnosť* [The Tragedy of Černová and Slovak society] (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1997), 21–24.

18 Fedor Houdek to Masaryk, 4 November 1901, in: Jan Rychlík, ed., *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – slovenští veřejní činitelé* [Correspondence T. G. Masaryk – Slovak public activists] (Prague: Masarykův ústav AV ČR, 2007), 73.

19 *Ibid.*, 74.

a consequence, the youth educated in the spirit of the Czech realism turned away from him [Šrobár].”²⁰ In addition, the administration of the review was something of a mess, subscriptions went partly unpaid and distribution remained poor.²¹ The *Hlas* finally died out in 1904. In many respects, it suffered the same problems as the ones that affected all political and publishing activities of the Slovak patriots: personal misunderstandings and rivalries, but mainly dilettantism. If we consider its content and impact, the *Hlas* can nevertheless be assumed to have shaken up the entire landscape and become the centre of an in-depth renewal that melded a generation of young men born mostly in the late 1870s and early 1880s – a renewal that lasted until the eve of the war, after which that same generation took up the torch and founded a new review called *Prúdy*, explicitly referring to the *Hlas*.

New Local Dynamics at the Eve of the 20th Century

At the turn of the century, the geographical balance in the Slovak politics slightly changed. The emergence of new cities and regions started to act as a counterweight to Martin’s influence. This was especially the case in Western Slovakia and the cities of Skalica, Myjava, Senica and Pressburg, and of Liptovský Mikuláš and Ružomberok in the Liptov. Some more isolated cities also (re-)emerged, such as Trnava, Nové Mesto nad Váhom and Tisovec, where the leading figures or families organized the “Slovak national life”.

The pillar of this renewal was the education, which applied to various fields where issues regarding peasants and the youth were important.

Health was one of the main concerns: “the fight against alcoholism goes hand in hand with the emancipating economic fight”, underlined Blaho in the already mentioned booklet “The Awakening of the West”.²² The 1901 establishment of an “abstinent circle” in Blaho’s city of Skalica was a small local event, even if the “circle” was able to rely on as few as 80 members during its first year of activity. Nevertheless, the network slowly grew. The year 1904 saw the first peak of education activities in the West, including conferences about alcoholism and dairy farming, and more than 20 conferences on other local or global economic questions and various topics of popular education, as well as the amateur theatre, which was an important and already developed part of the inclusive work on a local basis. This dynamic spread to agricultural cooperatives, from the Skalica cooperative to smaller structures in the surrounding areas. At the same time, small municipal libraries were opened, sometimes in private houses, and sometimes with the help of the Slovak catholic clergy that played an important role in the West. The third important step, as far as

20 Šrobár to Masaryk, 16 December 1902. – Rychlík, ed., *Korespondence*, 81, 82.

21 SNA, of. Blaho, c. 52, No. 1706 to 1708. Subscription is a long-standing problem of the review. See for instance Šrobár to Masaryk, 16 December 1902. – Rychlík, ed., *Korespondence*, 81, 82.

22 SNA, of. Blaho, c. 76, No. 2059, 15.

the West was concerned, was the opening of the House of the Peasant on the main Skalica square in 1905. The House, which was initiated by Blaho, soon transformed Skalica into the capital city of the Slovak peasantry.²³ Skalica became the place of the “Peasants’ congress”, an event that, each year from 1906 onwards, lasted for three or four days and was filled with conferences on health, technical progress, and political and economic education. An important part of it was devoted to joint activities (and notably cautiously prepared lunches and walks). As time went by, the core of participants to this congress expanded, gradually including new activists attracted by what was becoming a proper challenge for the “old centre”, i.e. Martin.

In the mid-1900s, Western Slovakia’s dynamic also relied on Pressburg’s renewed place in the overall patriotic landscape. The quite diverse city had a centre that blended the old families from the patriotic milieu and outsiders coming mostly from the surrounding Western counties. The old Štefanovič, Dérer, and another lawyer, Štefan Fajnor,²⁴ went on to help in building and strengthening this network. Their sons and daughters, and some of their close friends (Anton Štefánek and Milan Ivanka for instance) carried on their work, alongside the leading Catholic priests such as Ferdinand Juriga²⁵ and a handful of young social democrats. They were all born in the period between 1876 and 1884. Famously, Jozef Dérer’s son, Ivan, who was introduced into politics through the Catholic circles which, as he explained in his unpublished memoirs, “had somehow built a close contact with the mass of people like nobody had before”²⁶, benefited from the aura of his father, his closeness to the Štefanovič family (he was about to marry one of Štefanovič’s daughters) and a good relationships with the Fajnors. At that time, Štefanovič was at the top of his reputation, and had gone to Martin to head the Tatra banka, which was facing huge financial difficulties. As such, this unusual choice brought by an “outsider” to the Martin milieu was one of the clues to a new balance in the movement.

The diversification of the Slovak press was another clue. It came from the Catholic initiatives but also from some of the prominent business families of the Liptov County (mainly the Stodolas and the Makovickýs), who financed the main projects. The classical scheme was the following: the contestations or new options were financed and supported by the elders and organized by the youth. Such press was far from being professional and many projects failed due to persistent dilettantism and regional or personal rivalries combined with weak readership. The financial weakness and dependency on a number of influential families who also had to keep a balanced position between the “old” and the “new” was a constant problem. Despite these weaknesses, the failed experience in the press business helped strengthen certain networks of the young generation who challenged the still-leading centre of Martin.

23 SNA, of. Blaho, c. 47, No. 1559-1590.

24 About the Fajnors and their importance in the second half of the 19th century, see for instance Štefan Janšák, *Život Štefana Fajnora* [The Life of Štefan Fajnor] (Bratislava: Biblioteka, 1933).

25 About Juriga and his implication in Slovak politics at that time, see mostly Miroslav Pekník, ed., *Ferdinand Juriga. Ludový smer slovenskej politiky* [Ferdinand Juriga. The populist direction of Slovak politics] (Bratislava: Veda, 2009).

26 LA SNK, 85 C 33.

For their part, both Blaho and Hodža gradually forged new tools to be utilised in the lower- and middle-class Slovak peasantry. Milan Hodža was one of the youngest active leaders in the very early 20th century. He was born in 1878 in Sučany, just a few kilometres from Martin, and belonged to the famous Hodža family; his great-uncle was one of the three Captains of the 1848 Slovak uprising and a long-time friend of Ľudovít Štúr. Milan was also the son of Sučany's pastor, and, as such, an important figure in Turiec's religious and cultural life. He studied in Kolozsvár and Budapest and soon started to pay great attention to the "national question".²⁷ His first public activities were in journalism as he contributed to the *Slovenské listy* and *Hlas*. In 1900, he became editor-in-chief of *Slovenský denník* and relatively soon started to focus more on the politics rather than journalism. Despite the deeply ambiguous positions, he mostly considered the old strategy of the Slovak National Party (SNS) a failure that left the Slovak people unable to face the Magyarization process. Influenced by the Czech "small work", he openly considered that the SNS did not pay enough attention to social and economic quest, therefore causing severe stagnation. In his opinion, the "peasant question" was the one that had to be urgently resolved and, like Blaho, he paid huge attention to the situation of peasants. However, unlike Blaho, Hodža strove to remain in touch with the SNS and Martin in order to be elected into the party's councils and to share the burden within them.²⁸ Moreover, in 1903, he created the *Slovenský týždenník* weekly, which became an influential paper spreading agrarianism, taking advantage of the passing of the *Hlas* the following year. Active and skilful, Hodža was elected to the Parliament in Budapest in 1906. Building on this success, he strengthened his position in the party and pushed for the introduction of an "agrarian" chapter in its programme.²⁹

The building of agrarianism in Slovakia was a showcase of its internal tensions and divisions.³⁰ The "agrarian" movement of Skalica, and as such Blaho, were sharply criticized by the SNS, which considered Blaho to excessively challenge its authority due to the movement's own actions. Hodža took advantage of these tensions, notably in a meeting of the SNS Council in 1908, where he sought the introduction of his own projects.³¹ Hodža's ambitions suited the need of the SNS to weaken Blaho's positions and indirectly the positions held by some of those who helped him build the alternatives outside of Martin's moral *imperium*. The SNS favoured Hodža's strategy,³² and he was soon able to organize a Congress of the Slovak peasants in Budapest in 1908.³³ Although the Czech model remained an inspiration, efforts were divided

27 About that period, see the apologetic chapter written by Ivan Thurzo. – Ivan Thurzo and Alena Bartlová, *Slovenský Perikles* [The Slovak Pericles] (Bratislava: VSSS, 2008).

28 SNA, f. SNS, Kniha zápisnic.

29 Lubomír Lipták, dir., *Politické strany na Slovensku (1860–1989)* [The political Parties in Slovakia (1860–1989)] (Bratislava: Archa, 1992), 43.

30 Vladimír Zuberec, "Formovanie slovenského národného hnutia v rokoch 1900–1918," [The formation of the Slovak national movement, 1900–1918] *Historický časopis*, 20 (1972): 205–46.

31 SNA, f. SNS, Kniha zápisnic, 83, 84.

32 SNA, f. SNS, Kniha zápisnic, 74.

33 Milan Podrimavský, "Organizácia Slovenskej národnej strany v rokoch 1900–1914," [The organization of the SNS in the years 1900–1914] *Historický časopis*, 25 (1977): 193, 194.

along a line that separated groups according to geographical (West vs Martin) and generational lineages. It is also worth noting that the geographical factor could be compared with the type of family connections that were at stake. The competition in projects for an economic organization of the Slovak peasantry became less aggressive at the eve of the 1910s. The founding of the Central Cooperative [Ústredné družstvo, ÚD] in 1912 ended this second phase of agrarianism.³⁴ At that moment, the old Blaho–Hodža tensions eased because of the emergence of new divisions mostly involving young Catholic priests. The ÚD had gathered first-rank activists of agrarianism for a decade – Blaho, Hodža –, as well as Kornel Stodola from the business group of Liptov, Skalica’s priest Ľudovít Okánik (also Blaho’s brother-in-law), Milan Ivanka, one of the few Slovaks who managed to be elected to the Budapest Parliament,³⁵ as well as Anton Štefánek, who had long been following the first circle.³⁶ The creation of the ÚD was an important step that strengthened the existing networks and stimulated the independent economic coordination of the Slovak rural milieu.

This new organization was comprised of two clearly identifiable generations: the first openly challenged the SNS strategy, the impasse of which it saw as it grew up. It was made up of men born between 1865 and 1875. Some of them did not live in Martin or even Turiec and they shared their first political experiences in the large cities of Cisleithania, Prague and especially Vienna. The second generation included men born in the 1880s, who were often high up in the patriotic movement and based in its most important centres. They had benefited from the transformation of the industrial and business environment enabled by the economic rise of the Kingdom of Hungary during the “liberal” period. Those young men combined the high-level education, dynamic family networks and experience acquired abroad, where their “elders” surrounded them. The same type of social composition can be found in other fields that developed at the same time, such as the banking system.³⁷ This structure was based on the dynamics of the Liptov, where the Stodolas and mainly the Makovickýs were found at the very centre of a dense family network built over two generations.³⁸

34 Samuel Cambel, *Štátnik a národnohospodár Milan Hodža 1878–1944* [Statesman and economist Milan Hodža. 1878–1944] (Bratislava: Veda, 2001).

35 M. Ivanka (1876–1950) was born in 1876 in T. S. Martin in a small noble family of the Turiec. After finishing school in Martin, he studied law in Budapest and returned to Martin to work in Pavol Mudroň and Matúš Dula’s office. In 1904, he moved to Trnava to open his own practice and married the grand-daughter of Michal Miloslav Hodža. He belonged to the so-called “realist” fraction of the Slovak intelligentsia promoting the “small work”. He played an active part in creating the *Hospodárska banka* [Economic bank], and helped in some Slovak candidates’ campaigns in Western Slovakia. He was therefore elected to the Parliament in Budapest to represent Pezinok (in the suburb of Pressburg) in 1907 (election cancelled the following year as Ivanka was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment for anti-Hungarian activities).

36 Anton Štefánek (1877–1964) was the son of a shoemaker from Záhorie in Western Slovakia. As a young boy, he lived in Vienna where he frequented the “Tatran” and the “Národ” circles. He maintained strong connections with the liberals of the *Hlas* and created the *Slovenský obzor* in Budapest in 1907 along with M. Hodža and J. Ruman. In the following years he became editor of the *Ľudové noviny* (1908–1910) in Skalica where he worked with Pavol Blaho, whom he met during the “Tatran” period in Vienna. He finally started to work as editor of Hodža’s *Slovenský denník*.

37 About the banking system, see mostly Štefan Horváth and Ján Valach, eds., *Peňažníctvo na Slovensku do roku 1918* [Finances in Slovakia until 1918] (Bratislava: VTEL, 1975). Recently Roman Holec, *Tatra banka v zrkadle dejín* [The Tatra bank in the mirror of history] (Bratislava: AEP, 2007).

38 Z. Ďuriška, *Medzi mlynmi*. For another type of family network, see also Zdenko Ďuriška, *Pálkovci. Príbeh rodu garbiarských podnikateľov z Liptova* [The Pálkos. History of a Liptov tanneries family] (Martin: SGHS, 2013).

Another type of initiative favoured the strengthening of the above links among activists, i.e. the care for renewing relations with the Czech Lands. We will mention only two of the main topics. The more “ritual” one is the Luhačovice meetings that, under the aegis of the Czech association *Československá jednota* [Czechoslovak Unity]³⁹, gathered Slovaks and Czechs each year in a small thermal city of Southern Moravia, where Blaho worked for years during each summer. It was based on old relations created earlier in the Czech Lands. Julius Markovič, for instance, who headed the Popular bank [*Ludová banka*] in Nové Mesto nad Váhom, played a crucial role in attracting the Czech counterparts and businessmen.⁴⁰ Beyond their crucial role in the renewal of Czech-Slovak relations,⁴¹ the Luhačovice meetings favoured the development of exchanges – mostly from Slovakia to the Czech Lands.⁴² The more long-term-oriented new dimension of it was constant help in sending young Slovak students who were poor or not allowed to study in the Kingdom of Hungary to the Czech Lands. Blaho was one of the most active go-betweens of those exchanges that also broadly involved “Western” activists like Dérer, Ivanka and Bella.⁴³ The relative success of these initiatives can also be observed through the proposals of the Czechs to receive the young Slovaks.⁴⁴ Despite all the efforts they deployed over those years, the Slovak activists faced low financial capacities of the *Jednota* and of their own resources.⁴⁵ To a certain extent, the positive atmosphere surrounding this help for young students ended in 1912–1913.

Overcoming the Lasting Obstacles Within the Slovak Social Politics: *Prúdy* and the Prudists

All these evolutions had an impact on the national movement activities around 1910, as it diversified, with clearer diverging options appearing and the new divisions becoming more politically orientated and less dependent on regional differences, yet it still built on a generational and confessional factor – the latter being more important than the former.⁴⁶ Like the *Hlas* at the end of the 19th century, this new step was mainly the result of the obvious lasting deficiencies in the extension of political and social education and the will showed by a handful of young men to overcome them.

39 About the creation of the *Jednota* and its role in this initiative, see Michal Stehlík, *Češi a Slováci 1882–1914. Nezřetelnost společné cesty* [Czechs and Slovaks 1882–1914. The indistinct nature of common paths] (Prague: Togga, 2009).

40 LA SNK, 42 I 327, p. 2.

41 SNA, of. Houdek, c. 5, II/3, No. 160, Taborský to Houdek, Prague, 10 April 1908.

42 Rudolf Pilat and Josef Rotnágl to Fedor Houdek, Prague, 12 July 1912 (SNA, of. Houdek, c. 5, II/3, No. 160). The *Jednota* regularly acted as a go-between (see for instance letter of Rotnágl to Houdek, Prague, 2 May 1913. – *Ibid.*).

43 With M. M. Bella for instance, see, SNA, of. Blaho, c. 4, No. 78, 15 October 1913. With Dérer, see *ibid.*, c. 5, No. 134, letters from September to December 1910.

44 SNA, of. Blaho, c. 33, No. 1434. See also Rotnágl to Šrobár, Prague, 11 November 1912 (SNA, of. Šrobár, c. 5, No. 337).

45 Rotnágl and Ivan Klima to Houdek, Prague, 2 December 1911 (SNA, of. Houdek, c. 5, II/3, No. 160) and Rotnágl to Houdek, Prague, 17 September 1911. – *Ibid.*

46 As an illustration of this deep political fracture, see the correspondence between Ivan Dérer and Pavol Blaho in 1911 (SNA, of. Blaho, c. 4, No. 734) and between Šrobár and Štefanek the following year (SNA, of. Šrobár, c. 5, No. 295).

At the end of the decade, learning from *Hlas*'s experience and failures, a fledgling Committee of the Slovak youth decided to publish a review called *Prúdy*, where young patriots from prominent families played the leading role.⁴⁷ Two of them, whose paths were archetypal of the generation who took up the hlasist torch, illustrated a deep link between the new and the old generation; they also grew up in a perfectly patriotic milieu and their fathers experienced both changes and limitations in the Slovak politics. Many of them were Lutherans who matured at a time when efforts to financially strengthen the business and voluntary milieu were somehow more efficient. The first of them was Ivan Markovič, born in 1888. He was the son of Julius, a man who financed the SNS and activities connected to it and who was convicted in the notorious “Nitra trial” of 1902.⁴⁸ The second, Juraj Slávik, was also a young man born in 1890. He was the son of Ján, Zvolen's pastor, who was discreetly critical of Martin and expressed his satisfaction at how the hlasists “set the nation in motion”, despite some reserves he had regarding the harsh anticlericalism evident in some of its main representatives.⁴⁹ As a clear evidence of the evolution that occurred in the 1900s, the Czechs were active participants in the *Prúdy*.⁵⁰

Most of its editorial board agreed with the old hlasist message and the two generations melded and reinforced the dynamics. In his correspondence, Ivan Markovič summed up two important elements of the situation: firstly, the heritage of the *Hlas* and Šrobár; and secondly, the remaining problem of a narrow social and cultural base: “We observed that links inside the youth are weak, that we do not really know each other and that few people know us, and when we want to talk together, we have no place to do it.”⁵¹ His description of *Prúdy*'s aims recalls those of the *Hlas*: “It will have two functions: publicizing the spiritual fruits of the youth's work and informing the youth on events, trends and opinions in the Slovak life [...] in economics, in politics and also in literature, arts and science.”⁵² He explained that the review should “reflect the spiritual life of the Slovak youth”,⁵³ prepare “fighting issues”⁵⁴ and also welcome elder fighters, as long as they challenge the conservative policy of Martin. In that respect, Markovič vehemently defends Šrobár's contribution to the review in interesting terms that show the respect he earned in the young generation: “Šrobár's article testifies that *Prúdy* would like to make space for any opinion, and even for the

47 Marián Hronský, “K politickému profilu generácie okolo časopisu *Prúdy* (Prúdistov) (1910–1914),” [About the political profile of the generation around the review *Prúdy* (1909–1914)] *Historický časopis*, 23 (1975): 509–31.

48 Julius Markovič, *Nitrianský politický trestný proces: politická úvaha* [The Nitra political trial: political reflexion] (Turč. Sv. Martin, 1903).

49 LA SNK, 5 A 15, letter, 6 May 1910 to Jur. Janoška.

50 Namely Bohdan Pavlů, Czech hlasist who studied law in Prague, Vienna and Budapest, became a journalist and worked for the *Slovenský týždenník* [The Slovak weekly] between 1905 and 1910, for *Čas* [Time] between 1907 and 1910, and then for the Czech *Národní listy* [National Letters]. The other important Czech was František Votruba. Born near Tábora in southern Bohemia, he worked in Slovakia in the 1900s where he made contact with young Slovak writers. From 1911 onwards, he was responsible for the section “Slovenské věci” [Slovak affairs] of the *Čas* (about Votruba, see *Votrubov sborník* [Votruba's collection] (Bratislava, 1954), 107–61).

51 LA SNK, A 970, Markovič to Neckar, 24 September 1909.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 14 October 1909.

54 Ibid., 15 January 1910.

opinions of the elders [at that time Šrobár was 43 years old], as long as they relate to the youth, its work and its role. [...] Šrobár is an unquestionable spiritual tree of the Slovak awakening. For this reason, his opinions have to be taken into account.”⁵⁵

This question of the youth, which was of central significance at that time, brought all efforts together. Although this initiative was more elite-focused, it carefully resounded in all types of social politics and education activities during the following years. It was consciously devoted to underlining the impact of those actions and the manner in which its influence was spreading. Štefánek summed up the difference by using the classical Martin orientation: “Here, it was not only about diverging opinions or differences in work methods in general. It was not only what we call the fight of the youth against the eldest ... but a fundamental transformation in political and working methods...”⁵⁶ In order to help this transformation, shares in *Prúdy* were offered from April 1910 in order to create a consortium to provide aid for the review and establish the “Prúdy’s Library” collection of popular and scientific booklets.⁵⁷

This was also when the first project for a Slovak “daily” newspaper actually succeeded. Interestingly, the initiative was a genuine blend of different generations that have previously been discussed. Hodža’s first attempts failed due to inexperience, weak resources and narrow audience. After his election in 1906, the need for a daily paper that would spread political information emerged. The human and financial context in many ways facilitated the project. Amongst others, Hodža, Bella, Ivan Daxner, Šrobár, Ľudovít Medvecký, and Fedor Houdek took part in the final meeting of 21 November 1909 in Vrútky. The editorial board was to be headed by Hodža and Štefánek.⁵⁸ The strength of Liptov capital in the project is attested to by the fact that Šrobár, Peter Makovický, and Houdek led the consortium, all of them drawing on their Liptov business networks. These publishing initiatives lasted long enough to structure the political debate until the breakout of war. Besides the already mentioned activists, various circles with the same background were strengthened by these initiatives, as were their experience, networks and ability to shake up the old SNS. However, the latter remained dominant and almost unchallenged as the structure that was to unite “the different orientations of the nation”.

Apart from a few exceptions, all of the main figures had fathers or forefathers who were members of the main cultural associations, very frequently board members, and a huge majority of them were subscribers to the main Slovak press editions, shareholders or guarantors in their publishing houses, shareholders in Slovak banks or holders of reciprocal stakes in their businesses. Many of their fathers were famous in the milieu because of their involvement as lawyers, bank founders, businessmen or Lutheran clergymen.⁵⁹ Some of them personally benefitted from marrying into important families, like Jozef Gregor-Tajovský for instance. Belonging to the

55 Ibid., 17 March 1910.

56 LA SNK, 42 X 22.

57 LA SNK, A 970, Markovič and Pavlú to Neckar, 4 April 1910.

58 SNA, of. Houdek, c. 32, No. 215/3.

59 See Ľudovít Šenšel, *Päťdesiat rokov Tranoscia. 1898–1948 [50 years of Tranoscius]* (Liptovský Mikuláš, 1948), 14.

prominent and aspiring young Prudists, he was a talented writer who married Anna Lilgová (known as Gregorová in Slovak literary history), the daughter of an influential family belonging to Martin’s Slovak bourgeoisie,⁶⁰ and played a decisive role in the evolution of the new party programme in 1913.

In conclusion, there are three points that should be highlighted. Firstly, the transformation of the action and ideological references in the active fraction of the patriotic movement included a shift in its geographical centres and external influences – mostly from the Czech Lands. It is worth noting that, save for a few exceptions, none of them originated from Martin. This is a first clue to the decreasing influence of the city and its institutions in favour of the neighbouring cities in the Liptov area and Western Slovakia. Secondly, challenging the classical politics of Martin did not necessarily mean breaking with its heritage. Most of the young activists simply could not conceive acting without at least a tacit agreement from the “capital city”, i.e. Martin; in the first part of the 1910s, they even accumulated enough influence and support to join its structures and eventually play a decisive part in drawing up its renewed programme in 1913. This inclusion in party politics is partly due to the idea in which unity had to prevail in an otherwise unfavourable cultural and political atmosphere. In many cases, newcomers used the same tools as their elders in the mid-1890s. Finally, the relationships they developed with their Czech counterparts – as they obviously benefited from their stays in Prague – created some common solidarities that allowed easier cooperation during the First World War and enabled them to play a leading role in the internal shift towards the Czechoslovak project in 1918. This shift was accelerated by the war, the growing contestation of the Party’s passive position, and political opportunity. Moreover, those involved in the *Hlas* and their “heirs” at the *Prúdy* took a firm lead in the Slovak politics at the end of 1918, as five out of 15 members of the first provisional Slovak government of December 1918 belonged to the *Hlas* first editorial board, while a handful of others were involved in the *Prúdy* and various circles active in the “small social work”, including the cooperatives or support to Slovak youth. Most of these men, who steeped in the history and contradictions of patriotic action, would become the backbone of (Czecho-)Slovak politics throughout the interwar period. The depth of their connections as well as their shared “Hungarian period” history, solidarities and hatred are one of the many keys that can help observe the first Czechoslovak Republic and the Slovak role therein.

60 See Hana Gregorová, *Spomienky* [Memories] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1979). To go deeper on this aspect, see another illustration in: Ján Hrušovský, *Starý Martin v živote a ľudoch* [Old Martin in its life and people] (Martin, 1947) [New edition: *Obrázky starého Martina* [Images of the old Martin], (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2010)].

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**DRUŽINSKE VEZI IN »GENERACIJSKI KLJUČ«
V PRENOVLJENIH PRISTOPIH K DRUŽBENEMU
VREDNOTENJU SLOVAŠKE ELITE
NA ZAČETKU 20. STOLETJA**

POVZETEK

Članek preučuje del evolucije, do katere je prišlo v slovaškem patriotskem okolju ob koncu 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja. Opaziti je mogoče intelektualni preobrat, ki po eni strani temelji na geografski razširitvi dejavnosti mladih slovaških patriotov in po drugi strani na vplivu revije *Hlas* (1898–1904), na katero so imeli močan vpliv novinci, ki so študirali v avstrijskem delu Avstro-ogrske monarhije. Ta proces je tik pred 20. stoletjem privedel do nove dinamike, a je bil na koncu neuspešen predvsem zaradi trajnih vrzeli v slovaški družbeni politiki.

Nova generacija, ki je bila pod velikim vplivom zapuščine revije *Hlas*, je skušala te vrzeli premostiti z novimi povezavami med različnimi regijami, ki so bile vključene v patriotsko gibanje, in njihovimi glavnimi člani, ter ustvariti orodja za oblikovanje prenovljene vizije družbenih potreb na Slovaškem. Zdi se, da so bile ožja družina in prijateljske vezi enako učinkovite kot v prejšnjih desetletjih, ko so prav tako krepile vezi med aktivisti. Kljub temu se je tik pred 1. svetovno vojno slovaško patriotsko okolje soočalo s težavami pri izvedbi družbenega in nacionalnega programa.