

**REVISING THE NATION THROUGH SCHOOLING:  
CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING IN SLOVAK TEXTBOOKS, 1918-2005**

by

Deborah L. Michaels

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Jeffrey E. Mirel, Chair  
Professor David K. Cohen  
Professor Michael D. Kennedy  
Associate Professor Robert B. Bain

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To Jonathan,  
My dragon slayer and muse

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## **PROLOGUE**

### **The National Theater**

In the summer of 2003, I was in Prague collecting preliminary data for my dissertation and had to travel across town. I got on Tram 22 from the castle district, and it was rather empty, as was typical on summer Sunday mornings in the Czech capital. A group of six Roma [often referred to as “Gypsies”] sat at the front of the tramcar. There was a space of several empty seats between the Roma and the ten non-Romani Czechs at the back of the car. The people at the front of the tram had darker complexions and hair than the other people in the car; yet, in terms of dress, they blended in, wearing subdued colors, jeans or casual skirts, button-down shirts or t-shirts like the other travelers on the tram. The group at the front of the car was talking. Their voice level was moderate, but the people at the back of the tram were dead silent, so the conversation in front drew attention. The six people at the front were speaking Romany—a language that is based in Sanskrit, reflecting the migration patterns of Roma out of India over a millennium ago.

The tram took a sharp turn down from the castle district toward the center of town. The group at the front of the tram continued to speak Romany among themselves. An ethnic Czech man seated across from me near the back of the tram began to grumble. This man, who appeared to be in his 70s, leaned toward the woman seated in front of him, presumably his wife, and whispered to her. He looked up occasionally to shoot



hard glances at the group at the front of the tram. After much fidgeting, the older man aimed a loud and airy “Shhhhh!” toward the front.

One of the younger Romani men turned around in his seat and looked back at the old man and said, switching from the Romany language to Czech, “Co?” [“What?”], his brow wrinkled and his mouth down-turned. The old ethnic Czech man then responded, “Co si myslíte? Že jste doma?” [“What are you (formal form) thinking? That you are at home?”] The younger man retorted in a louder voice than before and in slightly accented but fluent Czech, “Well, we are at home here. This is our home. We are Czechs. Do you think we shouldn’t be at home here?” After a brief pause, the young Romani man urged the old man to respond, “Huh? Huh?” he asked. But the ethnic Czech had angled his body away from the Romani youth and toward the tram window. The elderly Czech was silent now and fixed his stare beyond the glass to the street. The young Romani man turned back around in his seat to face his companions and repeated the words of the old man in Czech: “Do you think that you are at home?” he said, mocking the question in a clear, impassioned voice. Then, he resumed speaking to his friends in Romany.

When the attention of the group at the front of the tram was no longer focused on him, the old ethnic Czech man leaned toward his wife and said, “Výstupeme.” [“We’re getting out.”] When the tram slowed at a stop, the couple got up and the old man mumbled, “First the Nazis, then the Russians made us get out. Now it is these people.” The couple slowly lowered their bodies down the tram stairs at the National Theater stop.

This incident captures a multitude of issues surrounding ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship in Central Europe—issues that have implications for democratic governance and stability, social and economic integration, and civil society. For example, the impact of history on national identity is evident: when the elderly, ethnic Czech mentioned the Nazis and Communists, he was constructing a Czech national identity based on memory of occupation and of dichotomies between “us”—the Czechs—and “them”—the Nazis, the Communists and the Roma. His analogy is flawed in that the Nazi occupation in 1939 and the Communist regime after 1948 were backed by military and political power, whereas Roma in Central Europe are disproportionately among the poorest and most disempowered peoples of Europe. Nonetheless, the elderly man’s comment reveals a fear and construction of “others” rooted in the history of the Czech lands.

The tram scene depicts how language and nationality are intertwined. The ethnic Czech man seemed surprised when the Romani youth turned around and spoke to him in fluent Czech. Language underlines the imagined boundaries of belonging and exclusion. Even though the majority of Roma living in the former Czechoslovakia are today Czech or Slovak citizens, in everyday discourse the terms “Czech” and “Slovak” take on an ethnic rather than a civic meaning.

The tram story is also illustrative of how history and public spaces have been constructed to create an image of “Czechness” that is ethnic rather than civic. The National Theater in Prague—the stop where the old, ethnic Czech man and his companion stepped off the tram—is a symbol of Czech national pride. Construction on the theater began during the period of National Awakening in the Habsburg Empire. Czech intelligentsia conceptualized the National Theater as a project that would revitalize

and celebrate Czech language and culture in the face of perceived German cultural oppression. The National Theater was completed in 1881, but destroyed by a fire that same year. In an enthusiastic demonstration of Czech ethnic solidarity, donations from Czech ethnics living in Bohemia and abroad funded the reconstruction of the National Theater, which opened for the second time in 1883.

The National Theater in Prague continues to be a central tourist attraction—a strong historical symbol of Czech ethnic and cultural pride. Evidenced by the tram interaction described, boundaries of national belonging, which are often constructed by language use, skin color, religion, and class-based ideas about “culture,” continue to shape social relations and politics in the region. Over the span of more than a decade of research and residency in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, and finally in Slovakia, I have witnessed the virulence with which many ethnic Czechs and Slovaks openly declare their hatred of Roma. Roma have resided for an estimated five centuries in Bohemia and Slovakia, and yet many of my ethnic Czech and Slovak friends, often university-educated, frankly shared with me their opinions that the “Gypsies should just go home.” Still more chilling was the phrase “Gypsies to the gas chambers!” that I saw scrawled as graffiti in many of the cities I traveled to in the region, including Prague and Bratislava, and which coldly advocated the Nazi method of exterminating millions of Jews and Roma in Central Europe during World War II.

The candid abhorrence of Roma that has struck me while living in Central Europe contrasts markedly with the typical disquietude I encounter when I ask individuals to define for me what makes a Slovak, Slovak, for example. My informants typically list attributes such as language, religious affiliation, parentage, psychological, behavioral,

and physical traits, and place of birth or “what my passport states” as the determinants of national membership. However, in practice, these same individuals who define for me the criteria of national membership often do not accept these same criteria as sufficient evidence of belonging when referencing the social groups—e.g. Roma, Hungarians, Germans—whom they already deem to be “foreign.” Rather the criteria are selectively applied according to the context of the situation: who is the judge of belonging, who is the referent, and what situation evoked the discussion of national belonging in the first place.

The “slipperiness” of national belonging became increasingly apparent as I became versed in the history of the region. One illustration of this elusiveness is the degree to which territory has traded hands in the region, meaning the family that has resided in the same “Slovak” town for generations may have technically resided in five different states. For example, the territory that today constitutes Slovakia comprised part of the Hungarian Kingdom during nearly four centuries of Habsburg imperial rule. After a mere twenty years of belonging to the Czechoslovak state in the interwar period, the First Vienna Award of 1938 arbitrated nearly one-third of the land in the Slovakia to Hungary. Just as “place of birth” can prove a poor indicator of a singular national identity, language and familial lineage often fail to clearly delineate who belongs to which nation in Central Europe because of the prevalence of centuries of multilingualism and intermarriage across religious, regional, and linguistic lines.

In addition to the history of the region, current events during my residency in the region obviated the continuing relevance and elusiveness of defining national membership. The civil war in Yugoslavia had begun when I arrived in Prague in 1991,

and I heard impassioned and contradictory accounts of what it meant to be “Croat,” “Serb,” “Bosnian,” and “Yugoslav” when I traveled there in January 1992.

Czechoslovakia peacefully divided into the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1993.

Discussions in the national media and in friends’ homes often focused on discerning the national differences and commonalities between Czechs and Slovaks. Meanwhile, in Canada, Quebec was voting on the issue of secession. In other words, despite the evident vagaries and contradictions between how national identity is often conceived and how it is applied, the idea of a national community is a force that can divide a citizenry to the point of secession or violent wars and produce everyday exclusion among social groups.

Even as nationalist conflict and secession rippled through much of the former Communist bloc in the 1990s, politicians and publics in these same countries rallied for membership in the supra-national structure of the European Union [EU]. National identities were re-narrated to justify membership within the multinational community of the European Union, even while these national constructs excluded ethnic groups affiliated, in the categories of the nationalist mind, with other European member states—for example, ethnic Germans in the Czech Republic and ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

Furthermore, most proponents and officials of the European Union touted the democratic character of pan-European belonging, inspiring in part an upsurge of civic democratic educational initiatives and curricular reforms in Central Europe. At the time of the tram interaction that I just recounted, which happened during a period when Czechs and Slovaks frequently expressed bitterness toward ethnic minorities, schools in the Czech and Slovak Republics were inundated with democratic civic education programs that emphasized tolerance, multicultural education, and minority rights. Rarely,

however, did the curricular materials and textbooks that I saw used in Slovak and Czech classrooms engage students in discussion regarding specific minorities in their communities. Rather, the democratic civic education material typically did not venture beyond the abstract level of human rights.

This wave of post-1989 democratic civic education projects was funded largely with US and EU monies. Sponsors tended to describe their projects as embodiments of a new form of civic education for the region, standing in marked opposition to the Communist civic education curriculum. However, these post-1989 projects in fact paralleled Communist civic education in at least one important way: both advocated human rights and simultaneously failed to openly confront the gap between these ideals and their realization on the level of daily interactions and state policies.

The persistent relevance of national identity to politics and social life—even at a time when many scholars were recognizing globalizing processes and declaring the death of the nation—confounded and intrigued me. It is this confluence of personal observations and broader social and political trends that led me to an investigation of textbooks and national identity in Central Europe. Moreover, it is the vehemence with which education reformers in the 1990s declared that a new era of multiculturalism, tolerance, and democratic inclusion had begun that inspired me to look at the power and limitations of schooling in shaping, enforcing, and remaking national identity. Would civic education have the power that its advocates claimed, that is to expand the cast of actors welcome on the stage of the National Theater?

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## CHAPTER I

### NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SCHOOL TEXTS

Nationality has a sentimental side to it; it is both soul and body at once.

—Ernest Renan, 1882<sup>1</sup>

School systems are at once the nation-state's handmaiden and its provocateur. Historically, school systems spread in conjunction with and as agents of nation-states.<sup>2</sup> Nation-states differ from earlier forms of governance in that they derive their legitimacy from popular consent—or at least from the appearance of consent—rather than from divine authority or hereditary lineages. Schools are uniquely situated to garner this consent because of their access to youth. By inculcating children toward the values of the nation-state, schools play a critical role in perpetuating the nation-state, helping to secure the populace's consent for generations to come.<sup>3</sup> In schools today, this type of inculcation

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Renan. "What is a Nation?," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (Routledge: London and New York, 1990), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Green writes: "The development of national education systems in nineteenth-century Europe, Japan, and the North Americas, though occurring at different times, invariably overlapped with the process of nation-building, both contributing to it and as a function of it. The leading role which the state apparatus, or political state, played in this process in many countries is also widely, if not universally, accepted as an historical fact." Andy Green, "Education and State Formation in Europe and Asia." In *Citizenship Education and the Modern State*, ed. Kerry Kennedy (London: Falmer Press, 1997), 9. See also, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli-Bennett observe that in schools: "Children are to be initiated not merely into society but, in the twentieth-century world system, into the



occurs through both explicit and implicit forms of civics that aim to create a cohesive national identity. Although school systems may require students to take what are openly referred to as civic education classes, more subtle forms of civic instruction include majority language training and teaching a dominant historical narrative that celebrates the successes of the state and conceals those aspects of the nation's history that could undermine civic loyalty. In short, nation-states rely on school systems to create citizens who will habitually confer their consent to be ruled by the state, thus legitimizing the state's existence.

While state schools foster popular consent through cohesive national identities, the tenets of liberal democracy also demand that schools educate students to be autonomous individuals who can serve as a check on state power. Individuals in a liberal democracy are free to affiliate with collectivities that may be ethnic, religious, political, or professional in nature, and some of these affiliations are fostered in state schools through multicultural and bilingual education and after-school clubs. Civic educators in democratic societies often frame their educational goals in terms of cultivating autonomy. Civic education seeks to build autonomy at the individual level through “critical

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*national* society... The individual must be a citizen who learns to identify (however begrudgingly, and with however many protestations) with the national symbols and programs so as to help ensure the success of state action [emphasis in the original].” Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli-Bennett, “Global Patterns of Educational Institutionalization,” in *Schools and Society*. ed. Jeanne H. Ballantine (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1989) 483. See also: John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, Richard Rubinson, and John Boli-Bennett, “The World Educational Revolution, 1950-1970,” *Sociology of Education* 50:3 (1977) 242-258.

thinking” skills and at the group level through common ideals and values such as tolerance.<sup>4</sup>

The history of ethnic and religious conflicts attests to the way in which pluralism complicates the nation-state’s goal of building consensus and legitimacy. Echoing this notion, Ernst Haas, in a classic work on nationalism, asserts that: “Multicultural settings are inhospitable to the establishment of successful nation-states.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, nation-states and their school systems face several tensions. Loyalty, social cohesion, and imposition of values, which are fundamental to the viability of a democratic social contract, are at variance with the democratic ideals of liberty, equality, pluralism, and deliberation. This study investigates these tensions, between ethnic and cultural visions of the nation on the one hand, and more universalistic and sometimes liberal conceptions of the state on the other, as they are reflected in school textbooks. Specifically, this work analyzes representations of the nation, national belonging and exclusion, citizenship and civic duties, and how historical events and figures are depicted in school textbooks across time and regime change in Central Europe. The driving question behind this study is: How do nation-states attempt to manage through schooling the likely tensions between an exclusive notion of the nation and more liberal civic ideals of the state?

Notably, democratic regimes are not the only type of government subject to the expectations of democratic liberal ideology. The modern nation-state arose out of

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<sup>4</sup> A review of civic education literature in the US and Western Europe that I conducted in 2003-2004 revealed that civic educators frequently name “critical thinking” and “teaching tolerance” as their educational goals without defining these terms or explaining how they might assess evaluate student performance in these areas. Nonetheless, the literature makes clear that civic educators see tolerance and critical thinking as critical civic attributes in a liberal democracy.

<sup>5</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress: Cornell studies in political economy*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 34-35.

democratic liberal ideals, in particular the notion that state authority stems from the *demos*, not from a royal lineage or by decree from God or church; therefore, the perceived legitimacy of a nation-state is entangled with the philosophy of democratic liberalism, regardless of its regime type. David K. Cohen has observed that: “Citizens’ acceptance of state authority is crucial to legitimate rule, for the modern state is understood as a human creation...so pervasive is this feature of the nation-state system that even authoritarian and totalitarian regimes find it necessary to create fictional representative institutions.”<sup>6</sup> That totalitarian regimes bother to hold rigged and one-party elections speaks to the performative function of voting rituals.

I approach these issues of national representation by focusing on the state that is today Slovakia. For several reasons, the Slovak Republic offers a particularly salient case for examining how exclusive and inclusive notions of national membership are inscribed in state schooling across regime changes. Slovakia in Central Europe represents a veritable gallery of twentieth-century regime types varying chronologically from empire, bourgeois democracy, nationalist dictatorship, state socialism, to parliamentary democracy. This range allows for an investigation into how particular political regimes might use state-sponsored schooling differently to promote, adjust, or remake national and civic narratives that legitimate state rule.

Even since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, several political developments have forced Slovaks to redefine themselves in terms of their national identity: the transitions associated with moving from state socialism to a democratic, capitalist society, the

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<sup>6</sup> David K. Cohen, “School System Development: Politics and Policy,” (paper presented to international and comparative education seminar, University of Michigan, School of Education, December 2003).

breakup of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993, Slovakia's entry into NATO in 2002, and the accession of Slovakia into the European Union on May 1, 2004. Due to the history of this region as the crossroads of Europe, Slovakia's past contains poignant examples of the complex nature of national belonging. For example, during the interwar period, Czechoslovakia was one of the most industrialized regions of the world and was seen by the international community as largely "Westernized."<sup>7</sup> Yet since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Czech and Slovak nationalists drew on the idea of a Slavic brotherhood with common linguistic and primordial roots, and Czechoslovakia during the Cold War was a Communist state aligned with the Eastern bloc. The East-West relational complexity of Slovak identities to their neighboring states is another dimension of the construction of national identity explored in this study.

Additionally, an overwhelming proportion of nationalism studies have either focused on Central Europe and/or been written by scholars from that region: for example, Eric Hobsbawm, Robert William Seton-Watson, Ernst B. Haas, Ernest Gellner, Hannah Arendt, Ladislav Holý, Hans Kohn, John Breuilly, Roger Bruebaker, Miroslav Hroch, and others.<sup>8</sup> Yet, studies of nationalism that focus specifically on Slovakia, especially across regime changes, are rare. Slovakia serves as a useful test case of nationalism

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<sup>7</sup>For more discussion on the industrialization of the Czech and Slovak lands during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, see Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflicts in Czechoslovakia: the making and remaking of a state, 1918-1987*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 12 and Owen V. Johnson, *Slovakia, 1918-1938: education and the making of a nation*. East European monographs, no. 180. (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), 72-78.

<sup>8</sup> My thanks to John Breuilly, who pointed out this aspect of the utility of the Slovak case when he served as the discussant for a related paper that I presented at the European Social Science History Research Conference in Amsterdam, 2006.

theories: it is at the core of a region fundamental to nationalism studies but simultaneously remains largely unexplored by scholars of nationalism.

### **A Typology of Nationalisms**

The meanings of *state*, *nation*, and *ethnicity* are multiple and overlapping. There are significant distinctions between the *state* and the *nation*, even as the two concepts often converge in popular thought. The *state* is a system of institutional and bureaucratic structures that regulates the lives of individuals residing within a delimited territory.<sup>9</sup> *Citizenship* signifies an official membership within that state system. While institutions and territorial boundaries define the *state*, the reach of a *nation* is not constrained by physical or structural boundaries. Benedict Anderson famously referred to the *nation* as “an imagined community” held together by the perception of a common identity.<sup>10</sup> Shared language, ethnicity and race, cultural, religious, and historical narratives, geographic proximity, and political beliefs are common unifying elements that political movements historically have referenced to cultivate feelings of national identity and to define nations.<sup>11</sup>

I differentiate among three conceptions of the *nation* in the history of Central European nationalisms: (1) primordial, (2) cultural, (3) and civic. Although, these categories are not mutually exclusive or neatly self-contained, an awareness of these

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<sup>9</sup> George Steinmetz, *State/Culture: state-formation after the cultural turn*. The Wilder House series in politics, history, and culture. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, “On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason,” *Theory, Culture, & Society* (16)1 (1999):41-58.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, David Miller, *On Nationality*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) and Rogers Brubaker. *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

distinctions is useful for suggesting which ideologies nation-builders deployed to create constituencies in Central Europe in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The history of nation-state building can also help illuminate current interethnic relations in the region.

Despite Anderson's assertion that nations are imagined communities, most nationalist ideologies do not subscribe to this perspective. Primordial nationalism assumes that a preordained, immutable, and authentic nation exists and has existed since the beginning of time. This ethno-racial stance toward nationality treats national membership as objective and organic rather than as socially constructed. According to this concept of the nation, membership is set by ethnic boundaries and transmitted through bloodlines.<sup>12</sup>

After the Napoleonic Wars, when the German-speaking populations of Europe lived under various political states, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder championed a second conceptualization of the nation as a cultural entity or *Kulturnation*.<sup>13</sup> This model of nationhood defines national belonging in terms of cultural attributes, such as language, religion, social values, and public behavior. The notion of a cultural nation is problematic, however, in that it leaves open the question of whose culture should serve as the measure of national belonging.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in Central Europe during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading cultural nationalists—

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<sup>12</sup> Michael, Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: journeys into the new nationalism*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: national identity and the post-communist social transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Zimmerman asks this question in the context of US immigration in his book, *Whose America?: culture wars in the public schools*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

who were often well-educated Protestants—consistently applied middle-class values such as property ownership and professional practice to national membership.<sup>15</sup> The leadership of nationalist movements in this time period almost invariably came out of this professional, educated class.

The salience of middle-class values for many nationalists during this time period is understandable in light of the confluence of several social movements: industrialization, the spread of liberalism, and the rise of the nation-state. Industrialization relied on the ingenuity and entrepreneurship of middle-class investors; in Marxist terms, the middle class functions as a buffer between the owners of production and the working class, preventing revolution and thus perpetuating the industrialized, capitalist economy. Although liberalism was not concerned with the middle class per se, in stressing the autonomy and equality of individuals, liberalism countered previous notions of divine and hereditary authority, and thus undermined the status of the aristocratic class. The professional middle class came to fill the upper stratum of the ideological social hierarchy after liberal intellectuals called into question the legitimacy of aristocratic rule. Nation-states gave form to the ideals of liberalism, institutionalizing the notion of popular governance. With this elevation of the average man came the commensurate decline in the status of the aristocracy, contributing to the cultural nationalists' adulation of middle-class values.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the primordial conception of the nation which envisions a limited and preordained national community, cultural nations are, theoretically speaking, more

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<sup>15</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: programme, myth, reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 127.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: a study in its origins and background*. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), 111.

inclusive. A *Kulturnation* permits individuals to gain membership into its community through assimilation. According to the ideology of cultural nationalism then, those individuals who adopt the cultural markers which nationalists deem relevant to the nation should become legitimate members of the national community.<sup>17</sup> Despite the theoretical distinctions between the primordial and cultural conceptualizations of nationhood, nationalists in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Europe often conflated these two notions of nationalism in their efforts to mobilize or exclude certain groups. Nationalists seemed to redefine their conceptions of nationhood depending on the political expedience of excluding or including certain groups within their movement.<sup>18</sup> While German nationalism in the late nineteenth century stressed a cultural definition of the nation, Jews who had fully assimilated to German society nevertheless found themselves excluded from the German nation early in the twentieth century when German nationalists began to overlay an ethno-racial conception of the German nation on Herder's cultural conception.

Primordial nationalism also borrows from cultural nationalism in practice, to a large degree because of the obstacle of proving national belonging in the primordial sense. What evidence could primordial nationalists in the mid-nineteenth century elicit that would prove that an individual was a descendant of an allegedly ancient ethnic nation? Before science became entangled in the nefarious task of contriving biological "evidence" to support pre-established social boundaries of national membership, primordial nationalists looked to cultural attributes, in particular language and folk

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<sup>17</sup> Holý 1996, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity: ethnonationalism in comparative perspective*. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).



traditions, to ascribe national belonging. There appears to be, however, a difference of tenor in how primordial and cultural nationalists evoked culture in Central Europe. Where proponents of Herder's *Kultur* would embrace as markers of national belonging the middle-class values that emerged within the context of industrialization, primordial nationalists tended to look toward the past, idealizing peasant culture as both representation and evidence of their age-old nation.<sup>19</sup> Origin myths, traditional costumes, folk dances and songs, and archaeological artifacts are a few examples of how primordial nationalists might employ peasant culture to construct an inherited tradition for the nation in lieu of evidence that would verify bloodline heritage.<sup>20</sup> As primordial nationalists peer backward in time to define the nation, cultural nationalists look to the present.

Perhaps because nationalists have often borrowed simultaneously from cultural and primordial conceptions of the nation to meet their political ends, some scholars locate primordial and cultural nationalisms in one category of "ethnic nationalism" or "exclusive nationalism."<sup>21</sup> I acknowledge that in the practice of mobilizing groups, nationalist leaders have tended to elide primordial and cultural constructions of the nation, and I employ this terminology in my own writing to signify when these categories become indistinguishable and cultural national belonging has come to signify a membership to which outsiders cannot assimilate. However, I argue that distinguishing between the primordial and cultural nation is theoretically useful for several reasons: (1)

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<sup>19</sup> Adulation of peasant culture and of what Europeans perceived as a "Gypsy lifestyle" was characteristic of Romantic literature that appeared in conjunction with these national movements in Central Europe.

<sup>20</sup> Haas describes primordial nationalists as those who base their conception of the nation on ethnic ideologies, often evoking links to peasant traditions. Haas 1997, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: the Negro problem and modern democracy*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944); Ignatieff 1993, 16.

the distinction captures a historical difference between the rhetoric of different ethnic nationalists during the nineteenth century in Central Europe; (2) it highlights disparities between the ideology of national membership and the standards used in the practice of determining national membership (for example, Slovak and Czech nineteenth-century nationalists framed the nation in terms of primordial ideas but often employed cultural attributes for circumscribing national membership); and (3) it avoids the presumption that cultural and primordial nations always exclude groups from the national community in the same way.

Speaking to this last point, it seems a distinction worth exploring that by design, primordial nations exclude on the basis of bloodlines, while cultural nations pretend to exclude only those who do not assimilate to the national culture. In a primordial nationalist's world the boundaries of national membership are predetermined, while they remain permeable in the cultural nationalist's view. The burden of proof and the agency of the individual are different in each of these two scenarios. The primordial version of the nation renders the individual relatively powerless in determining his or her own national identity. Primordial nationalists can mobilize their constituency by claiming that certain individuals are simply unaware of their preordained membership to the group. Therefore, the strategy of primordial nationalists for increasing their constituency is to raise national consciousness, to enlighten certain individuals to the "fact" that they belong to the specified nation. In contrast, the idea of a cultural nation theoretically places more power in the hands of the individual to adopt or reject the cultural prescriptions of national belonging.

I suggest that in Central Europe nationalists' preference for a primordial over a cultural construction of nationalism may be linked to the political, social, and economic position of the constituent group within the given historical context. Groups with a higher status seem to prefer the cultural conceptualization of the nation over the primordial and the inverse also appears to be true—groups that are disadvantaged within the given societal structure are more likely to adopt a primordial notion of national belonging. It was logical for German nationalists in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in Central Europe to adopt a cultural conception of their nation because ethnic Germans and German-speaking individuals from other ethnic groups held the majority of industrial management jobs and thus had a higher social and economic status than Slavs (i.e. Czechs and Slovaks) who were more heavily represented in the agricultural sector.<sup>22</sup> In other words, middle-class values and the context of industrialization would have neatly reflected the social reality of many Germans. The political system in both halves of the Austro-Hungarian Empire gave greater representation to Germans than to Slovaks and Czechs.<sup>23</sup> Thus, as the privileged ethnic group within the context of an industrializing Central Europe, and particularly within the Austrian half of the empire, it is unsurprising that German nationalists would assume a cultural stance toward nationhood, a stance that by promoting assimilation and middle-class values validated the status quo of ethnic Germans.

In contrast, the primordial view of nations complements the aims of disadvantaged groups like the Central European Slavs who were interested in undermining the status quo. The primordial nation declares the injustice of the social

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<sup>22</sup> Leff 1988, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Leff 1988, 24.

system of the time, looking to history for evidence of a venerated past, to archaeological artifacts to suggest territorial primacy and thus rights to the land, and to traditions as proof of continuity and cultural value. There is remorse in the evocation of peasant traditions in that the lost past is proclaimed glorious and legitimate, while the industrialized present is depicted as corrupt and unjust.<sup>24</sup>

While these two conceptions of nationhood fed social movements in Central Europe from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, two revolutions farther west gave birth to a third conception of the nation. The American and French Revolutions marked the emergence of what German historian Friedrich Meinecke refers to as a *Staatsnation* or a political nation.<sup>25</sup> In a political nation, the source of social cohesion is not inherited traits or behaviors, but a common core of political values that cut across religious, linguistic, and ethnic divisions. Michael Ignatieff prefers the term “civic nation” over “political nation,” which he defines as a nation that is ideally “composed of all those—regardless of race, color, [religious] creed, gender, language, or ethnicity—who subscribe to the nation’s political creed.”<sup>26</sup> This type of nation was revolutionary in that it envisioned a people united by political values powerful enough to override historical chauvinisms.

Liberalism is closely linked to the idea of a civic nation. Ernst B. Haas defines liberalism in its minimal terms as:

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<sup>24</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Meinecke and Hans Herzfeld, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1962).

<sup>26</sup> Ignatieff 1993, 249.

[A] form of government that employs decision-making procedures that provide for the representation of all major social and economic interests and ideologies and allow almost unrestricted discussion. It uses voting procedures that prevent the tyranny of majorities and minorities without committing itself to a single substantive formula of justice, rights, or expectations.<sup>27</sup>

The archetypes of political nationalism are the United States and France. Not only were these the first civic nations, but the first nation-states founded on the ideals of liberal democracy. The connection between liberalism and the political nation, I would argue, is more than an historical coincidence. Rather, the liberal democratic ideal is uniquely suited to bind diverse groups in a common political project thanks to its promise of freedom of affiliation and protection from tyranny of other groups.

The term “nation-state” connotes the notion of a citizenry or “nation” bound together under the bureaucratic structures of the state.<sup>28</sup> Historical circumstances, social mobilization, and political ends are fundamental to understanding why nationalists might evoke one conceptualization of nationhood over another. Nonetheless, the notion of “a nation” serves to mobilize constituents around a common identity and to legitimate the unification of a collectivity through state institutions. Despite nationalist rhetoric, nation-states are rarely if ever ethnically homogeneous. However, the rallying cry that ideologically legitimates the formation of a nation-state may become embedded in state institutions in a way that continues to define national identity beyond state formation and to privilege certain citizens.

While the state may actively promote a particular conception of national identity, notions of identity shift with time and circumstance. Charles Tilly argues that citizens

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<sup>27</sup> Haas 1997, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Green 1997, 11.

constantly reinterpret and redefine their national identities.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, competing notions of identity are likely to exist alongside the state-dominated narrative, especially among marginalized groups.<sup>30</sup> This pluralism of identities—existing at any given time but also changing over time—can threaten the very survival of the nation-state as it calls into question the unifying ideology that legitimated the formation of a nation-state in the first place.

Ethnic diversity represents a potential threat to the nation-state regardless of the collective national identity around which a nation-state was built. A primordial nation must regard other ethnic groups as foreign to the nation-state. A state created on the basis of a cultural national ideology views ethnic groups who do not assimilate as undermining national cohesion. Even a political nation can be threatened by ethnic diversity if ethnic divisions prove to run deeper than the citizenry's commitment to the political project that bound them at the point of state formation.

How can nation-states protect against the possibility their own disintegration in the face of changing identities and diversity? Nation-states require a way to reaffirm the ideological foundation on which they were formed or to replace that founding ideology with an equally binding one. Schools have historically served this function.<sup>31</sup> It is no coincidence that national school systems arose in conjunction with nation-states. Nation-

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Tilly. *Citizenship, Identity and Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Green states that: “The historical role of education in the process of state formation or ‘nation-building’ is now widely accepted” (Green 1997, 9). He also points out that: “These new systems represented a decisive break with the family- church- and apprentice-based forms of education which prevailed in early modern Europe” (Green 1997, 12).

states created these educational systems for the purpose of maintaining civic loyalty. Andy Green writes that “[n]ational education helped to construct the very subjectivities of citizenship, justifying the ways of the state to the people and the duties of the people to the state.”<sup>32</sup> Schools provide states with a site to influence discourses and images of national identity through curriculum choices, textbooks, and the inculcation of cultural values.

### **National Identity and Narration**

In the previous section, I addressed the relationship between national identity and state schooling. Now, I turn to the relevance of narratives to national belonging in order to address the question, “Why analyze school textbooks?”

How state agents, such as public schools, elites, the media, social groups, and individuals narrate the nation impacts public imaginings of what constitutes the national “we” and how that community differs from others. Geoffery Bennington writes: “The idea of the nation is inseparable from its narration: that narration attempts, interminably, to constitute identity against difference, inside against outside.”<sup>33</sup> The stories that are told about the nation—its meanings, values, heroes, defining events, and criteria for belonging—create images of belonging that, although “imagined,” nonetheless shape human loyalties, perspectives, and actions.

Nationalism scholars have commonly recognized the role that the narration of history plays in formulating public ideas about the nation. Albert Schaeffle, for example, identified eight elements that he believed determined the a nation’s viability, including

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<sup>32</sup> Green 1997, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Geoffrey, Bennington. “Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 132.

“history as cult,” that is, a commonly held and fervently believed in national history.<sup>34</sup>

The place of history for Renan, whom I quoted at the start of this chapter, is bound up with his notion of “a nation as a soul” with two facets, whereby:

One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form... The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are... To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions of being a people.<sup>35</sup>

The place of history is fundamental to Renan’s definition of a nation, with accounts of the past helping to build a common sense of legacy and heritage, and the notion of ancestors who sacrificed and worked in the past motivating the present generation with a desire to perform “great deeds together.”

The architects of nation-states, following the doctrine of self-determination, have often used the idea of territorial lineage to justify the establishment of an ethnically defined nation-state. History textbooks may function in service to this aim, designing accounts of ethnic descent to demonstrate how “we” have been on this land since time immemorial. School texts frequently depict archeological artifacts of proclaimed national ancestors, thereby becoming witnesses to the legitimacy of a nation-state. Architectural ruins, pottery fragments, written documents in the “primordial” language are examples of

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<sup>34</sup> Martin Thom. “Tribes within nations: the ancient Germans and the history of modern France,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 37-38.

<sup>35</sup> Renan (1882) 1990, 19.



the types of artifacts that have been both found and forged to speak in the name of a nation's historical past.

Historical narratives straddle a space between fact and myth. The heroes and events of historical discourse are frequently based in reality but take on the proportion and resonance of myth. Bronisław Malinowski noted the role that myths play in constructing societies: "myth acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events."<sup>36</sup> As this dissertation illustrates, textbooks often recount events and persons from the past in terms that underscore the values of the governing regime's ideology and represent the current regime as the apex of that history.

Influential to my thinking on the links between national identity and narration is Jan Assmann's work on mnemohistory, which he defines as the study of history as it is remembered, in contrast to a positivist endeavor. Assmann writes: "The present is 'haunted' by the past and the past is modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present."<sup>37</sup> Drawing on Assmann's distinction between history and mnemohistory, the primary goal of this dissertation is not to argue for the veracity of one version of history over the other, but rather to analyze how textbook narratives of national belonging vary or continue across time and regime change, and how these regimes attend to issues of

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<sup>36</sup> Timothy Brennan. "The National Longing for Form," in *Nation and Narration*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1990) 45.

<sup>37</sup> Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press) 9.

continuity, ethnic identity, and civic loyalty while re-representing history to legitimize the political ideology of the incumbent government.

Relevant to the history of Slovak identity, Assmann describes the phenomena of narratives and counter-narratives, whereby one historical representation eclipses another. Borrowing from Freud, Assmann points out that memories can become latent and marginalized. He writes:

Cultural knowledge is always embodied in human minds and circulates in groups and channels of communication. As soon as it ceases to circulate it becomes marginalized, either because the carrier group is persecuted or loses its influence, or because the knowledge is superseded by a new paradigm, a shift of interest. It may, however, remain stored in books and thus 'return' at a later time."<sup>38</sup>

While regimes have often attempted to erase past histories, the Slovak case demonstrates how memory can be stronger and more elusive than many regimes would desire. For example, even though centrist Czechoslovak politicians attempted to build a seamless, single nation during the interwar period, Slovak nationalists maintained their sense of a Slovak identity separate from the Czechs. Another example of the persistence of historical memory is illustrated in how Slovak accounts of World War II that had been forcibly repressed under state socialism, re-emerged with the post-1989 democratic government. Specifically, Slovak ethnic nationalists attempted to rehabilitate Jozef Tiso, the leader of the World War II Slovak regime, who had been vilified under state socialism. Similarly, Slovak historians who had likewise been silenced during the years

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<sup>38</sup> Assmann 1997, 217-218.

of Communist rule aspired to bring to light Slovakia and Tiso's role in the deportation of an estimated 70,000 Jews to death camps.<sup>39</sup>

In sum, history and civics textbooks are potent sources for investigating changes in national narratives across time and regimes, especially in a state where the government closely regulates compulsory schooling, as was the case in the regimes in this study. Textbooks are political in that they reflect the fundamental tensions that the nation-state faces between constructing a coherent community and embracing—rhetorically, if not in practice—liberal values that lend the regime legitimacy, but which simultaneously tend toward diversity and incoherence. By nature of being written records, state-sponsored publications can serve to maintain the national narratives that state agents once wished to perpetuate, preserving them for subsequent eras despite even drastic regime change, under which these accounts have fallen out of favor.

### **Research Methods**

Slovakia offers a superb case not only because of its rich history of regime change. A variety of non-Slovak actors in the 19th century have attempted to define its national narrative, including Czechs under the Czechoslovak states, the Soviet Union during the socialist period, and the European Union (EU) both in the years leading up to and after Slovakia became a member of this supranational organization. Yet, Slovakia has also experienced varying degrees of sovereignty: from 1939 to 1945 the First Slovak Republic became a state independent of the Czechs but remained under the close watch of its Nazi German ally; and since 1993 when the Czech and Slovak Republics split in

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<sup>39</sup> James Mace Ward, "No Saint: Jozef Tiso, 1887-1947." (PhD diss. Stanford University, 2008).

what was dubbed the “Velvet Divorce,” Slovakia has successfully achieved NATO and EU membership as an independent state. For these reasons, Slovakia allows for the exploration of how one nation defines itself under a wide array of circumstances and competing interests.

Two practical considerations also informed my decision to conduct my research in Slovakia. First, I had lived in Prague from 1991-2000. During this time, I witnessed the peaceful breakup of Czechoslovakia in “the Velvet Divorce” in 1993. I became familiar with the history of the region, and also learned Czech to the degree that I was employed as a translator. Because Slovak is linguistically closely related to Czech, my knowledge of the latter made the former, with some work and informal study, accessible to me. Second, while on a US State Department Fulbright Fellowship in 2004-2005 and based in the Slovak capital Bratislava, I heard about an impressive collection of textbooks at the State Pedagogical Library [Statná pedagogická knižnica], frequently referred to simply as SPK.

Located in Petržalka, a largely residential area of Bratislava dominated by prefabricated socialist housing, SPK provided a wealth of data on schooling in the region. As the head librarian explained to me in an interview: “SPK has the duty, the responsibility from a government statute, to archive all textbooks for basic and middle schools that were published in Slovakia, including those in [minority languages such as] Ukrainian or Hungarian.”<sup>40</sup> Although the staff was diligently working on converting their card catalogs to a digital, online format, the process was far from complete at the time of my data collection. In addition, the SPK librarians warned me that among the various

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Katarína Kurillová on May 11, 2005.

types of card catalogs located there, which were organized variously by the international Dewey decimal system, authors, titles, or subjects, none encompassed the complete textbook holdings.

Due to the absence of a single comprehensive catalog, I manually searched through each card catalog for the titles of Slovak-language history and civics textbooks published between the mid-19th century till 2005.<sup>41</sup> Although I did not limit my search by school type or grade level, several patterns soon emerged that facilitated my data collection. First, national history was a focus of the curriculum during specific grades—generally in the 4th and 5th years of elementary school and then again in later grades, often in 7th and 10th grade. The Ministry of Education, or its equivalent, published state curricula under each regime, which helped me confirm my observations regarding when in a students' schooling she would encounter national history. Second, the majority of textbooks went through multiple editions during any single regime. In these cases, I would place the first edition and later editions side by side and compare the table of contents for changes in themes, organization, and the page length of units. Changes across textbook editions within any given regime were rare, leading me to conclude that

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<sup>41</sup> Further complicating matters in the beginning of my data collection, I soon discovered that what in American English we would generally refer to as “civic education” had multiple names in Slovak: občianska výchova, občianska náuka, and náuka o spoločnosti. The different terms correspond to the grade level at which the subject is taught. Specifically, “výchova” connotes education in the sense of “upbringing” paralleling the German word “Erziehung” and is used for younger grades. Meanwhile, “náuka” signifies education in the German sense of “Bildung.” “Náuka o spoločnosti,” or literally “Education about Society,” is offered in the upper grades, particularly in college-preparatory schools or “gymnázia.”

the majority of re-editions were simply re-prints.<sup>42</sup> Third, after analyzing history and civics textbooks across all state school types within each of my designated regime periods, I found, for example, that the history narratives in textbooks designed for college-preparatory schools [known as “gymnázia”] compared to professional school students varied in predictable ways. The texts were simplified for the designated low-skilled professional schools and especially for special education schools; however, the general patterns of historical emphasis and interpretation remained constant. For this reason and because the college-preparatory and mainstream elementary school texts are more detailed than their grade-level equivalents in the professional and special education schools, the textbooks I cite in this study draw from the first two school types.

Besides the convenience of having the majority of textbooks housed in a single archive, the most important factor that rendered this undertaking realizable was Slovakia’s history of a centralized school system. Since 1918, the state government through the Ministry of Education has dictated the official school curriculum by grade level and school type. The most widely distributed textbooks throughout the time period under study were printed by the state-run Slovak Pedagogical Press or SPN [Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo] and approved by the Ministry of Education. Because state exams for graduation were aligned with the state curriculum and teaching materials, there was significant incentive for teachers, parents and students to use state-sponsored textbooks.<sup>43</sup> Importantly, the state tended to distribute the textbooks it produced to

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<sup>42</sup> When such changes across textbook editions did occur, I noted the variations and considered their political and social significance within the context of that historical period and regime ideology.

<sup>43</sup> In an interview on May 13, 2005, Erich Mistrík, professor and head of the civic education department at Comenius University, told me that in his experience, teachers

schools free of charge or for a subsidized fee. Under Communism, the state owned all printing houses. In other words, the variety of textbooks in Slovakia is vastly more limited than in the US system, in which each state controls its schooling, the textbook market is driven by an array of interest groups outside of the state, and publishers compete for the textbook market.

Despite SPK's mission to collect all school textbooks ever published in the region of today's Slovakia, the collection was not absolutely complete. After generating a record of relevant titles based on SPK's card catalogs, I cross-checked my list with a bibliography of textbooks (Registrujúca bibliografia SPK) and with the holdings at the Slovak National Library (Slovenská národná knižnica) in the town of Martin. Textbooks from the late 1990s and beyond were often unavailable in SPK at the time of my data collection. I often found these more recent books at the Pedagogical Faculty at Comenius University (Pedagogická fakulta Komenského univerzita) in Bratislava texts through the help of my colleagues there or I purchased the textbooks directly from publishing houses and bookstores.

In total, I studied over 400 titles for state schooling in the subjects of history and civics, which included teacher guides and official curricular documents in addition to textbooks. I focused my analysis primarily on texts that the ministry of education had approved, which were often publications produced at the state printing house. Such certification was also flagged in the front pages of each publication by an insignia from the ministry and a short statement and date of official endorsement. As mentioned

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generally elect to use the state-approved textbooks with the understanding that they cover the material that will be on the state-run secondary school graduation exams [maturity] and university entrance exams [statnice].

earlier, these state-approved texts tended to have the widest circulation within the state school system and commensurately large print runs. This situation became somewhat more complicated in the post-socialist years when US- and European-funded agencies flooded Central Europe with democratic civic education teaching guides and texts. In this era, I adapted my data collection accordingly, meeting with non-governmental and governmental organizations from abroad to obtain copies of their publications and discuss their distribution methods and program aims. However, even now when Slovakia is a full member of the EU, education remains under the purview of the state government, and the alignment between state-published textbooks and state-administered graduation exams continues to influence teacher and student choices in textbook adoption in favor of state-approved texts.

Within—and later across—each regime period between 1918 and 2005, I searched for content patterns in the textbooks. Questions that guided my inquiry included: How were terms such as nation or national, and citizen or citizenship used in the texts, and what did these terms seem to signify? How did the texts characterize national belonging and what meanings or criteria were attributed to “being Slovak” or “Czechoslovak”? Which historical events and figures did the textbooks cover, and how were the impact of these phenomena interpreted in light of regime ideology? Moreover, because national identity is constituted against a notion of the “other,” I interrogated the written text and illustrations to ask: How did the textbooks portray minorities, particularly Jews, Roma, Hungarians, Germans, and Czechs, and what was the suggested relationship between these groups and ethnic Slovaks? To understand how citizenship was constituted in each regime, I also analyzed descriptions of civic rights and



responsibilities, the articulation of civic values, and the degree to which these changed across regimes. I translated all of the textbook excerpts presented in this study.

At least two factors regarding the nature of my data have important implications for the limitations of my research. First, because I do not know Hungarian, I could not analyze school texts in Hungarian, which were relevant to the territory of Slovakia during the Habsburg Empire and later used by ethnic Hungarians who remained in Slovakia when it became part of Czechoslovakia. However, in addition to studying the limited number of Slovak-language primary school documents produced between 1868 and 1874 when Slovak-language schools were permitted in the Hungarian Kingdom, I read secondary sources on the history of education in this era to establish a basic understanding of the transitions in the education system and in conceptions of identity between pre- and post-World War I. Second, textbooks and curricular documents should not be assumed to represent teacher practice or student beliefs. Indeed, the resilience of certain historical memories in Slovakia despite their erasure from state-published textbooks attests to the multiplicity of sites outside of school texts where historical memory is produced and revised.

Nonetheless, textbooks provide valuable insights into the national identity narratives that state agents wished to impose on young citizens through the institution of state schooling. Moreover, in the centralized school system with state oversight of curricula, of textbook certification, and of the production of graduation exams aligned with state-sponsored texts, incentives for following the state-mandated narratives were high. The risks of deviating from the official curriculum were particularly serious in the totalitarian regimes, when teachers were likely to lose their position and government

privileges if they resisted official doctrine in their teaching. This is not to say that teachers never supplemented state textbooks with other materials or qualified state narratives in lectures and discussions. However, oversight from school inspectors and administrators representing the state and from parents and students interested in covering the content required to pass the graduation and college-entrance exams imposed considerable limitations on teacher agency.

While other studies have employed textbook analysis as a vehicle for comprehending variation in historical narratives, few have looked across a time span and breadth of political regimes comparable to this research. Among US examples of textbook studies, Joseph Moreau's is noteworthy, in part because he analyzes more than 100 US textbooks published over a 170-year period, between 1824-2003.<sup>44</sup> However, the relative stability of the US government eliminates the possibility for exploring how political regime changes have impacted history narratives of citizenship and national belonging. Beyond the US, the expansion of the EU has inspired a proliferation of textbook studies, in part because of the perceived urgency to forge a common European identity and history that might supersede national chauvinisms. These textbook analyses

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph Moreau, *School Book Nation: conflicts over American history textbooks from the Civil War to the present* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004). Other studies of US textbooks that are frequently cited do not cover the time span of Moreau's work: for example, Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: history schoolbooks in the twentieth century* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); and James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: everything your American history textbook got wrong* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

tend to cover one or two country cases and span no more than 50 years of textbook production.<sup>45</sup>

### **Scholarly Contributions and Chapter Organization**

This research into the continuity and change of national and civic narratives in Slovak history and civics textbooks from 1918-2005 contributes to existing scholarship in several ways. First, it expands beyond a common approach to case studies that tend to examine nation-states as static territorial and political entities. This study considers “Slovakia” across a span of 90 years and multiple regime changes, taking into account the expansion and contraction of “Slovakia” in geographical size and the relevance of “Slovakness” within various states—most recently in the supranational European Union. Second, the range of political types that Slovakia has experienced in that same time period permits an investigation into the assumptions about how the political ideology of the state informs historiography and civic education as represented in school texts.

A central indication of my research findings is that the tasks that a regime defines for its state schools are shaped not only by the logic of its political ideology, but also by its perception of its historical situation. I argue that incumbent state regimes appear to be in dialog through school texts with the ideologies of former regimes and often most fervently with the immediately antecedent regime. Therefore, state agents position their civic and national narratives in relation to “what came before,” in part to justify the superiority of their own government and legitimize their rule.

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<sup>45</sup> See for example the collection of textbook analyses in Hanna Schissler and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, eds. *The Nation, Europe, and the World: textbooks and curricula in transition* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005).

The title of this dissertation, “revising the nation,” is meant to reflect this idea that each regime inherits narratives and conceptions of identity promoted under antecedent regimes. In other words, regimes do not inherit a *tabula rasa* of social identities onto which they can simply and flawlessly project the political identity of their choice; rather new formations of national belonging must revise and work with the multiple and shifting layers of national identity built up over time. In this way, national narratives and conceptions of belonging are analogous to geological strata: each layer of rock contains traces of the context of its era but is formed on top of and in relation to antecedent strata. Especially in a region like Slovakia, which has experienced at least five major regime transitions in the last century, some continuity in the national myth, in how the nation defines itself, and in its heroes and tales of glory and suffering may provide a necessary degree of social cohesion—a bedrock—in times of drastic political upheaval.

This dialogical relationship between current and preceding articulations of “the nation” recommends a chronological approach to analysis. In other terms, sequencing the chapters of this dissertation temporally facilitates a contextualized study of how national narratives respond to their historical precedents and, simultaneously, how they manage the demands of changing political ideologies. Chapter Two of this study examines interwar Czechoslovakia from 1918-1938, and in particular the problem of attempting to create a convincing narrative of “Czechoslovak” belonging out of the multiethnic, multilingual identities that characterized the Habsburg Empire. Chapter Three follows the Slovak state through World War II, when narratives of “Czechoslovak” belonging were resized to fit an ethnically defined “Slovak” nation and legitimate the territorial state of the Slovak Republic (1939-1945). Chapter Four investigates textbook narratives under

Communism from 1948 till 1989 and the challenge of remaking an ethnic conceptualization of the “Slovak nation” with a working-class, internationalist vision of belonging. Chapter Five considers the transitions of democratization on national identity and the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1993, which marked a renewed Slovak state and a period of heightened ethnic nationalism. Chapter Five also questions the impact of a supranational narrative of European belonging on Slovak national identity narratives in school texts.

Throughout the study, I approach the textbooks as a form of political discourse that reveals the complexities and contradictions of the nation-state. My analyses of the textbooks uncover a debate that is taking place across all of the regimes under study. This debate is happening at multiple levels: (1) between the author and the anticipated audience of readers; (2) between the author and other authors who have captured the political ideology of the regime; (3) between the international community and the state; and ultimately, (4) between the author and his or herself. These dialogs often reflect the contradictions and challenges of the nation-state itself.

As this chapter has begun to describe, the nation-state is a Janus-faced entity, peering simultaneously backward and forward in time.<sup>46</sup> The imagined past—re-imagined in part through school history texts—frequently serves to construct a notion of the communal “we” bound through common traditions, language, religion, and simplified or fabricated ethnic origins. Accounts of the past also function to establish an idea of an evolutionary departure point from which the nation-state can and is demonstrated to have developed toward modernity and progress, in a trajectory of perceived inevitability that

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<sup>46</sup> Tom Nairn uses the analogy of Janus for the nation in Tom Nairn. *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977).

legitimizes the ideological path of the extant regime. Meanwhile, the Janus nation-state—and the textbook accounts that reflect its political discourse—simultaneously gazes into the future to predict the inevitably glorious fate of the national community, realized through the state and its agents. In other words, the state and the nation reconstitute and reinforce each other, but they also are Siamese twins of different minds, tugging in opposing directions.

Although this study examines articulations of national belonging in textbooks, a fundamental concern about how school narratives perpetuate social divisions undergirds this research. My hope is that by investigating school textbook narratives of national belonging in Central Europe across time and regime change, we might better understand why and how ethnically exclusive notions of national identity persist, what political and social purposes they serve, and, thereby, undermine the covert power of these narratives to make room for inclusive—and historically accurate—accounts of social and political membership.

## CHAPTER II

### FORGING AN UNSTABLE ALLOY:

#### THE CZECHOSLOVAK NATION IN THE FIRST REPUBLIC, 1918-1939

We are founding schools in Slovakia. We must await their results; in one generation there will be no differences between the two branches [Czech and Slovak] of our national family.

—Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 1921.<sup>47</sup>

Our Slovaks have not yet come from Slovak schools and as long as the last Slovak does not come from a Slovak school, there will not be true Slovak thought here.

—Vavro Šrobar, 1926 in a speech to Parliament.<sup>48</sup>

During the interwar period in Czechoslovakia, elementary school history texts commonly tell a primordial story of three brothers who venture out of their homeland, whose coordinates are simply “East,” to found their own communities, which evolve into distinct nations. The brothers are named Czech, Lech, and Rus, and, according to the myth, their communities reflect their namesakes: the Czech lands, Poland, and Russia, respectively. Predictably the textbooks published in the Czechoslovak Republic follow Czech to the end of his journey, leaving behind the brothers Lech and Rus. Of the three

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<sup>47</sup> Owen V. Johnson, *Slovakia, 1918-1938: Education and the making of a nation*. East European monographs, no. 180. (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), 95.

<sup>48</sup> Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflicts in Czechoslovakia: The making and remaking of a state, 1918-1987*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 139.

brothers, Czech ventures the farthest westward and discovers a fecund and temperate country, where his followers make him their leader.

This origin myth imagines a forefather around which the new state's agents could construct a notion of Czechness and, concomitantly, of social coherence. Missing from the legend, however, is an origin myth for Slovaks, who comprised together with the Czechs the ruling majority within the interwar state. The textbooks attempt to circumvent this oversight by mentioning at the end of the three-brothers story that Slovaks are also Czech's descendents. Nevertheless, the addendum that Slovaks too hark from the bloodline of "great grandfather Czech" comes across as an afterthought and begs the question why Czech was not named "Slovak" or "Czechoslovak" instead.

This chapter elucidates why textbooks during this era struggled in their narratives to define what it meant to be Czechoslovak or Czech-Slovak. After World War I, Czech and Slovak speakers found themselves in a newly formed nation-state, the First Czechoslovak Republic. The US, France, and Britain supported the establishment of this state in part because of claims that a Czechoslovak nation already existed and had a right to self-determination. Yet even among domestic politicians, particularly centrist Czechs, centrist Slovaks, and Slovak nationalists, passionate disagreements erupted regarding what criteria should comprise membership to a "Czechoslovak" or "Czech-Slovak" nation. This struggle to define the national identity of the post-World War I state is reflected in the political discourse of the textbooks analyzed in this chapter.

### **Designing "Czechoslovakism"**

Tracing the processes by which the First Czechoslovak Republic emerged from the ruins of the Habsburg Empire after World War I exemplifies emphatically how a



nation-state might be forged methodically, rather than “born” organically, despite national narratives that make claims to the contrary. A small group of Czech and Slovak politicians and intellectuals contrived to build out of separate pieces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire a unified, autonomous Czechoslovak nation-state and to transform a selection of often multi-lingual, multi-cultural Habsburg subjects into “Czechoslovak” nationals and democratic citizens—a feat that before World War I would have seemed too outlandish.

However, World War I provided the flame that dissolved the empires of Europe and that allowed for the reshaping of the continent’s geopolitical map. Nation-state builders such as Tomáš Masaryk and his colleagues Edvard Beneš and Milan Štefanik could endeavor to forge in the heat of the war a new national alloy—“the Czechoslovak nation.” Their motives for pursuing such an amalgamation were strategic. Ethnic Germans comprised a substantial proportion of the population of the Czech lands, meaning that Czechs would not have had a clear governing majority in a Czech state.<sup>49</sup> Masaryk and his colleagues, however, were committed to the ideals of democratic liberalism and the concept of majority rule. First, democratic liberalism’s valorization of self-determination had helped fuel the nationalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from which these leaders sprung, and lent them legitimacy. Second, the language of democracy

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<sup>49</sup> Leff estimates that six million Czechs, three million Slovaks, and three million Germans resided in Czechoslovakia during the First Republic (Leff 1988, 35). However, other sources indicate that the total population of Slovak territory—not of ethnic Slovaks—was just under 3 million, and approximately 68% of those 3 million identified as Slovak in 1921 (“Slovensko, vol. III” In *Statistický lexikon obcí v republice československé* (Prague, 1921), XVI-XVIII). In other words, the figure of 2.4 million appears to be a more accurate approximation of the number of “Slovaks” that Czechoslovak politicians could hope for in their bid for a strong majority against the large ethnic German population.

was necessary to gain the support of the democratic Allied Powers, the US, Britain, and France, during the war. By banding together with Slovaks, Czechs would comfortably be in the majority to rule the proposed Czechoslovak state. In addition, the inclusion of Slovak territory in the new state would create a more convincing geographic buffer against German expansionism, which held obvious appeal to the Allied Powers.<sup>50</sup>

Within this democratic rhetorical and ideological framework, it was difficult to reconcile the interpretation of self-determination as “one nation, one state,” with the conceptualization of Slovaks and Czechs as separate nations. For Czech nationalists who wanted to use “self-determination” as the rallying cry to gain their own autonomous state, an apparent solution to this dilemma was to embrace Slovaks as co-nationals. By 1917, Czech and Slovak leaders, including the Slovak national leader Andrej Hlinka, agreed that they needed to collaborate to gain their independence from the Germans and Hungarians. Nonetheless, they had reached little consensus about what “Czechoslovakism” would look like in the joint nation-state.<sup>51</sup>

Historical circumstances did not leave Czech and Slovak leaders with many opportunities to consult with each other or with their respective populations to devise a common conceptualization of Czechoslovakism or even to begin a serious debate on the subject. During World War I, the Habsburgs purposively obstructed contact between Czech and Slovak leaders at home and abroad.<sup>52</sup> Because the future of a Czechoslovak Republic in large part relied on convincing the international community of the existence

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<sup>50</sup> See Johnson 1985.

<sup>51</sup> For a thorough discussion of the problems of conceptualizing “Czechoslovakism” during the First Republic, see Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus state* (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 19-45.

<sup>52</sup> Leff 1997, 44.

of a Czech-Slovak nation that deserved its own state, Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefanik had to take care when lobbying abroad to present a united front on how Czechoslovakism would play out in their proposed nation-state.

Ironically, as Czech and Slovak leaders needed the concept of a Czechoslovak nation to legitimize their joint autonomous state, they would later need the state and its institutions to construct that very nation. As census data that I present later in this chapter demonstrate, identities in the Czechoslovak state were fluid and multi-faceted. In the former Habsburg Empire even the labels “Czech” or “Slovak” were inchoate, so it was unsurprising that the newly coined concept of “Czechoslovak” might be susceptible to varied interpretations and blank stares from the populace. Censuses, the media, and schools were a few of the institutions charged with instilling a sense of “Czechoslovakness” in the state’s citizenry, but confusion over what being “Czechoslovak” should mean complicated that charge.

Thus, a basic dilemma of the First Czechoslovak Republic was over the formula for the new national Czechoslovak alloy and how that national identity would inform schooling. Would Czechoslovak national identity be forged through the smelting of the ostensibly distinct elements of “Czech” and “Slovak” into a new, more resilient steel-like alloy? Would one element dominate the other in the end product, perhaps like fourteen-karat gold in which gold is combined with silver or copper, but the former dominates in color and name? Or could the notions of Czech and Slovak be mixed in a way that would celebrate their distinctness, two metal plates joined together by some national soldering iron?

This chapter investigates how school texts dealt with the challenges of creating the Czechoslovak nation out of former Habsburg subjects who had little sense of a national identity and whose leaders had not agreed on a “formula” for Czechoslovakism. The title phrase of this chapter “forging a nation-state” is meant to suggest both the creation of a nation-state and an act of forgery or falsification. Many scholars of nationalism, including Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, have argued convincingly of the imaginary or invented—and yet powerful—character of national belonging.<sup>53</sup> While it is commonly understood among scholars of nationalism today that “the nation” is made, not born, calling national constructions “false” is a more contentious matter. This second definition of “forging” is intended to evoke the perspective of prominent Slovak leaders during the First Republic who believed that the Czechoslovak nation had been built on false pretenses. Rather than creating a new, melded Czechoslovak identity or a federal state that established equality between Czechs and Slovaks, some Slovak politicians argued that their Czech counterparts during the First Republic simply wanted to turn Slovaks into Czechs, subsuming them under the more palatable Czechoslovak label. Analyzing the degree to which the “Czechoslovak” identity, as depicted in school texts, attended equally to Czech and Slovak sensibilities is one goal of this chapter.

While many Slovaks felt subordinated in the new Czechoslovak nation-state, their identity was still represented in the new state’s name and in the conception of the nation. The same could not be said for minority ethnic groups, including Germans, Hungarians,

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<sup>53</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London, New York: Verso, 1991). Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Jews, Roma [Gypsies], and Rusyns who resided in significant numbers in the territory of the new Czechoslovak state.<sup>54</sup> A contradiction inherent in the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic exists in the contrast between the ethnic Czechoslovak conceptualization of the nation, which excluded the minorities just mentioned, and the liberal, democratic ideals of the Czechoslovak state, which guaranteed minority rights. In this way, the story of this chapter attends to the central research question of this dissertation discussed in the previous chapter: How do nation-states navigate in schooling the probable tensions between an exclusive notion of the nation and more liberal civic ideals of the state?

I approach this question through an analysis of history and civics textbooks published during the First Czechoslovak Republic, using the framework of primordial, cultural, and civic nationalisms that I described in the Introduction. I situate the projects of building democratic Czechoslovak citizens, on the one hand, and an exclusive Czechoslovak nation, on the other, in the historical context of the post-World War I era.

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<sup>54</sup> Rusyns are referred to by many names, including Ruthenians, Ruthenes, Rusins, and Rusniaks in English. The national identity of Rusyns is controversial. Historically, politicians and intellectuals have argued alternatively that Rusyns are Ukrainians, Russians, or a distinct ethnic category. The majority of Rusyns are Greek Catholics, not Orthodox Christians, the latter confessional being associated with Eastern Ukrainian and Russian national identity, the former with Western Ukraine. Rusyns share linguistic characteristics with both Eastern and Western Slavic languages. In the context of post-World War I negotiations, Rusyn identity is particularly important because both Czechoslovak leaders and Hungarian leaders after World War I offered the Rusyns autonomy within their new states. In 1919, the Rusyns accepted the offer to join the Czechoslovak Republic on condition of autonomy over the territory on which the majority of Rusyns lived, Subcarpathian Rus. Rusyn self-governance was guaranteed in the Czechoslovak Constitution in 1920. For more on Rusyn identity, see the work of Paul R. Magocsi, including *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus, 1848-1948* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978) and *The Rusyns of Slovakia: an historical survey*. East European Monographs, 381 (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993).

This historical perspective, which takes into account international and domestic circumstances that were likely to have impacted identity projects during the First Czechoslovak Republic, demonstrates ways in which “what came before” matters in civic education and suggests that regime type alone does not sufficiently explain or predict the nature of national identity that states attempt to foster through schooling. Rather, the picture that emerges is dialogical and multifarious: the past informs current circumstances, but the present also revises the past; notions of modernization imagine the nation into a promising future while the adulation of primordial legends and folk traditions anchor that same nation in a sacred past; and a need to define the domestic “we” cannot ignore the discourses of larger, more powerful nation-states in the international sphere.

### **Czecho-Slovak Nation-Building from Abroad**

The international turmoil spurred by the onset of World War I made the prospect of an autonomous state for Czechs and Slovaks plausible and the reconfiguration of the map of Europe imaginable. Czech and Slovak national leaders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had called for greater autonomy for their ethnic nationals within the confines of the empire, but any declaration in favor of an independent state would have been an act of sedition during the Habsburg reign. Aware of these national aspirations, the Habsburg government imposed a communications blackout in the empire during the war to hinder national activism at home.<sup>55</sup> For this reason, the movement to create a Czechoslovak state had to find impetus and support abroad.

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<sup>55</sup> Leff 1988, 44.

Three of the most notable Czech and Slovak leaders working in exile during the war would eventually become the first president, minister of defense, and minister of foreign affairs of the Czechoslovak state; they were respectively Tomáš Masaryk, Milan Štefánik, and Edvard Beneš. In 1916, these three men formed the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, an organization that added the patina of officialdom to their war efforts. They met with Allied leaders in the U.S., Britain, and France to lobby for a future Czechoslovak state. The Allies and the Czechoslovak National Council had several interests in common. A unified Czech and Slovak state in Europe would provide a buffer against future German expansionism and a bastion of democracy in Central Europe. A Czechoslovak state carved out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would fit into the conventions of war retributions, diminishing the pre-war boundaries of the Central Powers. Finally, the future Czechoslovak state would encompass territories that ranked among the most highly industrialized in the world at that time, making it a desirable trade partner.<sup>56</sup>

However, the fate of the Czechoslovak state relied on the Allies more than the Allies relied on a Czechoslovak state. For this reason, it befell the Czech and Slovak leaders in exile during the war to court the Allies, in the hopes of bringing their support behind the idea of a Czechoslovak state. The Czechoslovak National Council organized the Czechoslovak legions—voluntary military units of Czech and Slovak émigré soldiers who fought alongside Allied forces. The Council leaders also pursued a vigorous strategy

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<sup>56</sup> R.W. Seton-Watson, *The New Slovakia* (Prague: Fr. Borový, 1924).

of diplomacy, meeting regularly with the highest officials of the Allied governments: Štefánik primarily in Paris and Moscow, Beneš in London, and Masaryk in the U.S.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to engaging the Allied leaders in diplomatic talks, the Czechoslovak National Council pursued a populist approach to state building by lobbying Czech and Slovak émigré communities in the U.S. Conscripting the émigré populations for the state-building project was vital for the legitimacy of the movement for several reasons. First, an ethnic national consciousness was arguably more developed among immigrant communities in the US than in the Habsburg Empire. Within Central Europe, regional identities tended to dominate still nascent national conceptions of belonging.<sup>58</sup> Second, even among those Czechs and Slovaks in Central Europe who might have self-identified as Czech and Slovak nationals, the idea of demanding an autonomous state probably appeared radical in light of decades of national political action that called simply for more representation and autonomy within the empire rather than for secession. Suggesting that the empire dissolve to allow for an independent Czech-Slovak state was also risky from the perspective of Czechs and Slovaks living in the empire who must have weighed the worth of such outspokenness against the probable repercussions should the Central Powers win the war.<sup>59</sup> Finally, many Czechs and Slovaks in Central Europe

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<sup>57</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson. *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1977); Leff 1988.

<sup>58</sup> Jeremy King. *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: a local history of Bohemian politics, 1848-1948*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra. *Kidnapped Souls: national indifference and the battle for children in the Bohemian lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Leff notes that a more viable agenda for many Slovaks was “an end to the dual monarchy under which they were at the behest of the Magyars” and “a return to rule under the more ethnically tolerant Viennese government.” (Leff 1988, 38-41).



remained unconvinced that they had much in common with each other.<sup>60</sup> Czech and Slovak national leaders had a history of collaboration during the National Awakening in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; however, the majority of Czechs and Slovaks had little sense of any special kinship between their two linguistic groups.<sup>61</sup> Because Masaryk and his colleagues could not rely on expressions of mass support at home, they needed the consent of the émigré communities in the US to lend their demand for an autonomous state the appearance of representing the “will of the people,” rather than simply the will of a few elite intellectual politicians. These observations reveal the tension between the aims of constructing an ethnic Czechoslovak nation, when ethnic national consciousness was still largely an idea of the elite, and the call to represent popular will in the spirit of democracy. As the later discussion of history textbooks shows, these tensions were quite apparent in the educational materials that would be used in the classrooms of Czechoslovak schools.

Fortunately for Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefánik, their desire for a joint sovereign state resonated with enough Slovak and Czech immigrants in the US to produce two public statements of support, lending their agenda of statehood a semblance of popular sovereignty. In 1915 in Cleveland, Ohio, members of the Slovak League and the Czech National Association—two émigré organizations in the US that gave financial and social support to new immigrants from the homeland—published a proclamation in favor of establishing a federal state of Czechs and Slovaks in Europe. On May 2, 1917 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Masaryk and representatives of the Slovak community there signed an accord stating that the will of Czechs and Slovaks was to form a joint state,

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<sup>60</sup> Johnson 1985, 47.

<sup>61</sup> See Jeremy King, 2002; Leff, 1985, p. 18.

“Czecho-Slovakia.” The Pittsburgh Agreement became more widely publicized than the Cleveland declaration, but both proclamations promised Slovakia considerable autonomy within the conceived framework of the future federation. Slovakia was to have its own legal system, political administration, and the right to cultural self-determination, including the right to decree Slovak the region’s official language.<sup>62</sup>

As these efforts indicate, the project to attain a Czechoslovak state relied heavily on the vision and efforts of a small, elite group of Czech and Slovak leaders in exile. These leaders in turn recognized that the success of their mission depended largely on international support, which they gained through a program of intense diplomacy and the promise that a Czechoslovak state would provide a barrier against future German expansionism. The émigré Czech and Slovak communities in the US provided the appearance of a national, popular will for a Czecho-Slovak state. However, that nation had yet to be forged at home.

### **The Nation-State Building Project Comes Home**

Meanwhile, in Central Europe, Austro-Hungarian authorities were aware of nationalist aspirations among some of the empire’s Slavic subjects and disrupted communications between the two halves of the empire to stymie political organization.<sup>63</sup> Slovak and Czech national leaders who had cooperated prior to the war now not only had

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<sup>62</sup> Johnson 1985, 46.

<sup>63</sup> Oscar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).

difficulty coordinating their political efforts at home and abroad, but were also at times unsure of who was winning the war.<sup>64</sup>

However, in 1917 several events presaged a turn in the war and emboldened nationalist activities in Central Europe. France and Britain began to better coordinate their military moves, the British naval blockade was successfully impeding the German war effort, and the US broke its isolationist policy in April 1917 to join the war on the side of the Entente Powers. That same month, three leading Slovak politicians, František Votruba, Anton Štefánek, and Vavro Šrobár, met in Prague with the leader of the Czech National Movement Antonín Švehla.<sup>65</sup> In May, Švehla stood before the Austrian Parliament and read a proclamation from the Czech Club suggesting that Czechs and Slovaks unite.<sup>66</sup> Šrobár, in the meantime, was spreading the idea of Czecho-Slovak unity in Slovakia. In May in the Central Slovak town of Liptovský Mikuláš, his speeches led to a rally at which the gathered Slovaks demanded, “sovereignty for all nations including the ‘Hungarian branch of the Czechoslovak nation.’”<sup>67</sup> This formulation of identity reveals the inchoate understanding of what the term “Slovak” meant. Slovak speakers would continue to identify themselves as Hungarian or Magyar even after the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic, and the state would look primarily to schools and state sponsored textbooks to build national consciousness at home.

On the international front, in September 1918, the Czechoslovak National Council formed a temporary government in Paris, with Masaryk as President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance, Štefánek became the Minister of War, and Beneš the Minister of

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<sup>64</sup> Leff 1988, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson 1985, 48.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson 1985, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson 1985, 48.

Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Interior. On October 17, 1918 the Prime Minister of the Hungarian Parliament declared that Hungary had lost the war, and two days later, Ferdiš Juriga, who was then the only Slovak representative in the Hungarian Parliament, declared Slovakia's independence from the Hungarian Kingdom.<sup>68</sup> Although in 1917 Šrobár had been incarcerated for inciting sedition in the empire, Hungarian officials now released him, and he made his way to Prague in time to sign the National Committee's proclamation of independence on October 28, 1918. The other four signatories were all Czech, foreboding an unequal balance of relations even between the majority ethnic national groups within the new state.<sup>69</sup>

On October 30, 1918 the National Committee joined Masaryk's temporary government in Geneva and negotiated the redistribution of governmental offices among the groups' members. On that same day in Slovakia, the newly formed Slovak National Council, consisting of approximately one hundred self-appointed members, convened in the Central Slovakian town of Turčiansky Svätý Martin and professed that it was the will of the Slovak people to unite with the Czechs.<sup>70</sup> Political scientist Carol Skalnik Leff states that the Martin Declaration was an attempt by a small group of Slovaks to publicly stake a claim in the future of Slovak territory, knowing that an international peace agreement was being negotiated.<sup>71</sup> She also observes that the Martin Declaration was ambiguous in its definition of "Czechoslovak unity," leading in later years to problems in which both centrists and Slovak nationalists cited the document to support their particular

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<sup>68</sup> Johnson 1985, 48.

<sup>69</sup> Leff 1988, 139.

<sup>70</sup> Emil Stodola and Matuš Dula had founded the council only a month earlier, when the Allied victory in the war seemed likely.

<sup>71</sup> Leff 1988, 41.

political agendas.<sup>72</sup> As I argue later in this chapter, the ambiguity of political terms on which Czechs and Slovaks entered into a joint state is also reflected in the ways in which school texts at times indiscriminately and interchangeably used terms such as “Czech,” “Slovak,” and “Czechoslovak.”

The Central and Allied Powers on November 11, 1918 signed an armistice ending the fighting between them. However, the treaties that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference, most famously the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, marked the end of the war on diplomatic terms. The creation of a new Czechoslovak state was one of the most important outcomes of the war.<sup>73</sup> Even after the Treaty of Versailles, fighting within the old Austro-Hungarian Empire continued. Hungary became the Hungarian Socialist Republic under Béla Kun and battled the Czechoslovak legions over the new state’s eastern territories. Hungary signed a ceasefire with the Czechoslovaks on July 1, 1919 and the Treaty of Trianon in Paris on June 4, 1920, settling for a time Hungary’s border disputes with its neighbors.

The military struggles that spilled beyond the official end of World War II made apparent the fragility of the new state. As fighting along the borderlands persisted past the diplomatic end of World War I, the legacies of the Habsburg Empire also continued to impact politics in the region despite the empire’s official dissolution with the Treaty of Versailles.

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<sup>72</sup> Leff 1988, 41.

<sup>73</sup> The new state encountered severe resistance from several neighbors most notably the Communist-led regime of Hungary. See, Rudolf L. Tökés. *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: the origins and role of the communist party of Hungary in the revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1967).

**Habsburg Legacies:  
Diversity and Disparities in the Context of Czechoslovak Nation-Building**

Politicians in the new state were in general agreement about the importance of schooling in this project; however, they differed in terms of what a Czechoslovak national would look like. As the quotes at the beginning of this chapter indicate, different ideas among state politicians—even centrists like Masaryk and Šrobár—existed about what schooling should aim for in terms of national identity. Was it to assimilate Slovaks into Czechs or to bring out a distinct Slovak character?

The legacies of nearly four centuries of Habsburg rule had created conditions that would make the marriage of Slovaks and Czechs, in many regards, an unlikely match. First, the people whom the nationalists wanted to make Czechs and Slovaks had little sense of themselves as such. As I describe later in this chapter, census data from this period illustrate that identities were more fluid than the nation-state builders would have liked. For example, Slovak speakers would often identify themselves as Magyar, Czech speakers were frequently fluent in German, and children born into families of mixed linguistic and cultural backgrounds might identify with several national labels. Regional identification was commonly stronger than these nascent notions of national identity, and linguistic, religious, and professional ties carried more clout than the memberships that nation-state builders wished to impose.

Given the ambiguous and limited understandings of what it meant to be “Czech” or “Slovak,” it is not surprising that the concept of “Czechoslovak” was susceptible to varied interpretations and often blank stares. After all, the two so-called nations had existed largely in separate halves of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Hungarian monarchy controlling what would become Slovakia and the Austrian Habsburgs ruling

the Czech lands. Partly out of these orientations toward two different administrative centers, the Czech lands and Slovakia developed disparate school systems, economies, legal codes, political institutions, and transportation networks.

The bifurcation of the institutional networks in the empire, especially after the establishment of a Dual Monarchy, informed the differently oriented notions of identity in the Czech lands and Slovakia. In the Budapest-ruled half of the empire, Hungarian was the official language of bureaucrats, and, with the exception of the brief period from 1862-1874 when a handful of Slovak-language schools existed, subjects who aspired to a secondary or higher education had to be literate in Hungarian or abandon their homeland often for Prague or Vienna.<sup>74</sup> Efforts to assimilate the populations of the Hungarian monarchy to a Magyar identity had also been extensive in Slovakia.<sup>75</sup> Where the Dual Monarchy had brought stricter assimilationist practices to the Hungarian-ruled regions of the empire, the Czech lands under the Austrian-Habsburg reign enjoyed a degree of administrative and cultural autonomy especially after the revolutions of 1848. Despite Vienna's concessions to Czech nationalists, Czech bureaucrats and professionals still needed German language skills to conduct business with their superiors in Vienna. Their ultimate loyalty had to be to the Habsburg emperor, with ostensibly negligible thought or allegiance to the monarchy in Budapest. In other words, all roads led to Vienna from the Czech lands and to Budapest from Slovakia. This divided infrastructure meant that

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<sup>74</sup> R.W. Seton-Watson, ed. *Slovakia Then and Now: A Political Survey* (London and Prague: George Allen & Unwin and Orbis, 1931). Solomon Wank. "The Habsburg Empire," in *After Empire: Multiethnic States and Nation-Building*. eds. Karen Barkey and Mark Von Hagen (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1997).

<sup>75</sup> Gerald Stourzh. "Ethnic Attribution in the Late Imperial Austria: Good Intentions, Evil Consequences," in *The Habsburg Legacy: national identity in historical perspective*. eds. Ritchie Roberson and Edward Timms. *Austrian Studies*, 5. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 67-83.

Czechoslovak politicians would need to reconcile disparate institutional networks and differently oriented identities associated with those systems.

In addition to their locations within two administrative networks, the geo-political placement of Slovakia and the Czech lands in Central Europe helped shape local identities. Religious identities were more diverse in Slovakia than in the Czech lands in part due to the former's relative proximity to the Ottoman Empire. Unlike in the Czech lands where zealous Counter-Reformation policies drove Protestants and unassimilated Jews abroad, underground, or into the arms of Catholicism, the Counter-Reformation was relatively weak in Slovakia because imperial power there was focused on blocking the spread of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the chaos of battles with the Ottoman Turks on Slovak territory ironically made it a relative haven for many Protestants and Jews from the Czech lands.<sup>76</sup>

Demographic and economic disparities between the Czech and Slovak regions compounded the problems of the political legacy that Czechoslovakia inherited from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This section reviews the diversity of the First Czechoslovak Republic's populace—a diversity that is not neatly captured by categories of “ethnicity” or “nationality” because of the multiple, overlapping, and, at times, conflicting allegiances that citizens held to religious, linguistic, and regional affiliations.

According to the first census of the Czechoslovak Republic taken in 1921, Czechs and Slovaks combined made up almost 66% of the state's citizenry.<sup>77</sup> Germans comprised approximately 23% of the population, and Hungarians nearly 6%; however,

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<sup>76</sup> See Seton-Watson, 1967; Johnson, 1985; Leff, 1988.

<sup>77</sup> Zprávy Státního úřadu statistického (ZSÚS) 1933/195; Antonín Matula and Franišek. Bouš, *L'éducation populaire dans la République Tchécoslovaque* (Prague: Politika, 1928), 5.



from a regional perspective, these state-wide statistics are misleading.<sup>78</sup> The presence of Germans and Hungarians seemed far greater from a local viewpoint, because Germans were concentrated in the Czech lands, particularly in the northern and western peripheries, and substantial Hungarian populations resided in Slovakia in its eastern and south-eastern border areas. Considered by region, 33% of the population in Bohemia, nearly 21% in Moravia, and just under 5% in Slovakia identified as German in the 1921 census.<sup>79</sup> While less than half a percent of the populace in the Czech lands declared Hungarian nationality, approximately 21.5% of the citizens in Slovakia identified as such.<sup>80</sup> This concentration of ethnic Hungarians and Germans along the borders of the new state was cause for particular concern, not only due to Czechoslovak nationalist sentiment but to ethnic nationalism from German and Hungarian states that laid competing claims to the same land.<sup>81</sup>

Other minorities in the republic included Jews, Gypsies, Rusyns, and Poles. Rusyns comprised nearly 3.5% of the republic's population in 1921 and were largely concentrated in Slovakia along its border with the Ukraine, whereas less than 1% of Czechoslovak citizens identified as Polish.<sup>82</sup> Approximately 1.4% of Czechoslovak citizens declared Jewish nationality in the 1921 census, and less than .2% (7,999 people)

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<sup>78</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195.

<sup>79</sup> L'Office de Statistique d'état. *Manuel statistique de la République tchécoslovaque, 1921* (Prague, 1925), 362-63.

<sup>80</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195; L'Office de Statistique d'état, *Manuel statistique de la République tchécoslovaque, 1921* (Prague, 1925), 362-363.

<sup>81</sup> The Treaty of Trianon that temporarily ended Hungary's attempt to win territory from Slovakia's southern and eastern regions remained a point of bitter contention in Hungarian historiography. See, for example, Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award: The Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938*. (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1981).

<sup>82</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195; Matula and Bouš 1928, 5.

identified their nationality as “Gypsy.”<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Gypsies often identified their nationality as Czechoslovak or German. Owen Johnson notes a tremendous jump in the number of people identifying their nationality as Gypsy between the 1921 and 1930 censuses—from nearly 8,000 to 30,626 individuals in Slovakia.

These demographics demonstrate that there was greater diversity in new Czechoslovak Republic than the state’s name or some of its textbook narratives imply and that the language of “nationality” was implicated in the identity politics of the time. Like its predecessor the Habsburg Empire, the First Czechoslovak Republic was a multinational entity, neither a single Czechoslovak nor a bi-national Czech-Slovak state. However, the census obscures diversity at the level of the individual, even while indicating it at the state level. Parents were often of mixed linguistic and religious background; Slovak children attended Hungarian-language schools; Slovak-speaking adults worked for Hungarian landowners and, therefore, might consider themselves part of the extended family of the Hungarian estate. Cultural and linguistic allegiances at the level of individuals or families were rarely as unidirectional or monolithic as the census data suggest.

A closer analysis of responses to censuses of the First Czechoslovak Republic exposes the gap between census language and citizens’ own understandings of the term

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<sup>83</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195; Matula and Bouš 1928, 5. However, equating the number of Jews and Roma in the Czechoslovak state with those who identified as such by nationality drastically underestimates their presence. In the 1921 census, 130,843 people in Slovakia identified themselves religiously as Jewish, but only 71,018 recognized their nationality as Jewish; 29,136 of these religiously Jewish citizens declared Czechoslovak nationality, 21,584 Hungarian, 8,738 German, 179 Rusyn, and 188 other. *Manuel statistique*, 1925, 379, Table XIII-19, cited in Johnson 1985, 80. Similarly, Gypsies often identified their nationality as Czechoslovak or German. Johnson notes a tremendous jump in the number of people identifying their nationality as Gypsy between the 1921 and 1930 censuses—from nearly 8,000 to 30,626 individuals in Slovakia, Johnson 1985, 79.

“nationality.” Johnson cites one census-taker from 1919 who recorded some of the responses he received when asking people to identify their nationality: “‘Slovak as well as Hungarian;’ ‘It’s all the same;’ Hungarian Slovak.’”<sup>84</sup> Respondents also based their answers on home language and religious affiliation such as “Catholic,” although “Jewish” was not a choice until the 1921 census.<sup>85</sup> The respondents’ answers resisted the census prescriptions, which forced them to choose one exclusive category—and a category that existed on the census in the first place—translating the iterative and multi-leveled aspects of identity into labels devised by the state.

The labels and categories that state agents selected for the censuses were not incidental, but in line with state identity politics. For the 1919 census, the criteria for determining a respondent’s “nationality” were undefined, but for the 1921 census “tribal membership whose primary external manifestation is generally the mother tongue” served as the measure of “nationality.”<sup>86</sup> By 1930, state officials decided that the standard be simply “mother tongue,” which boosted the number of citizens identifying as Czech or Slovak because vaguer criteria in the context of an “undeveloped” national consciousness tended to increase the number of non-Czechoslovaks in the state, especially in Slovakia, where Slovaks in rural communities continued to identify with the Hungarian label.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Josef Mráz, “O předbežnem sčítání lidí na Slovensku v roku 1919,” *Československý statistický věstník*, II, No. 1-2 (December 1920), 135.

<sup>85</sup> Josef Mráz, “O předbežnem sčítání lidí na Slovensku v roku 1919,” *Československý statistický věstník*, II, No. 1-2 (December 1920), 135-6.

<sup>86</sup> Ant. Boháč, “První všeobecné sčítání lidí v Československé republice,” *Československý statistický věstník*, II, No. 3 (February 1921), 116. Also cited in Johnson 1985, 80 with a slightly different translation.

<sup>87</sup> Ant. Boháč, “Národnost při druhem sčítání lidí,” *Statistický obzor*, XII, No. 1-2 (February 1931), 14-30.

Further evidence of the politics of the numbers is that Jews and Gypsies were exceptions to the mother-tongue standard. According to census criteria in 1921 and 1930 Jews and Gypsies could identify as such in the survey even if they spoke Hungarian or German at home.<sup>88</sup> Because many Jews and Gypsies spoke German and Hungarian, waiving the “mother tongue” rule in these cases tended to detract from the ranks of minority Germans and Hungarians in the state, in turn increasing the perceived advantage in numbers of “Czechoslovaks” in the republic.

The social reality of the First Czechoslovak Republic did not fit neatly into the categories of the census takers, but identity politics both domestically and abroad influenced census definitions. As noted earlier, the German minority in the 1921 census numbered over 23% of the total population of the republic, which was almost half the number of Czech nationals (51%) and considerably more than the number of people identifying as Slovak (approximately 15%) in the new state.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, with a bare majority in the territory, Czechs alone would have had a difficult time justifying their own state to the international community and dominating in a proportional democratic system. In short, Czechs needed Slovaks to boost their numbers in this multi-ethnic context. The “majority nation,” when defined as “Czechoslovak” rather than simply as “Czech,” included over 65% of the population.<sup>90</sup> The censuses during the First Republic tallied Czechs and Slovaks together as “Czechoslovak” nationals, emphasizing the supposed singularity of Czechs and Slovaks as one united ethnic nation in contrast to the other minority ethnic groups listed in the survey. Efforts in Southern and Eastern

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<sup>88</sup> Johnson 1985, 80.

<sup>89</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195.

<sup>90</sup> ZSÚS 1933/195.

Slovakia to identify and exclude from the census residents who did not have legal citizenship decreased the number of Hungarians who were accounted for in the survey and increased the Czechoslovak majority by an estimated 1%.<sup>91</sup> The number games that census organizers played to illusively minimize the presence of Germans and Hungarians in particular and, conversely, magnify the appearance of a dominant “Czechoslovak” ethnic nation, were politically pragmatic to Czechoslovak state builders in the international and domestic spheres. However, the economic, educational, and social relations among ethnic groups established under the old regimes were more intractable and complex than the census statistics indicate.

### **Political Structure of the State**

This section describes the political regime of the First Republic in order to later articulate the tension between the political ideology of this regime and national narratives. I also demonstrate ways in which the political structure of this government served a centrist Czechoslovak vision of the nation rather than a federal Czech and Slovak relationship. Despite the ethnic variation in the First Czechoslovak Republic, how did this diversity play out in the democratic system?

The First Czechoslovak Republic was a parliamentary democracy, in which Czech politicians had a distinct advantage over their Slovak counterparts for several reasons.<sup>92</sup> First, the Czech population was approximately twice as large as the Slovak,

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<sup>91</sup>Ant. Boháč, *Národnostní mapa Republiky československé: Podrobný popis národnostních hranic, ostrovů, a menšin* (Prague: Národopisná společnost Československa, 1926), 150-153.

<sup>92</sup>The 300-member lower house was called the Chamber of Deputies and the 150 member Senate. Proportional representation meant that a broad spectrum of parties made it into

and representation in parliament was proportional.<sup>93</sup> Second, the Czechoslovak parliament mirrored the electoral system that had functioned in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire, which would have been familiar to many Czech politicians who had served as Czech representatives in the previous regime, but not to Slovaks who had lived under the Hungarian half of the empire. Finally, Czechs generally had more formal political experience in 1918 than Slovaks. The Austrian Habsburgs had granted Czechs suffrage in 1907, while the Slovaks under Hungarian rule only gained the right to vote in 1920. Similarly, more Czechs gained political experience as representatives in the Austrian Parliament than Slovak elites did in the Hungarian parliament.<sup>94</sup>

The multi-party system of the First Republic gave representation to a broad range of interest groups and their political parties. This political system reflected the continuing influence of the Habsburg experience not only because it was modeled on the Austrian Habsburg Parliament, but also because many of the political parties had been active during the empire. This diversity of political parties meant that no single party could achieve a majority in parliament alone; rather a party's success depended on its leaders' ability to negotiate and form coalitions.<sup>95</sup> The multi-party system had the general effect of diluting the impact that major parties had on the political life of the republic; conversely it magnified the influence of minor parties, including the minority nationalist parties.<sup>96</sup>

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parliament and that parliament was a place of negotiation and compromise, not of important reform.

<sup>93</sup> The National Assembly, however, was elected through adjusted proportional representation. See John W. Boyer "Silent War and Bitter Peace: The Revolution of 1918 in Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2003): 1-56.

<sup>94</sup> Leff 1988, 150.

<sup>95</sup> Leff 1988, 48.

<sup>96</sup> Leff states that First Republic leaders chose not to ban minority nationalist parties from government, as other European countries had done, because such a ban would have

Even though a relatively large number of political parties were included in the ruling government coalition at any given time over the history of the First Republic, the character of these coalitions and their cabinets was consistently centrist. The cabinet, or the collective body of ministerial posts, fell under the legislative branch of government and governed between elections. Turnover of cabinet positions was high, and yet analyses by Leff indicate that a core group of politicians repeatedly cycled through the cabinet.<sup>97</sup> Leff points out that while Slovaks held a respectable 17% of ministerial posts during the First Republic, three centrist Slovak politicians—Ivan Derer, Vavro Šrobár and Hodža—together held 60% of the those portfolios.<sup>98</sup> According to Leff, the ministerial posts that these Slovaks held tended to be less prestigious—for example minister of culture or agriculture—compared with those ministries to which Czechs were appointed, for example, finance or foreign affairs.

Czechoslovak state-builders, many of whom had been minority nationalists in the Habsburg Empire, feared that in the new Czechoslovak state minority nationalist parties could signal the disintegration of the state, much as they had contributed to the dissolution of the empire. Politicians who believed in the unified vision of a joint Czechoslovak state found ways to promote a highly centralized government to counterbalance the fractionalization of the parliament. An informal means of central government control during the First Republic revolved around the presidency.

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appeared hypocritical: during the late Habsburg rule a primary political complaint of Czech and Slovak leaders had been the disproportional representation in parliament of minority ethnic groups compared to the majority German and Hungarian populations in the empire (Leff 1988, 48).

<sup>97</sup> Leff 1988, 192.

<sup>98</sup> Leff 1988, 192.

Even though under the constitution the powers of the president were largely symbolic, Masaryk was a major force in establishing political cohesion and continuity in the new state. He commanded respect among Czech and Slovak leaders, many of whom he had mentored during his time as a professor at the Charles University in Prague before World War I. Masaryk consolidated his disciples into two extra-constitutional bodies—the “Pětka” or Group of Five and the “Hrad” or Castle Group, named as such because the president’s offices were located in the complex of Prague Castle overlooking the city. The Pětka was a government steering committee consisting of leading members of five major governing parties, all of whom agreed on some form of a unified, Czechoslovak state. Similarly, the Hrad group included likeminded politicians from Masaryk’s circle, who acted as a think tank, both advising the president and giving him a stage of influence. Through the Hrad Group, Masaryk helped to coordinate political action among a core group of political parties, promoted his progressive program, and countered the religious, nationalist, and professionally-based agendas of other parties.<sup>99</sup>

Underneath the shifts and high turnover, there was a core group of politicians who came in and out of political positions with such frequency or merely shifted between positions, that they created some personal stability within the system. In terms of nation building, these leaders sought to institutionalize centralization and stability through the use of public schools. However, even as Czech and Slovak nation-state builders were largely in agreement about the importance of schooling for shaping the republic’s citizens, they differed, at times drastically, on their visions of the desired outcome.

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<sup>99</sup> Johnson 1985, 62.



## School Context

A core group of centrist politicians shifted in and out of ministerial posts during the interwar era. For the most part, these leaders coalesced around President Masaryk and sought to centralize state power and strengthen national stability through the use of public schools. Specifically, the Czechoslovak Constitution stated: “The supreme authority and control over all instruction and education shall be in the hands of the State.”<sup>100</sup> Private and parochial schools were also under state supervision, and control of schooling was vested in the Ministry of Education and National Culture [MŠANO), whose very name impressed the connection between nation-building and education.

The circumstances of the Habsburg regime during which the Czech lands and Slovakia fell under separate administrations, as previously mentioned, complicated the construction of a coherent school system. The new regime’s goals, which included encouraging a Czechoslovak identity and promoting democratic ideals, were often at odds with one another. Moreover, problems in basic aspects of educational infrastructure such as the lack of experienced school administrators in Slovak lands were daunting.

Originally, there were 8 sections and 23 departments in the ministry of education. Each section oversaw a particular type of education (e.g., elementary, vocational, universities) or had a special charge (e.g. Slovakia, national culture, religious affairs).<sup>101</sup> One department dealt specifically with testing and textbook adoption. The Slovak section only had one department and it took care of all Slovak educational issues and collaborated with other relevant sections. Jaroslav Vlček was the first head of the department within the Slovak section. Vlček’s mother was Slovak and his father Czech: a

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<sup>100</sup> Johnson 1985, 87.

<sup>101</sup> Johnson 1985, 89.

familial background that contributed to his strong commitment to a joint Czecho-Slovak state. The other officials in this department were also advocates of the Czechoslovak cause: for example, Karel Kálal worked on Slovak vocational schools and had been active in the Czechoslovak movement; and Albert Pražák, a university professor and scholar of 19<sup>th</sup>-century national awakening and a strong supporter of Czechoslovak unity, managed the adoption of textbooks for Slovakia.<sup>102</sup>

School was compulsory from age 6 and began with primary or ľudová school. After five years in primary school, children would move to secondary school known as “středná škola” or, if they passed the necessary tests, to a gymnázium, which was a university-track curriculum. Children had to remain in basic school for 6 years to complete their mandatory education. In 1922, responding to international economic demands for skilled labor, the government adopted the Little School Reform, which expanded compulsory schooling to 8 years. However, due to a teacher and facility shortage in Slovakia, the law was implemented gradually in Slovakia until 1928. For students who did not have the funding or grades to attend gymnázium, vocational schools and teacher-training institutes, provided alternative routes of professional development. By the mid-1920s, Czechoslovakia had a viable, national school system that served children from pre-school to college.

Nevertheless, as the quotes from two centrist Czechoslovak politicians that open this chapter exemplify, there was a serious lack of consensus on educational outcomes. The president of the First Czechoslovak Republic, Tomáš Masaryk, like many centrist statesmen, had relatives who spoke both Czech and Slovak: his mother was Czech and

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<sup>102</sup> Johnson 1985, 90.

his father Slovak.<sup>103</sup> Unsurprisingly, Masaryk advocated a melting-pot solution in which Czechs and Slovaks melded together to become indistinguishable from one another, so that within one generation “there will be no differences between the two branches [Czech and Slovak] of our national family.”<sup>104</sup>

Conversely, Vavro Šrobar, a central Slovak figure in the Czechoslovak government who held several ministerial positions in the First Republic including the post of Minister of Education and National Enlightenment, expressed in a 1926 speech to Parliament the hope that Slovak schools foster “true Slovak thought.”<sup>105</sup> Rather than erasing distinctions, Šrobar’s mission for schools in Slovakia was that they become “Slovak schools”—not “Czechoslovak schools”—that would help Slovaks realize their “true,” nationally distinct way of thinking. Schools, in Šrobar’s view, should help Slovaks realize their presumed essential Slovak selves, not a Czechoslovak blend.<sup>106</sup> These tensions are clearly exposed in the textbooks of this era.

### **Textbook Analysis**

This section examines the historical narratives that Czechoslovak educational leaders created in their efforts to unify the diverse peoples of this newly created country. The textbooks that I cite here were published by the state’s printing press and approved by the ministry of education.<sup>107</sup> While school texts should not be interpreted as exemplars of teacher practice or student learning, they do offer insights into how state officials

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<sup>103</sup> Johnson 1985, 57.

<sup>104</sup> Johnson 1985, 94.

<sup>105</sup> Leff 1988, 139.

<sup>106</sup> Šrobár, Vavro. *Osvobodené Slovensko: pamäti z rokov 1918-1920*. (Praha: Čin, 1928).

<sup>107</sup> See “textbook bibliography” at the end of this dissertation for a list of school texts from this era that were coded and analyzed for this study.

wanted their citizenry to conceptualize membership in the democratic Czechoslovak nation-state and the challenges they faced in constructing that membership.

*Origin Myths: The Primal Father and a Ruling Prophetess*

Elementary school history textbooks published during the interwar period that cover the prehistoric age in Europe through the Middle Ages at the upper basic school level recount the tale of three brothers who settled in Central Europe founding three separate nations. “According to an ancient legend, the brothers Czech, Lech, and Rus moved with their many companions out of their original homeland so that they could search for a new country. That is how Rus founded the Russian country and nation, Lech the Polish country and nation...”<sup>108</sup> Czech persists in his travels and settles farther westward than his brothers, evidence of his moral quality of persistence, which is rewarded by his discovery of a “blessed country.” This westward journey would locate the Czechs, though originally belonging to Eastern Slavs, in Western “civilization” and in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century context of the European Union, in “Europe.”

The story of Czech is an archetypal example of a primordial narrative. The familial lines of the story are clear. Czech is part of a Slavic brotherhood, and he is, as one text refers to him “our primal father.”<sup>109</sup> Ties to the land are explicit: The land is not

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<sup>108</sup> Jaroslav Vlach. (trans. Ján Vančík). *Dejepis všeobecný pre nižšie triedy stredných škôl, diel II: dejiny stredoveku a novoveku po vestfálsky mier* (Prague: Nakladateľstvo J. Otto, 1925), 11-13. This history textbook was assigned to the lower grades of a non-college track basic school.

<sup>109</sup> Jozef Koreň. *Dejiny československého národa: Dejepis pre slovenské ľudové školy (a pre opakovacie školy)*. (Prešov: Štehrvho kníhkupectva, 1922), 5. This is a textbook of Czechoslovak history for Slovak elementary schools.

simply “earth” or “territory” but a “homeland [domov]”<sup>110</sup> and a “fatherland [vlast].”<sup>111</sup> The beauty and fecundity of the land is stressed. “Czech continued across three large rivers until he arrived in the blessed country covered with mountains and temperate rivers. From there he saw wide plains all around him and he recognized the fertility of the new land. Czech looked around from the highest peak in this countryside and stated that he would settle here with his followers.”<sup>112</sup> The connection to the landscape is crucial in this narrative. The land is blessed with abundant waterways, rivers that are “temperate” rather than cold and unwelcoming, and mountains. In another textbook, the story is told with similar emphasis on the abundance of the land, telling of how Father Czech from a particular mountain—Mount Říp—“saw wide plains all around him and he recognized the fertility of the new land.”<sup>113</sup>

In all versions of the story, the great leader Grandfather Czech stands on Mount Říp, a prominent point, to make his historic declaration to his people. Here Grandfather Czech echoes other legends, including Moses on Mount Pisgah or Libuše, the Přemyslid princess, who according to Czech legend looked out over Bohemia and foresaw the construction of a great city, Prague.<sup>114</sup> The land holds up the leader, as if verifying his or her claim, while the leader becomes ruler of all he or she surveys, as if vision alone can achieve the conquest. The notion of sovereignty as tied to territorial rights echoed in this narrative; however, this sovereignty comes from a blessing of the land, a land that is here depicted as otherwise uninhabited, destined for Czech and his people to claim.

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<sup>110</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.

<sup>113</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Other aspects of the legend of Libuše are retold in Vlach 1925, 13-15.

Convenient for the story is the depiction of the land as unpopulated prior to the settlement of Czech and his followers. Czech's people are described as coming to the new land in waves, "After the first multitudes came then others."<sup>115</sup> This phrase substantiates their numbers: this was no small migration. Through these mass migrations however, "slowly the whole of Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia and Slovakia were peopled."<sup>116</sup> This last phrase indicates that prior to Czech's followers, these territories were not peopled. Notable in this primordial tale is the absence of a brother Slovak. Instead, it is the people of father Czech who settle the territory of Slovakia. This rendering of the primordial story echoes two tendencies in the way Czechoslovakism was interpreted in textbooks published in the First Republic: Slovaks and Czechs are portrayed as linked in primordial genealogy—a theme we will return to shortly. Second, Czech identity tends to swallow the distinctness of being Slovak. Here, the label "Czech" signifies the leader, the name given his people, and the territory on which they settle, that is, Bohemia is also called "Čech" in the Czech language. Then Grandfather Czech's people extend into other territories, incidentally including Slovakia. In addition to minimizing the importance of Slovakness, the tale magnifies the grandeur of Czechs, placing the Czech nation on par with two of the largest nations in Europe, the Russians and Poles.

Not only is Czech's claim to the land simplified by the absence of previous inhabitants, the leadership of Czech is also undisputed among his followers. The story continues: "[H]is people apparently said: 'Listen, leader and father of ours, you are called Czech and after you we will name this land Czech!'"<sup>117</sup> The Czech claim to this land is

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<sup>115</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>116</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>117</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.

rendered in this way democratic: it is the people who declare Czech their father and name the land in his honor. “From time immemorial exists the notion in the Czech nation that the peak from which it is said forefather Czech with his companions looked around the new country is the peak Řip (near Roudnice).”<sup>118</sup> The story gains credence here by referencing contemporary geographic sites, concretizing the myth by locating it in a place with which contemporary readers can relate: Mount Řip.<sup>119</sup> The textbook authors provide a parenthetical note that Mount Řip is located near the town of Roudnice, providing an additional sense of geographic place that brings the myth into the visible and tangible matter of land.

The land literally “grounds” the myth in that which is the most basic of materials: earth, soil, and geography. “Not far from Řip is the settlement Ctinoves, where it is said Grandfather Czech was buried.”<sup>120</sup> The alleged burial of Grandfather Czech at this location seals the connection of the Czech people to the land.<sup>121</sup> He becomes part of the earth.

The textbooks utilize archaeological findings similarly to legitimize the legend of Father Czech. “According to archaeological findings, Slavs appeared on the territory of our republic already at the time of Boj (around the year 500 B.C.), and certainly by the

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<sup>118</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.

<sup>119</sup> During my nine years living in the Czech lands, I was struck by the frequency with which Czechs would invariably point out to me Mount Řip and recount the legend of Father Czech as we drove past. This story and its connection to a landmass that I found rather indistinct—more of a hilltop than a mount—seemed deeply embedded in the minds of my friends as an important detail of history that they should recount for their American guest.

<sup>120</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.

<sup>121</sup> Katherine Verdery. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: reburial and post-socialist change* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1999).

second century B.C.”<sup>122</sup> Here the timeline is combined with an assertion, but no specifics, of archaeological evidence. The story of Czech in this instance moves from the stuff of legends to the parlay of evidence and science. “In Bohemia, the pagan graves that have been found have the same character as those discovered in Moravia and Slovakia, which proves that Czechs and Slovaks are descendants of one ancestor, one nation, called Czechoslovak.”<sup>123</sup> Graves play an important symbolic role in this narrative because graves link persons—bodies—with the land in which they are buried. This connection of *these* people with *this* land is qualified as ancient, by means of the pagan—not Christian—character of the graves. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this quote is the declaration that similar pagan graves—located conveniently in the very lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia that form the First Czechoslovak state—undoubtedly “prove” that Czechs and Slovaks share a common ancestor and, therefore, that they are necessarily one nation. The presumptions here are multiple: that pagan graves of the same character necessarily denote a single common ancestor, that the nation is delimited in a primordial way by this shared genealogy, and that this nation is called “Czechoslovak” as if the label were a universally accepted term instead of a newly conceived one: it transfers the contemporary label anachronistically back in time. The text does not offer alternative hypotheses or evidence that might sway the reader from this singular interpretation: for example, were pagan graves of this character also discovered in bordering territories such as present day Germany or Hungary? The textbook does not give specifics of where these gravesites are located so that the reader can verify that the spread of these supposedly uniquely “Czechoslovak” burials nor which specific qualities

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<sup>122</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.

<sup>123</sup> Vlach 1925, 11-13.



characterize them as such. The purpose of the text, therefore, is not to draw the reader into the processes of historical analysis such as sourcing and corroboration, but rather into a narrative of social cohesion and common ethnic heritage.

The story of this founding-father figure Czech is an archetypal example of a primordial narrative complete with references to ancestral forefathers and “ancient” connections to the land. The mythical character Grandfather Czech is part of a Slavic brotherhood, and he is for the nation, as another textbook states, “our primal father.”<sup>124</sup> But because it is the legend of Grandfather Czech, and not Grandfather Czechoslovak, the textbook authors have to offer additional explanations. After telling this legend, one textbook adds: “Slovaks also are descendants of Grandfather Czech. We all are one family.” Another textbook similarly uses a familial analogy comparing Czechs and Slovaks as “two adult brothers who live next to each other.”<sup>125</sup> No other siblings exist in this familial analogy, and, if failure to mention them were not enough to signal that Germans, Hungarians, Jews, and Roma do not belong to the “national family,” other parts of the text make this point clear.

*The Portrayal of Ethnic “Others”: Minorities in the First Czechoslovak Republic*

In the oversimplified manner that typifies many nationalist narratives, the dominant ethnic groups prior to the founding of Czechoslovakia are portrayed as undifferentiated oppressors. This oppression is traced back to sometime after the protagonist nation’s primordial founding—in this case by Grandfather Czech—continuing until the national awakening in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period of a “rising

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<sup>124</sup> Koreň 1922, 5.

<sup>125</sup> Koreň 1922, 1.

phoenix” that eventually returns the nation to its perceived rightful, sovereign place. For Czech and Slovak nationalists, the vilified groups were ethnic Germans and Hungarians respectively. Germans are commonly described as “violent” and “aggressive”<sup>126</sup> and Hungarians as looters with excellent skills in horsemanship.<sup>127</sup>

Although far from flattering, the depictions of Germans and Hungarians in the First Republic textbooks carry a sense of respect—albeit fearful respect accompanied with resentment. The same is not true when the texts refer to stateless minorities such as the Jews and Roma. Largely absent from the history textbooks, when Jews and Roma are included in the narratives, they are usually relegated to sections of civic textbooks conveying moral tales in which these minorities are the counter-examples to good behavior.

One textbook contains a unit entitled “Bad People [Zlé lidi],” and in it is a lesson called, “How a Gypsy strutted around with a stolen horse.”<sup>128</sup> After stealing a horse and trying to sell it at the market, the Gypsy is eventually outwitted by a Slovak man, who was its owner. Another moral tale in this textbook is entitled “The hiker should not leave the path” or “The Gypsy in the wolf’s pit.”<sup>129</sup> In this story, a Gypsy musician decides to take a shortcut home through the woods after a night of playing his violin at a local

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<sup>126</sup> Rudolf Kratochvíl. *Prehľad z dejepisu* (Prešov: Štehtrovo kníkupectvo a nakladateľstvo, 1924), 13. This book was intended for upper elementary school. The author was a school inspector.

<sup>127</sup> Kratochvíl, 1924, 25.

<sup>128</sup> Martin Ježo and Peter Prídavok. *Občianska nauka a výchova: príručná kniha pre učiteľov slovenských ľudových škôl, časť I. pre I., II., a III. ročník* (Prešov: Štehtrovo kníkupectvo a nakladateľstvo, 1925), 23. This is a civic education methods book for teachers in Slovak elementary schools.

<sup>129</sup> Martin Ježo and Peter Prídavok. *Občianska nauka a výchova: príručná kniha pre učiteľov slovenských ľudových škôl, časť II. pre IV. a V. ročník*. (Prešov: Štehtrovo kníkupectvo a nakladateľstvo, 1925), 27. This textbook is part II of the guide for Slovak elementary school teachers cited above.

celebration. He falls into a pit set to catch wolves and finds he is not alone in the pit. To keep the wolves from devouring him, he plays his violin to lull the beasts. Thankfully, at daylight, just as most of his violin strings have broken, the Gypsy man is saved by a group of Slovak hunters. He vouches “never again [to] stray from the castle path.”<sup>130</sup>

As predictable as these stereotypical portrayals of Gypsies as thieves and musicians are the characterizations of Jews in the texts. One textbook describes a period in the 17th century when “The state was much in debt” but a Jewish man named “Zdenek Levy...[was] the biggest usurer in the Czech land.”<sup>131</sup> The text goes on to make an ethnic pun that: “In previous times, Prague Jews kept a lion [in Czech “lev,” playing on the name Levy] and a lioness in a cage, thanks to which they made a good living; now the entire kingdom cannot make a living—thanks to one Levy.”<sup>132</sup> This excerpt blames the financial ruin of the kingdom on a single Jewish lender and draws on the regional stereotype of Jews as greedy moneylenders.

Another secondary school textbook from this period evokes this same stereotype of Jews in more prosaic and direct terms: “Now in Slovakia there is quite a brisk industry, but as always it is mainly in the hands of Jews.”<sup>133</sup> The transitional phrase “but as always” suggests a long-standing bitterness. The “good news” that Slovakia had a relatively strong industrial commerce is qualified with the implied “bad news” that Jews, as opposed to ethnic Slovaks, still run that industry. Not remarking on the ethnicity of the

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<sup>130</sup> Ježo and Prídavok, part II. 1925, 28.

<sup>131</sup> Kratochvíl, 1924, 84.

<sup>132</sup> Kratochvíl, 1924, 84.

<sup>133</sup> Kojan and Lehký. *Zemepis, Dejepis, a Občianska nauka Československej Republiky*. (Prešov: Knihtlačiareň Svätého Mikuláša, 1922) 10. Intended for geography, history, and civic education lessons, this textbook was geared toward secondary school students.

industrial owners or stating that “Slovak citizens” manage that sector of the economy would be alternatives suggesting a civic mindedness towards all citizens in the republic.

However, being “ethnically neutral” is not the only or even best method of upholding civic national ideals of equality and minority rights. For example, if the text stated that “Jewish citizens own most Slovak industries and have helped the nation become economically viable,” the positive contribution of Jews—as citizens, not as “foreigners”—would be stressed. In addition, this formulation would undermine the prevalent stereotype linking Jews with greed and economic power. Furthermore, the phrase “in the hands of” conveys a sinister intention or abuse of power, rather than, for example, the more neutral statement “owned by.” This same textbook later claims that “Many Jews came to Slovakia out of Poland—[and were] the authors of the plague.”<sup>134</sup> This statement casually refers to the libel that Jews were the originators of the Black Death that killed an estimated third of the population of Europe. These pernicious references to Jews are particularly significant because Jews are otherwise not mentioned in the textbooks; hence, students would likely come away from reading the textbooks with only negative images of Jews, images that would reinforce existing stereotypes.

#### *Democratic Constitutionalism: Civic Narratives and Their Contradictions*

While the previous section focused on ethnic nationalism in school texts, this section examines the civic nationalist narratives that existed, at times side by side with the ethnically exclusive passages. Specifically, I stress here that two types of democratic narratives are relevant in the interwar-era textbooks: first, excerpts that circumscribe

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<sup>134</sup> Kratochvíl, 1924, 109.

inclusive belonging to the democratic state by invoking equality and the rights of all citizens, and second, examples of texts that describe specifically minority rights in a democracy.

Civics and history textbooks from this period commonly contain statements about the superiority of democracy to other forms of government, especially to the regime form that came before, the absolute monarchy of the Habsburg Empire. After defining a democracy as “government of the people” and as “the most perfect state regime,” one textbook states that in democracies, “all people are equal, [and] that all people, without regard to their station or property, have the same civil rights, which guarantee them participation in the government and administration of the state.”<sup>135</sup> Another upper elementary textbook, in a section entitled “The rights and responsibilities of state citizens” lists civic rights, including: “1. *Equality before the law*. Everyone without regard to language, race or religious persuasion...[emphasis in original]”<sup>136</sup> The passage continues with a list of seventeen freedoms; for example, number sixteen is freedom of language: “State citizens in their private, in commercial and church lives, in the press, and in their public gatherings may freely use all languages. The official language of the Czechoslovak Republic is the Czechoslovak language, which has great advantages in interactions with the authorities. Nevertheless, the text notes that wherever at least 20% of the residence identify with a different language, there that language can be used even

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<sup>135</sup> Kratochvíl, Rudolf and Peter Prídavok. *Občianska nauka a výchova: príručná kniha pre učiteľov slovenských ľudových škôl, diel III., časť II. pre VII. a VIII. Ročník* (Prešov: Štehtovo kníkupectvo a nakladateľstvo, 1929), 5. This textbook was part II of a guide for elementary school teachers of civic education.

<sup>136</sup> Ervin Pálesch. *Československá ústavoveda pre vyššie škôl ľudových, ako i pre školy meštianske, odborné a stredné*. (Prešov: Štehtovo kníkupectvo a nakladateľstvo, 1923), 44. This is a civic education textbook for the upper grades of elementary school and covers the Czechoslovak constitution.

in interactions with authorities.”<sup>137</sup> Both of these examples emphasize equality of, in the first case “the people,” and in the second “state citizens” regardless of ethnicity, class, language, or religion. Noteworthy in these texts is the use of the third person plural—i.e. “they, them, their”—when referencing “citizens” and “the people.” Through this choice of pronoun, the textbook authors evoke a sense of distance or neutrality in declaring the rights of state citizens. The format of a list of the rights and responsibilities of citizens adds an element of formality or matter-of-factness when compared with the ethno-cultural narratives I will discuss in a moment.

In the second set of democratic civic narratives the focus shifts from the undifferentiated rights of the citizenry to the rights of minorities. Here, the first person plural pronoun—i.e. “we, us, our”—appears to differentiate ethnic Czechs and Slovaks from the rest of the state population. Under the heading, “The Rights of Minorities,” one textbook reads: “Besides the Czech [and] Slovak . . . nation there lives in our republic also other nations: Germans, Poles, and Hungarians. We call them minorities. Why? National minorities have here with us an inalienable right.”<sup>138</sup> The audience suddenly becomes ethnic Czechs and Slovaks—an assumption that is in part related to the language version of the textbook (this textbook was in Slovak).<sup>139</sup> Nonetheless, an alternative would be to

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<sup>137</sup> Pálesch, 1923, 45.

<sup>138</sup> Kratochvíl and Prídavok 1929, 107.

<sup>139</sup> The assumption that the readership of Slovak textbooks identified with being “ethnically Slovak” is problematic for numerous reasons: First, monolingualism was not the norm after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, although, interestingly, it was the form that this narrative was trying to force fit the population into, i.e. “You speak Slovak, you are Slovak.” In reality, a Slovak speaker was likely to also know Hungarian or German or Yiddish, for example, and might identify with all, a combination of, or none of these labels. Second, the “nationalization” of the school system led to a drastic increase in Czech and Slovak schools and a decrease in schools where Hungarian was the language of instruction. Thus, children whose first language was not Czech or Slovak may have

restrain from using the third person plural in a way that associates the state (speaking through the textbook narrator) as part of an ethnically Czech and Slovak “us” and distances the state from the “them” of ethnic minorities. This section of the textbook switches in the same paragraph back to the neutral tone of listing universal democratic rights, claiming: “The constitution guarantees the absolute equality of civil rights to every state citizen of the Czechoslovak republic. All state citizens are absolutely equal before the law, they are accorded the same civil and political rights, without regard to race, language and religion.”<sup>140</sup> The problem is that even in the textbooks that were extolling democracy, minorities were not treated as full participants in the Czechoslovak nation.

### **Conclusions**

The ambivalence between the civic and the ethnic projects of building the nation-state of the First Czechoslovak Republic is manifest in several recurring themes. First, the textbooks attend to democratic narratives of civic rights, including freedom of religion and minority rights. Second, these civic dialogues contradict the ethnic dichotomization of “us” and “them” in school textbook narratives, which imagines Czechs and Slovaks united against their political, moral, and social ethnic others. Third, there are two categories of “others” at play in these narratives: the political enemies and the social-moral enemies of the nation.<sup>141</sup> By virtue of their state power in the

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ended up attending those schools for structural reasons. Third, there is evidence that the shift in state power alone from the hands of Hungarian and German to Czech and Slovak speakers led many parents to enroll their children in the majority Czech/Slovak schools, even if they did not identify with that group for fear of economic and social disadvantage if they attended a minority school.

<sup>140</sup> Kratochvíl and Prídavok 1929, 107.

<sup>141</sup> In some ways, Jews and Gypsies are depicted as less “outside” than the Germans and Hungarians. There is a patrimonious, proprietary, condescending attitude toward these

international sphere, the textbooks depict German and Hungarian ethnics as the political enemies of the Czechoslovak nation. Despite their enemy status, Germans and Hungarians are afforded a degree of respect in the school texts; however, it is a respect based on fear, which the textbooks justify in illustrating the historical tendency of these ethnic nations to oppress the so-called Czechoslovak nation. Conversely, Jews and Gypsies are portrayed as the social and moral—rather than political—“them” in relation to the Czechoslovak “us.” To borrow a term from Rogers Brubaker’s work, these ethnic outsiders do not have “home nation-states” to protect their group interests and therefore constitute no real or imagined military or political threat.<sup>142</sup> The textbook narratives envision Gypsies and Jews as outside the Czechoslovak nation, and this distinctiveness is often portrayed in textbooks as a social or moral “otherness.” Lastly, another recurring theme during this era is the ways in which the textbook narratives preference “Czechness” above “Slovakness” in their conceptualization of the Czechoslovak nation, and characterize Slovaks as the younger, less developed brother compared to the older Czech sibling in the Czechoslovak national family.

The textbook narratives generally do not fall neatly into the types of national identity that I identified in my introductory chapter: primordial, cultural, and civic. Rather, the data are intertwined, often within a paragraph or single sentence. For example, language criteria for nationality would seem to fall into the cultural typology,

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groups. The phrase “our Gypsy,” for example, occurs in the textbooks. Similarly, my sense is that Jews and Gypsies are considered no less “enemies of the nation” than Germans and Hungarians, though of a different ilk. Gypsies and Jews are depicted as slyer, more insidious (insider) enemies than Germans and Hungarians, and therefore, perhaps, more feared because of the “hidden threat” they supposedly represented.

<sup>142</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).



and yet the textbooks talk about “mother tongue,” rendering language into something based on lineage and familial ties, closer to primordialism. In another example, democratic civic values might appear at first glance to fall into the civic category. Yet during the First Republic, civic morals are sometimes equated with Christianity.

How can we reconcile the contradictions between the ethnic hatred and prejudice expressed in the depictions of Roma and Jews in these textbooks with assertions in these same texts of democratic equality and minority rights? I offer here a preliminary and no doubt partial explanation. First, as alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, the state builders had to contend with two competing tasks: first, building a democratic society based on the tenets of minority rights and tolerance; second, creating the logic of an ethnic nation that would establish social cohesion, a sense of belonging within society and legitimate the boundaries of the Czechoslovak state to the international community. Where social cohesion is lacking among the ethnic national majority—in this case, Czechs and Slovaks—and hence internal boundaries are vague, a notion of external others helps to create a recursive or negative definition of the national “we.”

In addition, the stereotypes of Roma and Jews that these textbook authors evoked were embedded in the majority society in the region for centuries prior to World War I. The ideals of democracy, on the other hand, were new to the region, borrowed from governments in Western Europe and the US. Yet this explanation is not entirely satisfactory knowing that ethno-culturally exclusive narratives in long-standing democracies also persist and, like in the Czechoslovak case, tend to lend themselves to mythical elaboration in comparison to the often dry enumeration of civic rights and responsibilities.

Similarly, as we will see in Chapter Five, blatantly exclusive narratives and democratically inclusive ones coexisted once again in post-socialist Slovak textbooks from 1989-2005 in ways reminiscent of interwar Czechoslovakia. Corroborating the findings of other educational research in post-socialist Europe, I found in the secondary school and teacher preparatory classrooms that I observed during this period that teachers did not engage students in conversations around the inherent contradictions in the textbooks between the ethno-cultural construction of the nation and the democratic vision of an inclusive state. Democratic ideals were discussed in the abstracts of human rights and international treaties, and the ethno-cultural myths persisted in rich, detailed narrative form.

### CHAPTER III

#### SLOVAK NATIONALISM IN SCHOOL TEXTS DURING WORLD WAR II: THE FIRST SLOVAK REPUBLIC, 1939-1945

A small Slovak faction dreaming of God knows what kind of independence for Slovakia.  
—Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 1925<sup>143</sup>

Events are rushing forward, and I cannot say what all will develop, if Slovaks will...  
quickly declare that they do not identify with this regime nor with the Czech nation...  
—Jozef Tiso, 1939<sup>144</sup>

In 1925 the president of the First Czechoslovak Republic Tomáš G. Masaryk noted that the Pittsburgh Agreement, signed by Slovak and Czech émigrés in the US at the end of World War I, did indeed promise Slovaks parity with Czechs in the future joint state. However, Masaryk added that the guarantee of parity was inserted only to “appease a small Slovak faction dreaming of God knows what kind of independence for Slovakia.”<sup>145</sup> Although Masaryk did not live to see it, the dream of independence for Slovakia became a reality a mere fourteen years later with the founding of a Slovak state. From March 14, 1939 till May 8, 1945, the First Slovak Republic existed independent of the Czech lands. However, this “independence” was based on Slovak subservience to the will of Nazi Germany.

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<sup>143</sup> Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Světová revoluce za války a ve válce 1914-1918* (Prague: Čin a Orbis, 1925), 262.

<sup>144</sup> Valerián Bystrický, “Zasadnutie Slovenského snemu 14. marca 1939,” *Historický časopis*, 47 (1999):1, 109-10.

<sup>145</sup> Masaryk 1925, 262.

As the previous chapter illustrated, Czech and Slovak centrist politicians attempted throughout the interwar era to forge a Czechoslovak nation. School textbooks played a key role in their efforts to construct a notion of “Czechoslovak” belonging and identity. However, these textbook narratives of “Czechoslovakness” were often clumsy and internally contradictory, at best, condescending and offensive to Slovaks, at worst.

In this chapter, I investigate the degree of continuity and change in textbook narratives during the First Slovak Republic (1939-1945) compared with interwar Czechoslovakia (1918-1939). Specifically, I analyzed the texts with the following questions in mind. In light of the dramatic political, social, and economic changes involved in this transition—which included not only moving from a democratic to an authoritarian regime but also the drastic reduction of the state’s size in terms of its population and territory—what, if anything, remained constant in the narratives, and why? Given the regime change one might anticipate a rise in Slovak ethnic national narratives. But how would these texts differ from what came before: would “Slovak” simply be substituted for “Czechoslovak” or would different myths and legends emerge? What would happen to the depictions of national “enemies” from the Czechoslovak period? In addressing these questions I found considerable and at times unexpected constants in the textbook narratives across these time periods and what changes did occur did not always follow a predictable path.

Before turning to the textbook analyses, I summarize the events leading up to the breakup of interwar Czechoslovakia in both the domestic and international spheres. This historical background provides the context through which I interpret what is included and excluded in the school texts and how these World War II texts compare with the earlier

texts under the First Republic. A brief review of how the school system and textbook publication changed during World War II further contextualizes the aims of schooling during this period.

The heart of this chapter is my analysis of World War II-era Slovak textbooks, which I present according to relevant categories of nationalism theory. First, this analysis provides perspective on primordial nationalism during this period: How was the “we” of the Slovak nation circumscribed in the texts? What was the bloodline narrative and who were portrayed as the primordial ancestors of the Slovaks? How did the textbook authors evoke relationships between Slovaks and the territory of their newly found state? After examining primordial membership, the textbook analysis investigates cultural belonging during the First Slovak Republic: how were relationships among the nation and language, religion, and progress in the arts and sciences described and what did these relationships suggest in terms of the exclusivity of the Slovak nation and its civilizational place in Europe? I continue this discussion of the creation of a new Slovak national identity by examining how the textbooks treated Germans and Hungarians, two peoples dubbed state enemies under the preceding regime who during World War II became, at least superficially, political and military allies. I then turn to how the textbooks dealt with Roma and Jews—stateless minorities labeled “Untermenschen” by the Nazi regime.

I end my analysis of textbooks from this era with an investigation of civic narratives. Despite the authoritarian regime, I found that democratic constitutionalism persisted in the civic education lexicon. It appears selectively in the textbooks, used to bolster Slovaks’ claim to their own nation-state, but conveniently not applied to argue for

non-Slovak minority rights. Meanwhile, narratives of health, loyalty to the state, and the virtues of hard work prevailed across time and despite regime change.

### **Historical Background**

Understanding the domestic and international contexts that led to the breakup of interwar Czechoslovakia and the founding of the First Slovak Republic is integral to interpreting both the explicit and implicit messages that Slovak school textbooks held for students and for teachers during World War II. Particular aspects of the interwar Czechoslovak society—such as its democratic character, multi-party government, the structure of Slovak schooling, and the unfulfilled promises of Czech and Slovak political parity—set the stage for the demise of the first Czechoslovak state and influenced how World War II-era Slovak textbooks articulated Slovak national identity. Developments on the international level had an equally significant impact on the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1939, the creation of an independent Slovak state, and the production of distinctive Slovak textbook narratives during the First Slovak Republic.

#### *Democratic Institutions and Autonomist Empowerment*

What went wrong with the attempts at forging Czechoslovak unity before World War II? Despite the hopes and efforts of centrist Czechoslovak politicians to practically erase distinctions between Czech and Slovak national identity during the First Czechoslovak Republic, the aspirations of Slovak autonomists gained momentum during the interwar period. In this way, the Slovaks were participating in the surge of ethnic nationalism that dominated most of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s. But the

democratic character of the First Czechoslovak Republic also contributed to this trend.<sup>146</sup> Under the democratic system of government, Slovak elites had opportunities to develop and openly articulate their nationalist goals, unlike during the last decades of the Habsburg Empire. Even though prior to World War II most other Central European states banned national minority parties, the Czechoslovak government permitted them, believing that their exclusion would be undemocratic and thereby undermine Czechoslovakia's legitimacy with the Western democratic states that supported its founding.<sup>147</sup>

The Slovak autonomist party, called the Hlinka Slovak Populist Party [Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana] (HSĽS) after its Catholic clerical founder Andrej Hlinka, opposed these efforts to "Czechoslovakize" Slovaks. This position directly challenged the aims of Slovak and Czech centrist politicians, who believed that forging a seamless "Czechoslovak" identity was integral to the viability of the state. As discussed in Chapter Three, Masaryk and his colleagues believed that forging a previously non-existent "Czechoslovak" nation would create the unity that Czechs needed to have a stronger majority vis à vis the German minority, which approximated 3 million against an estimated 6 million Czechs and 2.4 million Slovaks.<sup>148</sup>

The democratic character of the Czechoslovak state also gave Slovak autonomists the freedom to disseminate their views and seek representation in the government.

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<sup>146</sup> See Mark Mazower. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. (New York: Knopf, 1999).

<sup>147</sup> Leff 1988, 64.

<sup>148</sup> Karel Pichlík cites Masaryk as recognizing in 1916 that a Czechoslovak alliance was necessary to assure political dominance over other ethnic groups, in particular the Germans. See Karel Pichlík, *Zahraniční odboj 1914-1918 bez legend*. (Prague: Svoboda, 1968), 214.

Beyond free speech and electoral representation, the particular structure of the Czechoslovak government, a multi-party parliamentary system, may have magnified the impact of Hlinka's nationalist party. As the political scientist Theodore J. Lowi has argued, "[p]roportional representation tends to rigidify whatever social cleavages first provide the basis for it, because it encourages social interests to organize, then perpetuates them by allowing them to become 'constituencies.'"<sup>149</sup> In this way, the democratic form and institutional structure of the First Czechoslovak Republic contributed to the rise of the Slovak autonomists. In the three Czechoslovak national elections between 1925 and 1935, HSLS won more votes than any other party in Slovakia: between 28.3% and 34.3%, whereas the next leading party, the Agrarians, gained only between 17.4% and 19.5% of the regional Slovak votes during these same elections.<sup>150</sup> With the Slovak autonomists' electoral gains came increased opportunities for Slovak national leaders to gain political experience—an area in which Slovaks lagged compared to their Czech counterparts at the founding of Czechoslovak state. Only three Slovaks gained representation in the Hungarian Diet by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century compared to the Czechs, who before 1900 occupied between 85 and 87 out of 425 seats in Vienna's Reichsrat.<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, issues of language and religion divided the centrists and the Slovak autonomist leaders. The dominance of the Czech language in state business and in Slovak schools, where Czechs were frequently hired as teachers, ran counter to Hlinka and his

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<sup>149</sup> Leff 1988, 64.

<sup>150</sup> Leff provides a revealing table of the First Republic elections data by region: Table 2-2, Leff 1988, 52.

<sup>151</sup> *Dějiny státu a právy na území Československa v období kapitalismu*. (Bratislava: SAV, 1973), 732.



followers' goals of preserving a Slovak identity that was distinct from that of Czechs.<sup>152</sup> The disproportional appointment of Protestant Slovaks over Catholic Slovaks to government positions revealed a bias that further angered Slovak nationals. Czech national leaders favored Slovak Protestants because they felt the Protestants were more reliable allies in their efforts to break with the Catholic Habsburg past. In addition, Lutherans in Slovakia conducted their liturgy in Czech.<sup>153</sup> Hence, unlike Slovak Catholics, Slovak Protestants religiously and linguistically fit with centrist ambitions to construct a fluid Czechoslovak identity—dominated by Czech culture—and to distinguish themselves from their former Catholic rulers.<sup>154</sup>

#### *Education and Slovak Identity Formation*

Ironically, during the First Czechoslovak Republic universal schooling, which was supposed to bolster Czechoslovak nation-building efforts, also created opportunities to solidify a Slovak identity that ran counter to the image of Czechoslovakia as a single, ethnic nation. The spread of state schools where Slovak was the language of instruction and of textbooks helped to improve the literacy skills and educational opportunities of Slovak-speaking youth.<sup>155</sup> With more Slovak youth reading Slovak, Slovak nationalists had opportunities to gain a wider audience for their publications including the journals

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<sup>152</sup> Victor S. Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy 1920-1938." In Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, eds. *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 114-116.

<sup>153</sup> Johnson 1985, 29.

<sup>154</sup> Between 1919-1930, Roman Catholics numbered consistently around 71% and Protestants comprised less than 18% of the Slovak population (*Soznam miest na Slovensku*. ZSÚS 1933/195).

<sup>155</sup> Johnson 1985, 91.

*The Slovak [Slovák]* and *Get On Board [Nástup]*. As with the political structure of the multi-party system, the democratic institutions of the First Czechoslovak Republic enhanced the reach and skills of the Slovak national movement.

Adding potential fuel to the Slovak autonomists' cause were the narratives in school textbooks that aimed to build a Czechoslovak identity in the image of Czechs. In many instances these narratives were likely to backfire, creating a sense of alienation from Czechs—rather than affinity to Czechs—among Slovaks. Narratives of “Czechoslovakness” were often clumsy and internally contradictory. For example, while these texts proclaimed that “our” nation was properly referred to as “Czechoslovak,” the authors frequently slipped into speaking only about the forefathers and history of the “Czech” nation, forgetting Slovaks altogether. In some cases, the textbook authors eventually seemed to backpedal, as if recognizing their omission of Slovaks, and reiterated that Czechs and Slovaks are one nation, declared that Slovaks were also descendants of the forefather Czech, or added that Slovaks and Czechs were like two brothers from the same family, with the Czechs being the older brother to the younger Slovak sibling. None of these additions, however, were likely to make up for the effacing of Slovak history and traditions in the so-called “Czechoslovak” identity narratives. In other words, state efforts to create a unified Czechoslovak nation fostered resentment among some Slovaks due to a Czech bias in the identity narratives and thus had the unintended effect of strengthening Slovak autonomists' resolve.

### *Unfulfilled Promises of Economic and Political Parity*

Textbook rhetoric of Czech and Slovak brotherhood likely seemed disingenuous to many Slovaks in light of how their industries declined disproportionately compared to Czech production during the lifetime of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Before World War I, Slovak industry had prospered under Hungarian protectionist policies, which included subsidies and high tariffs on imports.<sup>156</sup> These economic protections disappeared with the formation of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Moreover, under the Habsburgs the Slovak transportation system had been oriented to move industrial products to Hungary and elsewhere eastward and to receive raw materials from these same regions; it did not adapt well to the western shift in its market in the interwar era.<sup>157</sup> With the formation of the joint Czechoslovak state, Slovak goods competed with Czech goods, and Czech industry had a geographic advantage and a stronger transportation network for serving a western market.

Furthermore, after World War I the Czechoslovak government appropriated industries within its borders, wresting ownership from Budapest and Vienna.<sup>158</sup> Czech banks stepped in and purchased Slovak industries, which Hungarians and Jews previously

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<sup>156</sup> Rudolf Olšovský and Václav Průcha, eds., *Stručný hospodářský vývoj Československa do roku 1955* (Prague, Svoboda, 1969), 140.

<sup>157</sup> Johnson 1985, 73-74. Johnson notes that hostile relations with Hungary during the interwar period hampered Slovakia's access to its former markets. Hungary attacked Slovakia in 1919 trying to regain some of its pre-war territory, and a trade war between Czechoslovakia and Hungary ensued. Also for specifics on the conflicts between Slovakia and Hungary at this time, see Rudolf L. Tökés *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: The Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace. Stanford: F.A. Praeger, 1967).

<sup>158</sup> Johnson 1985, 73.

had managed and/or owned.<sup>159</sup> These same Czech banks allowed Slovak factories to languish in tight financial times, such as during the European recession (1921-23), and in the global depression in the 1930s.<sup>160</sup> Rather than aiding Slovak enterprises, Czech banks tended to invest their capital in Czech factories, which were often better equipped and better located for transporting products westward than Slovak plants. For example, in 1922 Slovakia received 130 million crowns in bank investments, whereas Bohemia alone received 14 billion crowns in investment monies.<sup>161</sup> Deindustrialization and the resulting unemployment led thousands of Slovaks to emigrate to the US and Canada. Before strict immigration quotas became effective with the 1924 US National Origins Act, an estimated 35,000 Slovaks left that year for the US, joining approximately half a million Slovaks already residing there.<sup>162</sup> Meanwhile a dearth of qualified Slovaks at home caused an influx of Czech professionals into the Slovak economy in the early half of the interwar period, for example, in the teaching profession.<sup>163</sup> Ultimately by the 1930s, as Carol Skalnik Leff argues, “Czechs felt they had made significant budgetary sacrifices to

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<sup>159</sup> Lúdvít Holotík, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Slovakia,” *East European Quarterly*, 1 (March 1967), 33. Rudolf Olšovský, “Strukturální změny v ekonomice předmnichovského Československa,” *Dějiny a současnost*, VII: 3 (1966), 26.

<sup>160</sup> Johnson notes that Czech banks often bought Slovak banks in this era (Johnson 1985, 75).

<sup>161</sup> Zdenka Holotíková, “Niektoré problémy slovenskej politiky v rokoch 1921-1925,” *Historický časopis*, 14, no. 3 (1966): 456.

<sup>162</sup> The number of Slovaks emigrating in the interwar period was particularly high in comparison with the overall population in Slovakia, which ranged between approximately 3 and 3.3 million between 1921 and 1932 (ZSÚS 1932/150, 170, 179: *Československá statistika*, Vol. 94, 47.) However, many Slovak émigrés returned to their home country, the primary objective of emigration being to earn money abroad for their families, who often remained behind (See Yeshayahu Jelinek. “Nationalism in Slovakia and the Communists, 1918-1929.” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar. 1975), 65-85.

<sup>163</sup> Mamatey 1973, 143-4.

help Slovak development; the Slovaks saw the Czechs as patronizing and hypocritical; the Czechs saw the Slovaks as ungrateful.”<sup>164</sup>

In addition to economic complaints of disparate treatment of Czechs and Slovaks in the new state, Slovak autonomists had substantive grievances with the constitutional form of the Czechoslovak government. In May 1918, a group of twenty Slovak, Rusyn, and Czech émigrés in the US had signed the *Pittsburgh Agreement*, announcing their intention to found “Czecho-Slovakia;” however, the name of the country became the Czechoslovak Republic. The small difference of removing the hyphen and the capital S in the spelling of the country’s name had tremendous symbolic significance. The “Czecho-Slovakia” formulation, like the *Pittsburgh Agreement* itself, suggested greater parity between Czechs and Slovaks and maintained a semiotic distinction and separateness between the two groups. However, the state that emerged after World War II, “Czechoslovakia,” blended the two semantic roots into one, reflecting Czechoslovak centrists’ aim to construct a common Czechoslovak identity. In addition, the 1918 *Pittsburgh Agreement* explicitly promised Slovaks their own political assembly, judicial and administrative systems, and equity between the Czech and Slovak languages, which the new state did not provide.<sup>165</sup>

The *Pittsburgh Agreement* was not the only document that indicated that the future nation-state of Czechs and Slovak would confer parity between the two ethnic groups. In a memorandum to the World War II Allies, Edvard Beneš, who would become the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the second president of the new state, declared that the first cabinet would include four Slovaks; however, under pressure from other political

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<sup>164</sup> Leff 1988, 148.

<sup>165</sup> *Vznik Československa*, doc. 41

parties, only two Slovaks were appointed—a pattern that did not vary significantly during the life of the First Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>166</sup>

As early as 1919, the HSLS party began to press the Czechoslovak government for compliance with the *Pittsburgh Agreement*. Hlinka and his colleagues noted that the Czechoslovak government on November 11, 1918 declared that it would recognize all agreements reached during the war by Masaryk.<sup>167</sup> Although Masaryk had not signed the Pittsburgh decree he was its central author and coordinator. It was in reference to this document that Masaryk claimed later that he participated in the Pittsburgh negotiations “to appease a small Slovak faction which was dreaming of God knows what kind of independence for Slovakia.”<sup>168</sup>

In fact, the “kind of independence” to which most Slovak autonomists aspired during the life of the First Czechoslovak Republic was one that fulfilled the intentions of the *Pittsburgh Agreement*. Although the democratic nature of the First Czechoslovak government gave voice to Slovak nationalist politicians and clumsy articulations of Czechoslovak identity may have exacerbated a sense of separation between Czechs and Slovaks, an independent Slovak state was not the original goal of the HSLS. Rather, Slovak autonomists largely strove for Slovak self-governance within a federal system and did not see secession from the Czechoslovak state as a desirable nor viable option.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Edvard Beneš. *Světová válka*, Vol. III, 502, cited in Johnson 1985, 71.

<sup>167</sup> James Ramon Felak. “*At the Price of the Republic*”: *Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1929-1938*. Pittsburgh Series in Russian and East European Studies, 20. (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), 40-41.

<sup>168</sup> Masaryk 1925, 262.

<sup>169</sup> A younger faction of HSLS members followed Vojtech Tuka’s radical ideas including a pro-fascist ideology and aspirations for Slovak independence. The journal *Nástup [Get On Board]* was the venue for the ideas of this radical wing of HSLS. Tiso and other, generally middle-aged members of HSLS, however, represented the more moderate and

However, international events, particularly the rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler's appointment to Reich Chancellor in 1933, transformed the geo-political outlook of the region and eventually moved Slovak nationalist leaders in a new direction.<sup>170</sup>

### **The International Context: Divide and Conquer**

Monsignor Jozef Tiso became the leader of HSL'S after Hlinka died on August 16, 1938. Tiso had been an active member of HSL'S throughout the First Czechoslovak Republic. In 1927 he was appointed Minister of Public Health and Physical Education in the Czechoslovak government and by 1930 was the head of the moderate clerical wing of HSL'S. Soon after this change in leadership came a series of events in quick succession that would alter the shape of Czechoslovakia, and of Europe.<sup>171</sup>

With his eyes on the Sudetenland, Adolf Hitler sought to utilize the fissures between the Czechs and Slovaks to his own advantage. The Sudetenland, which encircled the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, offered substantial military advantage to Hitler because of its industrial potential for producing weaponry. This land also held ethno-

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members of the party, who were old enough to remember oppression under the Hungarian monarchy and appreciate the relative freedoms of the interwar democracy. See James Ward, "No Saint: Jozef Tiso, 1887-1947" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2008).

<sup>170</sup> Leff argues that Slovak self-governance was not in opposition to the existence of the Czechoslovak state. She writes that HSL'S's "claims for autonomy were focused, specific, and need not have been defined as an antisystem in any obvious and direct way. Federalism of some variety was the goal...It was not a structural alteration that challenged the premises of republican government or capitalism, nor did it contest the continuing existence of Czechoslovakia as a state in any direct sense." (Leff 1988, 85).

<sup>171</sup> Edvard Beneš. *Mnichovské dny: Paměti* (Prague: Svoboda, 1968) and Valerián Bystrický. "Slovensko a Mnichov." In *Mnichovská dohoda: Cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě*, edited by Jan Němeček, 164-191. (Praha: Karolinum and Univerzita Karlova, 2004).

symbolic meaning for the Nazis because of its considerable German-speaking population. Slovakia, which did not have the concentration of ethnic Germans as that found in the Czech lands, was of less immediate interest to Germany. Nonetheless, Germany's ally Hungary did make claims to territory in Slovakia, especially to border regions with large Hungarian-speaking populations.<sup>172</sup>

The pace of events and maneuvers in the next two years was astounding. The *Munich Agreement*, signed by the German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, the Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and the French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier on September 30, 1938 signaled the death of the First Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>173</sup> No Czechoslovak representative was present at the Munich Conference, yet the accord gave Nazi Germany the Sudetenland regions. Nazi occupation of the Sudetenland began on October 10. Almost overnight, Czechoslovakia lost its borderland military defenses, approximately 3.5 million citizens, and substantial industry, including steel manufacturing.<sup>174</sup> Recognizing the dire implications of the *Munich Agreement*, Edvard Beneš, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs who had become president in 1935 after Masaryk's death, resigned on October 5, 1938, and Emil Hácha became the next Czechoslovak president.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Deák, Ladislav. *Hra o Slovensko: Slovensko v politike Maďarska a Poľska v rokoch 1933-1939*. (Bratislava: Veda, 1991); *Hungary's Game for Slovakia*. (Bratislava: Veda, 1996). *Viedenská arbitráž: 2. november 1938: Dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2002-2003).

<sup>173</sup> Seton-Watson 1977.

<sup>174</sup> Rudolf Olšovský. "Strukturální změny v ekonomice předmnichovského Československa," *Dějiny a současnost*, VII, No. 3 (1966), 26.

<sup>175</sup> On October 22, 1938, Beneš fled the country for London, where he established the Czechoslovak government in exile. Edvard Beneš. *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš: From Munich to New War and New Victory*, translated by Godfrey Lias (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954).



In an effort to strengthen Czech and Slovak solidarity in the face of the Nazi threat, on October 6, 1938 the Czechoslovak government negotiated the *Žilina Accord*, which established Slovak autonomy within the structure of the Czechoslovak state and renamed the state Czecho-Slovakia, as intended by the *Pittsburgh Agreement*.<sup>176</sup> Tiso became the Slovak prime minister under this arrangement. Meanwhile, Hungarian partisans launched attacks in Sub-Carpathian Rus and in southern Slovakia—activities that threatened to devolve into an open war. Germany and Italy wanted to avoid an all-out war at this point and therefore arbitrated on November 2, 1938 the *First Vienna Award*, which seceded approximately one-third of Slovak territory to Hungary.<sup>177</sup> However, the Vienna Award did not put an end to the disputes, and border skirmishes between Hungary and Slovakia continued.

Due in part to Hungarian incursions into Slovak territory, ethnic Slovak political power coalesced behind HSĽS.<sup>178</sup> The Slovak government declared in January 1939 that only three parties would be legal in Slovakia: HSĽS, the German minority party in Slovakia, and the Unified Hungarian Party, thus ridding the political system of parties built on anything other than ethnicity.<sup>179</sup> In a mere two decades, Slovakia had gone from a place where the majority of its residents did not identify with a single ethnic group to a

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<sup>176</sup> Valerián Bystrický and Barbara Pišecská. “Žilinská dohoda 6. októbra 1938.” *Vojenská história*, 10 (2006): 4, 77-108.

<sup>177</sup> For details on the *First Vienna Award*, see Kovacs, 1999.

<sup>178</sup> Leff 1988, 101.

<sup>179</sup> The result of this restriction on party legality raised the status of ethnicity as *the* determinant of political affiliation and thereby also increased its overall social import. In the First Czechoslovak Republic, party affiliation was often based on identity markers that cut across ethnic groups. For example, several major parties were founded on religious or professional affiliations, such the Christian Democrats and the Agrarian Party, or on a non-ethnic ideology such as Communism. For a thorough investigation of political parties in interwar Czechoslovakia, see Leff 1988, 46-78.

society in which the government made ethnicity the decisive factor in political affiliation, thereby also increasing ethnicity's impact on cleavages in Slovak society at large.

Aware of German pressure on Slovakia to secede from the Czecho-Slovak union, on March 9, 1939, Czech troops invaded Slovakia and deposed Tiso from his position as Slovak Prime Minister. On March 13, 1939, Hitler summoned Tiso to Berlin, where Hitler informed him that if he did not declare Slovakia's independence, Germany would disavow itself of Slovakia's fate, leaving it vulnerable to Hungarian and Polish invasion. During Tiso's meeting with Hitler, Germany's Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop interrupted with a false report that Hungarian troops were amassing along Slovak borders. Tiso contacted the Slovak Prime Minister who had replaced him, Karol Sidor, and the Czech President Emil Hácha, and the three men agreed to call an emergency meeting of the Slovak Parliament the next day.<sup>180</sup> On March 14, the Slovak Parliament convened, and the German minority leader in Slovakia Franz Karmasin warned that if independence were not immediately declared, Germany and Hungary would invade and divide Slovakia.<sup>181</sup> Under this threat, the Slovak Parliament unanimously voted for Slovakia's independence from Czecho-Slovakia and appointed Tiso the new Slovak state's prime minister. Tiso sent a telegram requesting Germany's protection, thereby submitting Slovakia's fate to the Nazi state.<sup>182</sup>

On March 15, Hitler's troops occupied the rest of the Czech lands, establishing the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Early on March 23, 1939 Hungary

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<sup>180</sup> Martin Sokol. „Ako došlo k vyhláseniu Slovenského štátu? (Moje poznámky k marcovým udalostiam 1939).“ *Historický časopis*, 39 (1991): 3, 323-329.

<sup>181</sup> Pavol Čarnogurký. *14. marec 1939* (Bratislava: Veda, 1992).

<sup>182</sup> George F. Kennan. *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers 1939-1940* (Princeton: University Press, 1968); Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč. *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2001).

invaded eastern Slovakia from the Sub-Carpathian region. Military attacks continued until the end of March. On April 4, 1939 in Budapest, Slovakia forcibly ceded part of its eastern territory to Hungary.<sup>183</sup> All these developments shaped the context in which Slovak textbooks must be understood.

### **Schooling and Textbook Publications in the First Slovak State**

Seen as a key institution in the mission of binding together the Czechs and Slovaks into a single “Czechoslovak” nation, the First Czechoslovak government had invested heavily in schooling in the interwar period, which ironically later became a boon to the new Slovak state that wanted to define itself as clearly separate from the Czechs. The number of schools in Slovakia increased dramatically during the interwar regime, especially professional schools and college-preparatory schools.<sup>184</sup> Texts for subjects that under the Habsburgs had only been in Hungarian were now available in Slovak. And by the late 1930s, enough Slovaks had graduated from teacher training programs to replace the cadre of Czech teachers who had worked in Slovak schools at the beginning of the interwar republic.<sup>185</sup> However, the educational infrastructure and corps of trained

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<sup>183</sup> Kovacs and Lipták, 1997.

<sup>184</sup> A substantial number of schools built under the interwar Czechoslovak government ended up in Hungarian territory with the *First Vienna Award*. Ladislav Deák. *Viedenská arbitráž: 2. november 1938: Dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2002-2003).

<sup>185</sup> In addition to the larger pool of qualified Slovak teachers, preferential hiring laws that favored Slovaks for professional positions in Slovakia encouraged this transformation from a predominantly Czech to a predominantly Slovak teaching force. See: Valerián Bystrický. “Vyst’ahovanie českých štátnych zamestnancov zo Slovenska v rokoch 1938-1939.” *Historický časopis*, 45 (1997): 4, 596-611; and Redačná komisia Ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety. *Päť rokov slovenského školstva*. Bratislava: Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1944.

professionals inherited from the democratic First Czechoslovak Republic would now be transformed to serve a clerical-fascist Slovak state.<sup>186</sup>

Under the Tiso government, a primary task of the state education system was to raise Slovak national consciousness. Schools and their texts would abandon the project of constructing a joint Czechoslovak nation and would instead turn their attention to defining a separate and distinct Slovak nation. Slovak language and literature courses would replace many Czech authors from their repertoire, focusing primarily on those writers who were identified as Slovak. Ethnic minorities were no longer guaranteed the right to their own language schools regardless of their concentration in any given region. Furthermore, with Tiso being a Catholic priest backed by a wing of Catholic clergy in HSEŠ, Slovak identity became tightly bound to Christianity and more specifically to Catholicism.

Despite the ideological shift in the state, according to the records at the Slovak Pedagogical Library (SPK) [Slovenská pedagogická knižnica] in Bratislava, few textbooks were published during Tiso's regime. This dearth of new textbooks may be attributed to the short existence of the state and the upheavals and financial demands of the war that made textbook production difficult. Unlike during the interwar period, civic education seems to have disappeared as a separate subject in World War II Slovakia. The one textbook on civic education in the SPK archives that was published during World War II was a 1943 text for professional trade schools. This text is under forty pages in length, and it consists primarily of concise descriptions of a narrow range of topics such

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<sup>186</sup> For a discussion of the controversies surrounding the “clerical-fascist” label for the First Slovak State, see Ward 2008. Tiso's collaboration with Hitler is discussed in: Ferdinand Ďurčanský. “Mit Tiso bei Hitler: Die Entstehung der Slowaischen Republik 1939.” *Politische Studien*, 7:80 (Dec. 1956), 1-10.

as industrial law, social welfare protection for employees, the rights and responsibilities of employees, and various trade associations.<sup>187</sup> The apparent rarity with which civic education appeared in the school curriculum as a separate school subject with its own set of textbooks does not, of course, mean that Slovak youth were not receiving a civic education in other subject areas. As the text analysis later in this chapter illustrates, history textbooks from this era were in close alliance with the ideology of the First Slovak Republic.

This alignment between the ideology of the Slovak state regime and the history texts is unsurprising given who the authors of these texts were. In my archival research I found only four history textbooks published during World War II in Slovakia. František Hrušovský authored three of these four texts. Beginning in 1931 at the age of 28, Hrušovský taught at the gymnázium Kláštor pod Znievom, which was one of the first Slovak-language schools in history, established during the Habsburg Empire and which therefore held deep symbolic meaning for Slovak nationalists. Later, Hrušovský became an editor of a history journal at the Slovak cultural institute, Matica Slovenská. From 1938-1945, Hrušovský was a member of the Slovak Parliament. After the fall of the Slovak state, he emigrated to the US fleeing Communism.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Matica Slovenská was founded in 1864 to promote Slovak language and culture, and this institution became integral to the Slovak autonomy movement. Matica Slovenská printed one of Hrušovský's textbooks *Slovenské Dejiny*

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<sup>187</sup> Vladimír Mišík. *Občianska náuka: učebný text pre odborné živnostenské školy*. Bratislava: Štátna kníhtlačiareň, 1943. This civic education textbook was designed for trade schools.

[*Slovak History*], in 1940 for students in their third year of secondary school.<sup>188</sup>

Hrušovský wrote two other textbooks on Slovak history, both titled *Dunaj* [The Danube], which were intended to be taught consecutively in the sixth and seventh year of grammar school. Both of these history texts were published by Spolok svätého Vojtecha [The Association of Saint Vojtech], a Catholic organization founded by a priest, Andrej Radlinký, in 1870 to promote Slovak Roman Catholic literature. Three editions of *Dunaj* appeared during World War II.

The last textbook that I found from this period is the work of Anton Kovalík, who was a geography and history professor and became the director of the teaching academy at Spišská Nová Ves, a town in Central Eastern Slovakia. Kovalík's textbook covers ancient world history, including nine pages on prehistory, 43 pages on "Oriental Nations" such as Egypt, Babylonia, India, and China, 66 pages on Ancient Greece, and 70 pages on the Roman Empire. The book ends with the reign of Charles the Great. Published by the state press in Bratislava [Štátne nakladateľstvo v Bratislave] this textbook states that its intended audience is students in their fifth year of gymnázium and those in their second year at the teaching academy. Kovalík was not as fortunate as his colleague Hrušovský: in 1945 the Stalinist-era secret police known as the NKVD [The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs] abducted Kovalík and took him to the Soviet Union, where he died in 1946. The fates of both Kovalík and Hrušovský attest to the highly political nature of textbook writing.

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<sup>188</sup> According to *The Annual Report for the School Year 1940-41* this was the only history textbook approved for 1941-42 at the State Slovak Gymnázium at Turčiansky Svätý Martin. (Štátne slovenské gymnázium v Turčianskom Sv. Martine. *XXII. Výročná za školský rok 1940-1941*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Nová kníhtlačiareň, 1941).

## **The Primordial Story: Birth, Migration, and Land**

Four major themes dominate the Slovak history textbooks from this era: (1) the primordial story of Slovak origins; (2) the glory of a Slovak past; (3) the oppression of Slovaks by other nations; and (4) Slovak history as fulfilling a nationalist destiny. The order of these themes roughly follows the chronology above, in which the textbooks begin by introducing the Slovak origins near the start of each textbook, then discuss the early glory of the Slovak nation embodied in the “first state” of Great Moravia, and move on to the Slovak nation’s “dark ages” of invasion and oppression under various “foreign” nations, in particular the Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, and at times the Jews.

Ultimately, the textbooks attempted to draw readers into a foregone and frequently reiterated conclusion: that the Slovak state was the reward and destiny of a great nation that suffered through centuries of subjugation but remained loyal to its land and national character. Taken together these themes form a pattern analogous to a triptych, depicting a Christian narrative in which the Slovak nation experiences birth, martyrdom, rebirth and glory.

However, only when observing the texts from the distance of overarching patterns does this image of the triptych come into focus. Seen from a closer perspective, at the more minute level of sentences and paragraphs, the themes in the textbooks are less stationary than the triptych analogy implies. Although each of the four themes takes its turn dominating the textbook narrative, these same motifs are tightly interwoven and repeated throughout the texts. From this view, the narrative themes are comparable to a symphony composed of separate movements, but within each movement a pattern of notes, perhaps phrased differently or played at varying tempos, repeats, reminding the

audience of what has already been sounded and foretelling what is to come. The analysis that follows attempts to retain both of these perspectives on how the themes transpire within the narratives—that is, describing in detail the separate thematic panels of the triptych and simultaneously acknowledging their interwoven motifs.

*“The Great Slavic Family”: Establishing an Ethnic Bloodline*

Even in this period of intense, inward-looking Slovak ethnic nationalism, a narrative of Slovak inclusion in the “great Slavic family” lingers in the textbooks.<sup>189</sup> The Slovak primordial story begins with the assertion that “Slavic nations had a common origin, long ago, prior to their departure from their original country [pravlasti]”<sup>190</sup> This opening to the primordial narrative suggests the “once upon a time, in a land far, far away” beginning of fairy tales. The time of Slavic unity is beyond periodization and the “original country” is also unspecified in the narrative, conveying that these origins lie in the mists of pre-history and that the student need not imagine what came before. Rather, what matters to the story are the events that follow these vague origins.

The textbooks that extol the Slavic origin myth in detail are written for students in the sixth and seventh years of elementary school, who would typically be between the

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<sup>189</sup> The phrase “great Slavic family” appears in František Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny: učebnica pre IV. triedu slov. stredných škôl*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1940a, 11. This textbook states in its title that it is for fourth graders in the basic school. References to the Slavic “family” and Slavic “beginnings” permeate these early sections of the primordial narratives in all three texts. For example see also two other textbooks by Hrušovský: *Dunaj: dejepis pre šiesty postupný ročník slovenských ľudových škôl, (Beh “A”)*. (Trnava: Spolok Sv. Vojtecha, 1939) 53- 55 and *Dunaj: učebnica dejepisu pre 7. postupný ročník slk. ľudových škôl (Beh “B”)*. (Trnava: Spolok Sv. Vojtecha, 1942) 7. The 1939 text was written for the sixth year of elementary school and the 1942 text was intended for students in the seventh year of elementary school.

<sup>190</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 11.



ages of ten and thirteen. These texts follow the Slovak “tribe” out of the unclear mists of distant origins and into the focused national story on Slovak territory. “After their departure beginning at the start of the sixth century, Slavs, our ancestors, began to work their way into the territory of Slovakia through the Carpathian basin and Moravia.”<sup>191</sup> Here as the Slovaks reach their destined land, clarity emerges with specific geographic references and with the demarcation of a time period.

Despite the amorphous character of the Slavic origins story, it achieves several concrete purposes. First, the pan-Slavic narrative establishes a kinship between Slovaks and other Slavic groups that together are more numerous and powerful than the Slovaks alone. Paralleling the textbooks in the interwar era, these World War II publications give a long list of the different Slavic groups and note that Slavs populate “all of the eastern half of Europe,” thereby underlining Slavs’ joint dominion over a larger portion of the continent and their strength in numbers.<sup>192</sup> Second, the origins narrative defines ethnicity as a primordial construct wherein blood lineage alone determines membership in “the family.” It is their common origins that explain Slavs’ linguistic, religious, and character similarities. In other words, even by mastering a Slavic language, becoming Christian, or adopting the alleged characteristics of Slavs (whatever that means) one cannot gain entry into the group. Assimilation is not a choice; rather a notion of “blood and soil” drives belonging, even though this bloodline might be lost in the misty past.<sup>193</sup> Third, the idea

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<sup>191</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 10. See also Hrušovský 1942, 7, which delimits the period as between “the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries.”

<sup>192</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 11.

<sup>193</sup> In bold, the textbook for the sixth year of elementary school asks students to define: “What is: a family, a lineage, a tribe, a nation?” This same list poses the questions: “What is Slavic brotherhood?” and “Do you know the lovely song, ‘We are all Slavs?’” See Hrušovský, 1939, 55-56.

professed in these textbooks of an unmarked, primordial country of Slavs sets up the narrative for Slovaks' to claim primacy on "Slovak" territory. Archeological findings and written records indicate that Slovaks were not the first to inhabit the land that becomes the Slovak Republic. For example, Germanic peoples, Avars, and Romans had settlements in this territory prior to the arrival of the Slovak "tribe," but the texts explain that these early inhabitants did not remain in Slovakia. The migration story out of the united Slavic country, which the texts state began in the sixth century A.D., provides Slovak nationalists with an argument to then claim that their ethnic group constitutes the oldest, continuous settlement in that territory.

Although the Slavic origins story only constitutes a small section of the history texts, it is noteworthy for its unambiguously positive representation of Slavic brotherhood. Unlike much of the Slovak narrative, which often emphasizes animosity or bitterness toward other nations, the pan-Slavic story underscores an affinity with others, even if only with those deemed ethnically related to Slovaks through their Slavic roots. "There were different Slavic tribes which had a common origin, spoke a common language and had even a common pagan religion."<sup>194</sup> Besides stressing the shared linguistic and religious roots of Slavs, another text claims, "they had also a similar character, which they have preserved to this day."<sup>195</sup> The third textbook insists that these commonalities persist because "even today Slavs can understand each other and feel like brothers."<sup>196</sup> The pagan religious connection is also updated in the history texts by recognizing a common Christian bond among Slavs wrought by Saints Cyril and

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<sup>194</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 7.

<sup>195</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 11.

<sup>196</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 55.

Methodius: “This respect for the Slavic apostles unites all the Slavic nations in one big family.”<sup>197</sup>

Despite the emphasis on commonalities in this account of Slavic origins, the unspoken story is primarily one of exclusion. Most of the minority groups that lived in Slovak territory before, during, and after World War II did not meet the linguistic and/or religious criteria of Slavic membership delineated in these texts. The primary languages of Hungarians, Jews, Roma, and Germans residing in Slovakia were not Slavic. Additionally, Jews were excluded from the “Slavic family” by religion. These same groups do not even constitute the acknowledged readership of the textbooks as attention to the use of “we” and “our” therein reveals. For example, a unit heading in one textbook states: “We are all Slavs.”<sup>198</sup> Meanwhile, elsewhere a textbook declares that “our ancestors” are Slavs, indexing a community of readers and learners that excludes any of the non-Slavic linguistic or non-Christian minorities mentioned.<sup>199</sup> However, a close reading of the texts reveals that even the Slavic minorities that populated Slovakia during World War II—such as Czechs and Rusyns—were left out of the narrative audience. Even as the story declares that, “[w]e are all Slavs” it repeatedly refers to Slavs in the third person plural with “they/them/their,” implicitly narrowing the circle of readership further still to Slovaks only.<sup>200</sup> Hence, despite this avowal of Slavic origins, the narrative audience is essentially national, rather than transnational across all Slavic nations.

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<sup>197</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 73.

<sup>198</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 7.

<sup>199</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 10.

<sup>200</sup> For multiple examples of references to Slavs in the third person, see: Hrušovský 1939, 55; Hrušovský 1942, 7; Hrušovský 1940a, 10, 11.

As during the First Czechoslovak Republic, the pan-Slavic roots of the nation follow an archetypal primordial national narrative of blood membership. However, in the post-Munich Accord world, the focus was no longer on the origins story of the “Czechoslovak nation” but rather of the “Slovak nation.” In fact, the concept of a Czechoslovak nation is not mentioned in the primordial story at all here. Only later in the texts when covering the 19<sup>th</sup>-century period of the National Awakening and the interwar regime does the term “Czechoslovak nation” appear. However, the textbooks mention “Czechoslovak” only in passing and as a fanciful idea promoted by centralist politicians during the First Czechoslovak Republic. The term in this context appears in quotation marks, distinguishing the notion of a “Czechoslovak nation” as a fanciful construct unlike the “Slovak nation,” which is printed without quotation marks in these textbooks, denoting it as a real, rather than an imagined, entity. Moreover, the Slovak origin myth in the World War II textbooks does not establish any special relationship between Czechs and Slovaks. Czechs are simply depicted as one of the many tribes constituting “the great Slavic family.”<sup>201</sup>

Although the Slovak textbooks denote all Slavs as member of a large family, Slavs soon become the distant relatives on the family tree, and Slovaks alone constitute the immediate relatives who are the protagonists in the historical narrative. An alleged quote from Ľudovít Štúr, an 18th century Slovak nationalist, illustrates this idea: “Behind those peaks there lies Slovakia, our family, a nation impoverished, oppressed, denied its independence for a thousand years.”<sup>202</sup> In this quote, “our family” equals “the nation,” and not the broader Slavic transnational community. Accompanying this transition from

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<sup>201</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 11.

<sup>202</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 130.

using “the family” to indicate all Slavs to the term denoting the smaller Slovak unit, another change is evident: as in the previous quote, Slovaks are no longer referred to as a “tribe” but a “nation.” One textbook explains that: “when Slavs broke away from their united country, they were not yet divided into nations. They were different Slavic tribes...”<sup>203</sup> By this explanation, after leaving the haziness of the distant Slavic womb, the Slovak nation is born on the land that it claims as its own.

*Below the Tatra Mountains: Frontiers of Land and Nation*

In the Slovak primordial story, the land and the nation are mutually constitutive. As the narrative of Slavic origins suggests, Slovaks become “Slovak” only after they reach “their” land. However, the land, also does not receive an identity until the arrival of Slovaks. Thus, the term “Slovak” comes to inextricably denote both these people who left the primeval Slavic motherland and the land that they settle. This essential linkage between the nation and its land appears throughout the textbooks in describing all eras of Slovak history. Unlike the Slavic origins story which is limited largely to the beginning of the accounts of domestic history, the Slovak land heralds the dawn of Slovak history, witnesses the humiliation of “foreign” occupations and invasions, and is vital to the fulfillment of what the texts declare is the culmination of Slovaks’ national destiny—the formation of the Slovak state in 1939 on the historic lands of the nation.

The adjectives used to describe the land seem selected to promote admiration and pride in the textbooks’ readers. The most common descriptors in the texts are “beautiful,”

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<sup>203</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 7.

“fertile,” and “rich.”<sup>204</sup> These characteristics foment the love Slovaks have for their land, which transcends time, connecting past generations of Slovaks to the present. For example, “[W]e love this beautiful land below the Tatras [Mountains]”<sup>205</sup> By using the pronoun “we” in this statement, the text encircles its young readers, presumes they are all ethnic Slovaks, and hoists this love of the land on them: you must love the land to be a part of the collective. Earlier generations of Slovaks set the example of how to properly love the land: “our ancestors in bad times and in good, in glory and in suffering, persisted because they fervently loved their beautiful country.”<sup>206</sup> In this statement, it is the land that motivated Slovaks of old to persevere through eras of oppression. The land is analogous to a damsel for whom male Slovaks fought in battle: “our predecessors loved this country so much that they would rather fall in battle, pour out their blood on the earth, suffer many treacheries, but not abandon their country.”<sup>207</sup> Other nations are depicted as covetous of the Slovak land: “The country in which our ancestors settled after their departure from the land of the Slavs’ origin was even back then beautiful and rich. It is no wonder that many nations liked it and wanted to occupy it.”<sup>208</sup> Similarly, the land is described as “faithful,” waiting to embrace her loyal Slovaks upon their return: “The Slovak nation [after fighting border incursions by Hungarians and Poles in 1938]...retreated to its faithful mountains.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> See for example: several references to the “beautiful land” or “beautiful country” on Hrušovský 1939, 57; Hrušovský 1942, 12, 88; Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 4.

<sup>205</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 12.

<sup>206</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 57.

<sup>207</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 57.

<sup>208</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 57.

<sup>209</sup> Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 196.

These faithful mountains loom large in the national imagination. The coat of arms of Slovakia during World War II, which became incorporated into the Slovak flag after the Velvet Divorce in 1993, depicts three blue bumps, representing three mountain groupings that are all part of the Carpathian chain: the Fatras in northwestern Slovakia today, the Tatras dividing Slovakia and Poland, and the Matras which are located in present-day northern Hungary. Of these mountains, only the Tatras are mentioned by name repeatedly in the textbooks published in World War II, probably due to Hungarian and Polish incursions into previously Slovak territory and because the Tatras are the highest and arguably most dramatic of the mountain ranges. Frequently, “below the Tatras” serves as shorthand for Slovak territory in general such as, “The Slovak nation below the Tatras” and less than two pages later in this same text, “The Slovak nation whose one goal was to live free and in peace below the Tatras.”<sup>210</sup> Slovak émigrés to the US are portrayed in one textbook as a model of fidelity to the Slovak nation and “its below-the-Tatras homeland.”<sup>211</sup> This same textbook states that for all Slovaks, including émigrés, their “common cradle is under the Tatras.”<sup>212</sup> Notable is the presumption that the relevant nation of identification for ethnic Slovaks living abroad is Slovakia, which the Tatras symbolize and concretize—rather than the countries to which they immigrated. It is the ethnic nation of blood and land that counts in these narratives, not the civic status of émigré Slovaks who may have gained citizenship and integrated into societies abroad.

In addition to the Tatra Mountains, the Danube River is a geographical marker evoked to delimit and represent “Slovak territory” in the textbooks. Two of the Slovak

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<sup>210</sup> Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 165, 167. See also Hrušovský 1942, 12, 88.

<sup>211</sup> Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 190.

<sup>212</sup> Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 163.

history textbooks published during Tiso's regime are titled simply "The Danube [Dunaj]," thereby establishing the river as a symbol of the country in general. More often, however, the textbooks reference the Danube and the Tatras jointly as geographical features that historically mark the borders of Slovakia: "The Slovak nation [...] for the span of centuries lived, worked, fought, suffered, and died for others on this land between the Danube and the Tatras."<sup>213</sup> Describing the land where Slovaks resided circa 1000 CE, another textbook claims that Slovak territory encompassed the area "between the Danube [River], the Tatras [Mountains], and the Tisa [River]" and further notes that: "The territory that Slovaks inhabited then was much bigger than it is today."<sup>214</sup>

Remarking that Slovakia was once "much bigger" and the choice of "The Danube" as the title for two history textbooks must have had a particular resonance in this World War II period. During the interwar Czechoslovak Republic, the Danube River traced the political border between a southwestern portion of Slovakia and a section of northwestern Hungary. However, the *First Vienna Award* in 1938 granted Hungary the majority of territory on the Slovak side along the Danube, except near the Slovak capital Bratislava; Slovakia was forced to yield approximately one-third of its arable land and a fifth of its industry in this cession.<sup>215</sup> Meanwhile, border incursions into Slovakia by Polish and Hungarian forces continued into 1939.

Underlining this loss of land, the textbook published for high school students in this period ends with a map of Slovakia from 1918-1939. The map depicts Slovakia's 1939 political borders, which the key indicates were established by the Vienna

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<sup>213</sup> Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 208.

<sup>214</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 14.

<sup>215</sup> See Ward 2008.



arbitrations of 1938; but the map also outlines broader boundaries that illustrate where the border of Slovakia was before 1938 and the still-wider border that the Slovak delegation to Paris requested (but did not receive) in 1918.<sup>216</sup> In other words, this map lends a sense of authority to the largest expanse of “Slovak” territory hoped for but never realized by Slovak politicians. Whereas name labels alone floating on the peripheries of the map signify Slovakia’s neighbors, Slovakia itself is fully outlined with its former, bigger borders highlighted by gray shading on the otherwise white background of the map. The map key indicates by various patterns of shading when and to which countries the borderland territories were ceded. Conspicuously, the adjectives on the map key describing each land transfer vary: the areas taken by Poland were “torn away [odtrhnuté];” whereas territory ceded to Hungary, was “seized [obsadené]” or “surrendered [odstúpené];” and the land that became part of the German Reich in 1938 was benignly “joined with [pričlenené]” Germany.<sup>217</sup> The varying gradations of emotion and formality that the adjective choice conveys seem to correspond with the political status of Slovakia vis-à-vis its neighbors. Poland was not an ally—in fact, in 1939 Slovakia became the staging ground for the Nazi-led invasion of Poland, and Slovakia contributed a military contingent to the attack.<sup>218</sup> Although Hungary is Slovakia’s historical foe and gained the most territory from Slovakia in this period, it was also an ostensible ally by virtue of both countries’ compacts with Germany, which may explain the more formal, less violent word choice when describing Hungary’s annexations from Slovakia than Poland’s. In the case of Germany, a formidable ally, former Slovak

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<sup>216</sup> Map no. 3 in Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 211.

<sup>217</sup> See the map’s key, Map no. 3 *Slovakia* in the Hrušovský *Slovenské dejiny*: 1940, 211.

<sup>218</sup> Igor Baka. „Slovensko vo vojne proti Poľsku v roku 1939.“ *Vojenská história*, 9 (2005): 3, 26-46.

territory is simply and benignly “joined” with it, a term that evades any sense of loss or victimization on the part of Slovaks.

Two other maps are featured at the end of this textbook. They are titled “Slovakia in the Roman-Germanic Era” and “Turks in Slovakia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries.”<sup>219</sup> This inclusion of maps that record incursions into “Slovak” territory back as far as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, when the Romans established outposts along the Danube and the “Slovaks” by Slovak nationalists’ own accounts had not yet immigrated out of the Slavic motherland, exemplifies the primordial attitude toward the land that permeates the text: land is predestined for, essential to, and emblematic of the nation.

Slovakia in the history texts is not defined only by geographical features or its political borders and territorial losses, but also by its location within Europe as a crossroads and buttress in the center of European civilization. One textbook for pupils in their sixth year of basic school commands its readers to look at a map of Europe and states that: “Immediately upon first glance we notice that the territory of our country lies in the very center of Europe. This is a very important thing!”<sup>220</sup> Although the text does not directly explain the implications of Slovakia’s geographical position in Europe, it accentuates in multiple ways Slovakia’s significance in the context of the continent, declaring, for example, that “[t]he most important river of Europe is the Danube” and that Slovakia “lies at the watershed of European rivers.”<sup>221</sup> A page later, this textbook reiterates that Slovakia is positioned “in the very heart of Europe.”<sup>222</sup> The emphasis on Slovakia’s vital place on the continent is more pronounced in the textbooks for basic

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<sup>219</sup> Maps no. 1 & 2 in Hrušovský 1940a, 209-210.

<sup>220</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 56.

<sup>221</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 56.

<sup>222</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 57.

school students, but the message persists even in the high school level texts.<sup>223</sup>

Furthermore, as I discuss later in this chapter, Slovakia's spatial place in Europe becomes emblematic of its civilizational place among the great cultures of the continent. Thus, the land embodies the nation.

The land and the nation are inextricably bound in the primordial narrative, through glory and suffering, as parent to child, lovers to each other, or as parts of one body. This bond is narrated in part through the idea that because Slovakia is at the crossroads of Europe, the land and people have suffered the ravages of foreign invasions and been caught together in the crossfire of other nations' battles. "In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Magyar kings led many wars with the German emperors and the Czech rulers. Many of these wars played out on the territory of Slovakia, which suffered terrible damages in these battles."<sup>224</sup> In another era, the disputes over who would succeed the Hungarian King Ludvit II, who died in the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, occurred on "Slovak" territory, "bringing great damages to the inhabitants of Slovakia."<sup>225</sup> At the start of a section entitled "Slovakia before the Tatar Invasion," the first sentence reads: "Many different calamities befell the territory of Slovakia since the 9<sup>th</sup> century...All of these drastic political changes devastated Slovakia and ruined its inhabitants."<sup>226</sup> Again, the fate of the land is the fate of its people.

Similarly, the land also acts as the protector of the Slovak nation, sheltering the nation in "its faithful mountains" in times of "new disaster."<sup>227</sup> The land is lauded for

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<sup>223</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 6.

<sup>224</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 35.

<sup>225</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 82.

<sup>226</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 35.

<sup>227</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 196.

guarding Slovak national culture during the long centuries of Hungarian rule: “Even through all of the disasters that happened to our country, the Slovak nation preserved itself on the Slovak land, protecting its language, its old traditions, its Slovak character, in the foothills of the Slovak mountains, in the deep valleys, and in the vast basin of Slovakia, it did not mix with other nations and did not succumb to foreign influence.”<sup>228</sup> The contours of the “Slovak” land are credited with maintaining the essentialized contours of Slovak national culture.

### *Ancestral Rights to the Land*

While the land is a protagonist in its own right in the textbook accounts just described, it is also an object acted upon and possessed. According to the narratives, Slovaks procured this territory for their descendants by settling and cultivating the land. It is these criteria of early, continuous settlement and industrious cultivation that the textbooks describe to students and then use as evidence of Slovaks’ right to the land. In other words, the textbooks act simultaneously as the purveyors of the “proper” criteria for land claims and as the sources for accounts that fulfill those same criteria to the advantage of ethnic Slovaks.

The textbooks are dotted with repeated assertions that Slovakia is the land of the Slovaks. Notably, the frequent, anachronistic use of “Slovakia” or, alternatively, using “Slovak” to qualify references to the land—as in, “the Slovak land,” “a Slovak country,” or “Slovak territory”—biases the narratives, rendering the proprietorship of the land predetermined. This observation might seem quite self-evident, but the impact can be

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<sup>228</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 31.

subtle. For example, in the quote, “Slovakia from time immemorial was the land of the Slovak nation”<sup>229</sup> responds to an implicit question, “To whom does Slovakia belong?” However, referring to the territory as “Slovakia” indexically naturalizes the connection between Slovaks and this land.

At other points, however, the textbooks do recognize that “Slovakia” and “Slovaks” did not always exist as referential categories. The origins story discussed earlier is one example of this recognition: the pre-Slovaks emigrate out of an indeterminate Slavic motherland and settle on territory between the Danube River and the Tatra Mountains. One textbook even admits that, “It is true that in these times, in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Slavs broke away from their united country, they were not yet divided into nations.”<sup>230</sup> In other words, this origins story negates the idea that Slovaks were in Slovakia since “time immemorial,” locating instead temporally a period of arrival on this land. Nonetheless, once stated early on in the textbooks, the origins tale is bracketed off and true history begins with settlement of the land.

Another example of an oblique acknowledgment that “Slovaks” and “Slovakia” are not chronologically universal terms is the insistence that the first Slovak state was the Great Moravian Empire (9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.). The name of the empire connotes that the idea of “Slovakia” as a geographical designation did not exist at this time but rather a land known as “Great Moravia.”<sup>231</sup> However, the thrust of the conclusion, even in the usage of “Great Moravia” is that, linguistic details aside, “Slovaks are the original inhabitants of their country, which they have occupied since the time of Great

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<sup>229</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 159.

<sup>230</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 7.

<sup>231</sup> The term “state” is anachronistically used here—a point that I take up later in this chapter in analyzing what the textbooks describe as the golden era of Slovak history.

Moravia.”<sup>232</sup> In other words, the textbooks make some acknowledgments of the contextual, rather than universal, idea of a Slovak land and people, but these caveats and implicit recognitions appear usually at the beginning of the narratives and are later obfuscated with much more prevalent and insistent messages of Slovak primacy and rights to the land they occupy.

Burial, archeological artifacts, and Slovak names are three categories of evidence that the textbooks evoke to support the notion that Slovaks are the rightful inheritors of their land. Burial literally conjoins the earth and the bones of ancestors. One text explains that, “we love this beautiful land below the Tatras, because in it rest the bones of our fathers and primal fathers.”<sup>233</sup> The “we” of the readership is assumed to share in this patrilineage, and the ancestral bones serve as both archeological evidence of “our” presence on the land and as a symbolic commingling of ancestral remains and the earth.

<sup>234</sup> Drawings and photographs of pottery and tool shards, burials sites, and the foundations of early Christian churches are included in the textbooks to provide additional proof of an early “Slovak” imprint on the land. Few details surrounding the discovery of these relics are provided, as if the materiality of the objects alone—conveyed through representations, as in photos or drawings—is sufficient to prove the argument of Slovak preeminence on the land: for example, the burial place of the artifacts, where they are stored today, and who found them are facts missing from the texts. One textbook cites the exhumation of “the grave of a Slovak fighter in the time of the Great Moravian Empire” as testimony of Slovaks’ long-standing presence in the

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<sup>232</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 113.

<sup>233</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 12.

<sup>234</sup> The absence of female progenitors and protagonists in the narratives is striking throughout textbooks from World War II.

region; however, no explanation is given as to why archeologists determined that this skeleton was “Slovak.”<sup>235</sup>

According to the textbook for high-school level students, another source of evidence of Slovaks’ rightful claims to land are the names of places and people. “The inhabitants who resided on the territory of Slovakia in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries were the ancestors of the population that lived here in the time of Great Moravia. They were indeed Slovaks, as *geographical names* from all over the Slovak territory attest to... Besides these geographical names, *the personal names* of the inhabitants of Slovakia, preserved in old documents, evidence the continuity of Slovak settlements in Slovakia. [Emphasis in the original]”<sup>236</sup> After this excerpt, the font changes—a technique used to signal a quotation from another source, although often, as in this case, the source is not identified. The effect is for the reader to expect a quotation from the “old documents” mentioned in the previous sentence, but instead of a primary source, the past tense of the passage signals a secondary source: “In these times Slovaks most often used the following names: Bogat, Bogdan, Bogomier...”<sup>237</sup> The list of names is extensive, and a young Slovak reader might take the Slavic sound or familiarity of the names as solid evidence of Slovaks’ long-standing residence on the land. Much later in the textbook, the idea that place names are clear indicators of which ethnic group can claim what land recurs: “The Slovak names of mountains, rivers, streams, villages, towns, and castles

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<sup>235</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 24. Of course, the reason no explanation is provided is because none exists for this argument. As mentioned in Chapter One of this dissertation, the earliest references to “Slovak” seem to refer to the Slovak language and first occur in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. See: Elena Mannová, ed., *A Concise History of Slovakia*, *Studia Historica Slovaca*, 21 (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2000), 98, 143-146.

<sup>236</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 40.

<sup>237</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 40. Once again, revealing a patrimonial view of descent, the names listed are all male names.

prove that *Slovakia had become by the 6<sup>th</sup> century a Slovak country*. [Emphasis in the original].”<sup>238</sup> Any counter-evidence to this claim is left unexamined, for example the fact that throughout Central Europe geographical places generally had multiple names reflecting the multilingual character of the region.<sup>239</sup> In short, the existence of Slovak names for places and for inhabitants from a previous era does not preclude the possibility that other linguistic groups also resided on this same land.

The Slovak textbooks vacillate between conveniently ignoring the history of other ethnic groups who resided on the territory of contemporary Slovakia and recognizing—but qualifying—the presence of Germans, Hungarians, Jews, and Rusyns there.<sup>240</sup> At the end of a unit for basic school children, a textbook tells its readers to look at a map of Slovakia and states: “All of these areas are part of our common Slovak country because Slovaks live in all of these regions.”<sup>241</sup> Extrapolating from this statement, the implicit formula for determining a people’s rights to the land is residence: where an ethnic group resides, there lies that people’s country. Yet, under conditions of heterogeneity, ethnic nationalism, and conflicting land claims, this equation clearly fails.

During World War II with Hungarian and Polish incursions into what had been Slovak territory in the First Czechoslovak Republic and the independence of Carpatho-Ruthenia, Slovak nationalists were acutely aware of divergent claims to land in the

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<sup>238</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 109.

<sup>239</sup> In a case study of a town in Bohemia, Jeremy King evidences the multilingual context of the region and how the rise of ethnic nationalism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century attempted to transform the commonly polyglot population into identifying with one ethno-linguistic group. King. *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>240</sup> Roma are not mentioned in any of the textbooks from this era—a point that I return to later in this chapter.

<sup>241</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 17.



region. Perhaps it is this reality that led the textbook author and state publishers to feel a need to acknowledge the historical presence of other groups but to describe them as latecomers and foreigners. For example, the text for upper-level students states that: “Other than the original Slovak population that inhabited the territory of the Slovak Republic from [the time of] the arrival of Slovaks to Slovakia, Hungarians also began to settle along the lower reaches of the Slovak rivers.”<sup>242</sup> Significantly, in this quote the rivers are still designated as “Slovak,” the territory as “Slovakia,” and Slovaks as the “original” population. A time period for when the Hungarians arrived in the region is not given, although at this point in the narration, the textbook is covering the era from the 9<sup>th</sup> till the 12<sup>th</sup> century. On this same page, the text observes that in this time, “foreign merchants, especially Germans and Jews, as guests with permission from the king, brought to us foreign wares.”<sup>243</sup> Again, Germans and Jews are identified as “foreigners” and “us” implies ethnic Slovaks. Later in covering the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, this same textbook recognizes that, “some smaller groups of Rusyns and even Romanian settlers came to Slovakia, however the overwhelming majority of these developing settlements had Slovak populations.”<sup>244</sup> Here too the mention of non-Slovak groups in Slovakia is qualified with an assertion that Slovaks were still the majority population.

In addition to a concern with establishing the notion that Slovaks were on the land before other ethnic groups, the textbooks repeatedly profess that the “Slovak” character of the territory persisted through “colonization” from other peoples. What “Slovakness” means shifts, sometimes suggesting a culture to which outsiders can assimilate and at

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<sup>242</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 41.

<sup>243</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 41.

<sup>244</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 111. Later, the text states that Slovaks successfully assimilated these “foreign elements” without force. Hrušovský 1940a, 112.

other times signifying a majority of Slovak ethnics living on the territory. For example, in a unit on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovak National Awakening, a textbook remarks that after the “original layer of Slovak inhabitants,” Hungarian and then German immigrants came to Slovakia. These Hungarians and Germans are described as “foreign elements” that “disrupted the singular national character of Slovakia.”<sup>245</sup> Despite this “disruption,” the text explains that many Hungarian nobles who fled the Turkish invasions settled in Slovakia but did not pose “a great threat to the Slovak character of the region because some of the Hungarians became Slovakized in the Slovak context.”<sup>246</sup> Referring to the Rusyn and Romanian settlements in eastern Slovakia, students would learn from the textbook that, “The national character of Slovakia not only did not suffer from this colonization,” but on the contrary, the presence of other ethnic groups “solidified the Slovakness of Slovakia.”<sup>247</sup> The implication of this claim is that the national identity of ethnic Slovaks became clearer vis-à-vis contact with other ethnic groups.

Whether it is language abilities, dress, profession, religion, values or other traits that constitute this “Slovakness” to which others can assimilate is not explained. Rather Slovakness is a construct presumed to be mutually understood by reader and author. In another quote from this same textbook, “Slovakness” is an attribute of the land determined by the number of ethnic Slovaks living there: “*The Slovakness of Slovakia never was interrupted* to the extent that Slovaks lost their numerical upper hand and with

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<sup>245</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 110. It is noteworthy that the primary danger to the supposed purity of Slovak national culture that these textbooks perceive comes from the presence of Hungarians. This point is taken up later in this chapter.

<sup>246</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 110.

<sup>247</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 111.

that their right of ownership to their homeland [emphasis in the original].”<sup>248</sup>

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of what “Slovakness” could indicate, it is a concept mobilized in the texts to inextricably link the land and the Slovak people.

The frequency with which the textbooks from this era remind their readers that the territory of the contemporary state is the shrunken borders of a broader land that rightfully belongs to the Slovaks reveals more than an imagined, inextricable bond between ethnicity and land. The insistence and repetition of this message also suggests the tenuous position of a small nation-state within an international context of conflict over national sovereignty and quickly shifting political borders. Besides its diminutive size and military capacity, at least two additional factors impact the need to repeat the theme of Slovaks’ claims to their territory. First, unlike the Czech lands, which were recognized as historic lands because of the administrative precedence of the Bohemian Kingdom and the Moravian Principality, Slovakia was not considered a historic land in this sense. Rather, the textbooks needed to construct “Slovakia” as a historic entity through a story of Slovaks’ persistence on their land and the notion of the Great Moravian Empire as a first Slovak state. Second, the Slovak textbooks had to confront the political claims that other ethnic national groups were making to “Slovak” territory at this time. To make their ethnic claims to the land, the textbooks had to revise the reality of linguistic, religious, and cultural plurality, which had characterized this region’s history and the everyday experiences of its inhabitants.

Of course, it would be unrealistic for a textbook author to believe that non-Slovaks in the region, foreign officials, or the international community generally would

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<sup>248</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 112.

look to these textbooks to formulate their policies; rather the texts are meant to arm Slovak youth for the ideological battle over land rights, hammering into the minds of the readers through repetition and a tone of insistence the message that “Slovakia belongs to the Slovaks.” They prepare students to respond to possible counter-arguments and simultaneously nip in the bud any thoughts that the critical reader might introduce to the classroom discussion, such as “Didn’t the text state that the Romans and Avars were here before the Slovaks?” “Didn’t Germans establish the cities here?” or “This territory has belonged historically to the Hungarian Kingdom.”

The strategy that the textbooks adopt in anticipation of these kinds of rebuttals is: first, to acknowledge that “Slovakia” was inhabited prior to the arrival of the pre-Slovak Slavs but that these earlier groups migrated out of the region, rendering Slovaks the only “original” people remaining in the area; second, arguing that all other non-Slovak ethnic groups inhabiting Slovakia today arrived *after* the Slovaks; third, to exhibit Slovak sufferings under the governance of “foreign rulers” and to use this history of martyrdom as evidence of Slovaks’ fidelity to the land. A quintessential example of this argument follows: “All the nations that lived in Slovakia prior to the arrival of Slovaks abandoned this territory moving on, while only Slovaks settled here long-term and resided in this country for more than a thousand years. Because Slovaks lived uninterrupted on this territory for centuries, they have a historic right to this country.”<sup>249</sup> The use of the phrase “historic right” is significant: although Slovaks did not have an internationally recognized kingdom or principality of their own to establish a “historic right” in the usual European sense of the term, the textbooks are creating a rationale for another kind of historic claim

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<sup>249</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 5.

based on the duration and continuity of Slovak settlements on the land in question. The term “abandoned” here is also noteworthy because it contributes to the image described earlier of a marital bond between the land and a people: only the Slovaks are true to the land and thereby have proven their merit of it. Another illustration of this idea appears in a section that describes the Tatar invasions in Central Europe: “even through these calamities the Slovak land never ceased to be the country of Slovaks, who on this territory survived all the storms and never abandoned their country.”<sup>250</sup> This theme of Slovaks’ proven fidelity is not confined to one section of the narrative but spans the description of domestic history from the end of the fall of Great Moravia till the present, in which the 1939 establishment of the Slovak Republic becomes the pinnacle of progress and the fulfillment of an ethnic national fate.

*Inheritance of the Land: Cultivation and the Promise of Freedom*

According to the textbooks, Slovak ancestors secured the land for their descendants not only by being the earliest continuous settlers of the region but also by virtue of hard work and cultivation of the land. In a unit detailing how Slovak serfs built castles throughout the region for the Hungarian nobility, an ink drawing depicts a landscape with castle ruins in the background and a farmer walking behind a team of oxen plowing the land in the foreground. The caption reads: “The walls of the proud castle are falling apart, but the Slovak peasant contentedly cultivates the land of his ancestors.”<sup>251</sup> In this imagery, the castle stands as a symbol of foreign kingdoms, which

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<sup>250</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 35.

<sup>251</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 50.

eventually fall into ruin, but the land and the Slovaks are eternal. Another text echoes this idea that through cultivation the Slovak ancestors laid claim to the land for their descendents: “Slovaks for long centuries cultivated the soil of their forefathers so that on this piece of earth under the Tatras they would secure their future.”<sup>252</sup>

The two textbooks for younger students liken the relationship of the land across generations of Slovaks to a family inheritance. In a section entitled “Inheritance of our Fathers” the narration shifts from descriptions of the past to an analogy directed at contemporary student readers: “When parents die, all of their property, which they earned through their hard work, is passed on as an inheritance to their children. Good children know how to value this inheritance.”<sup>253</sup> The text transforms into a moral imperative with this last phrase, dictating what “good children” know. This statement is directly followed with an emotive statement: “Woe to him who recklessly spends the property of his parents!”<sup>254</sup> In case the young student reader has not grasped the implied analogy yet, the text states outright the parallel between familial and national inheritance: “This kind of precious property was inherited by the Slovak nation from its famous ancestors.”<sup>255</sup>

Surprisingly, embedded in this primordial narrative that quintessentially links ancestral lineage, work, and entitlement to the land is a theme of freedom. Although more commonly associated with civic democratic nationalism, freedom is not incongruous to the totalitarian politics of World War II Slovakia. It is not individual freedom that concerns these textbooks, rather freedom of the Slovak nation, conceived as a

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<sup>252</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 159. For additional references to work and Slovak rights to the land see also Hrušovský 1940a, 196, 208.

<sup>253</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 11.

<sup>254</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 11.

<sup>255</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 11-12.

homogeneous, single-minded entity: “The Slovak nation, which on this land between the Danube and the Tatras for the span of centuries lived, worked, fought, suffered, and died for others, deserves to live as a free nation in a free land and work only for its own gain.”<sup>256</sup> First, the list of strong verbs “lived, worked, fought, suffered, and died” contributes to the insistent tone in this statement. Second, the word “deserves” captures the moral directive of the statement. And third, the simultaneously poetic and politically symbolical phrases “between the Danube and the Tatras” and “span of centuries” reverberate the primordial theme of early and continuous settlement in this geographical space delineated by a river and mountains rather than by capricious boundaries established under, from the Slovak nationalist perspective, inauthentic antecedent regimes. Lastly, in this quote, the repetition of “free” to modify both the “nation” and “land” underlines the presupposed common fate of these two entities.

Tellingly, in some of the excerpts that stress the idea of land as an inheritance of the nation, the voice of the narrative switches to using the second person plural, speaking directly to the student readers. In one example, the narrator speaks endearingly to the readers, referring to them as “dear” and “loyal,” ingratiating the students to the text and making them pliant to its moral message: “You, dear pupils, as small and loyal Slovaks, you should never forget that your fathers and forefathers lived in this country as serfs and nevertheless they did not abandon this land and cultivated it because they believed that one day the time would come when you would live here as children of a free Slovak nation.”<sup>257</sup> The moral lesson here is that good Slovak children “should never forget” the

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<sup>256</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 208. See also Hrušovský 1940a, 167 and Hrušovský 1942, 16 for additional examples.

<sup>257</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 51.

sacrifices of their predecessors. Once again, the words “cultivate” and “abandon” occur in the context of justifying the ancestral rights to the land. The last paragraph of the textbook repeats this sudden shift in voice that moves from either the third person (they) or first person plural (we) to the second person plural (you), accentuated by a larger font than the surrounding text and an exclamation point: “Dear Slovak children!”<sup>258</sup> In a hortative tone, the narrator proceeds with: “In Slovak school you learned about the past of our nation and about the history of your Slovak fathers. You learned about all that the Slovak nation had to survive on this sanctified Slovak land. These were our fathers and forefathers! Your Slovak ancestors worked on this here land, fought for it and suffered for it so that it could become your free country.”<sup>259</sup> The themes are by now familiar: the students are assumed to all identify as purely ethnic Slovaks; the land is sacred; ancestors—identified only as male—cultivated and thereby secured this land for future generations of Slovaks; and the suffering of past is redeemed by the reward of national freedom. The final words of the textbook are: “Na stráž!”—a common greeting and farewell of this wartime period in Slovakia, which literally means “On guard!” Ending with this phrase solidifies the intent and utility of instilling in children a national and ancestral affinity with the land; it is these students whom, as potential soldiers, the government may someday call upon to defend the political borders of Slovakia.

### **Conclusions**

Perhaps the most potent analogy for conveying the interconnectedness of nation and land is that of the bodies: the Slovak people bleed and sweat for the land, and the

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<sup>258</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 90.

<sup>259</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 90.



land bleeds for its people when non-Slovak governments wrest it from the Slovak nation. “Slovaks even after the demise of the first Slovak state remained in this country, tilled the soil and sprinkled the land with their progeny and even with their blood in order to preserve the land for their offspring.”<sup>260</sup> Comparable to earlier imagery that depicts the land and its people intermingling through the burial of ancestral bones in the soil, here blood and progeny are sprinkled on the land, evoking Catholic imagery of holy water spraying congregants with its blessing. The action of “tilling the soil” also reminds the reader of the textbooks’ frequent argument that a history of hard work—particularly farming the land—validates Slovaks’ claims to the territory. Another textbook for basic school children comments that because Slovakia is a “beautiful and rich” land, “Our ancestors...had to therefore frequently fight against different enemies. However our ancestors loved this country so much that they would rather fall in battle, pour out their blood on the earth, suffer many treacheries, but not abandon their country.”<sup>261</sup> The consecration of the land with the blood of the people is a common motif in many nationalist narratives; nonetheless, in this time of war the imperative to act in “love of country,” as evoked in this passage, is particularly salient, preparing the Slovak youth to take on the potential sacrifices of their near future.

The anthropomorphic treatment of the land as a living body brings to the contemporary scenario of Hungarian and Polish secessions added emotive potency. The upper-level history textbook from this era explains that Slovakia joined military forces with Germany to attack Poland in 1939 with the result that “the Slovak villages that had been torn away” from Slovakia through Polish incursions in 1938 “were returned to the

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<sup>260</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 12.

<sup>261</sup> Hrušovský 1939, 57.

free Slovak state. The bloody wound in the north was healed and in every Slovak heart it strengthened the hope that in a similar way the other wound on the body of the Slovak country would also be healed.”<sup>262</sup> The “other wound” here is an oblique reference to the regions of interwar Slovakia that the *First Vienna Award* granted to Hungary.

In conclusion, the land is a central actor and object in the ethnic national story told in World War II textbooks in Slovakia. Through all periods of the triptych from origin myth, to the proclaimed golden age of the first Slovak state in the time of the Great Moravian Empire, to centuries of foreign rule and invasions, and, finally, to the rebirth of the free Slovak Republic, the textbooks from this era maintain the centrality of the land to Slovak national identity. The beginning of the Slovak nation is marked by its arrival on “Slovak” land after emigrating from an undefined Pan-Slavic motherland. Geographical features, in particular the Tatra Mountains and the Danube River, become synonymous with the Slovak nation. The land is depicted as a protector of the Slovak people, sheltering them in its valleys and mountains in times of “foreign” invasions. At other times, the countryside is analogous to a traditional bride, beloved and beguiling in her beauty and fertility, and to which the Slovak people are faithful. Territory is requisite for state formation, and thus the land is of political as well as symbolic import. The history textbooks repeatedly return to the argument that Slovakia belongs to the Slovak people, constructing a story of uninterrupted and primal settlement on the territory. Ultimately, the land and the people are inextricably intertwined in the narratives through images of the body. The sweat and blood from the work and battles of the Slovak people seeps into the land, and the land itself suffers “bloody wounds” when it is made unwhole by

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<sup>262</sup> Hrušovský 1940a, 207.

neighboring powers such as Hungary and Poland who occupy borderland regions, severing them from the Slovak body. Of the time periods under study, it is in this World War II era that the primordial ties to the land are most prevalent in the articulations of national belonging in the history textbooks.

## CHAPTER IV

### Revising “the Nation” as “the Working-Class,” 1948-1989

Each Communist Party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these principles if it is to remain a Communist party.

—Leonid Brezhnev, August 3, 1968<sup>263</sup>

Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, made the above statement as on a visit to Bratislava in 1968. His speech, which outlined what became known as the “Brezhnev Doctrine,” was a direct warning to the Czechoslovak party head Alexander Dubček in essence telling him that his liberalizing reforms, which included lifting state censorship and a promise to gradually incorporate other political parties into the governing system, had to end. Dubček famously declared his reforms were part of an effort to create “socialism with a human face”—an image that contrasted sharply with the appearance of socialism at that time as a system dominated by an anonymous, hegemonic state.

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<sup>263</sup> Brezhnev made this statement in Bratislava at the Warsaw Pact convention shortly before the invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 22, 1968. See: “Document No. 128: Unofficial Enunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, September 26, 1968 (Excerpts).” In Jaromír Navrátil. *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Document Reader* National Security Archive Cold War Readers (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 502.

This tension between a distinct national interpretation of Communism and the desire of the Soviet leadership to maintain control over its satellite states exemplifies a persistent theme of the post-World War II era in Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, Joseph Stalin himself seemed to recognize that after World War II appeals to national histories and traditions could be used to effectively spread Communism. In his 1946 discussions with leaders of the British Labor Party, for example, Stalin described the existence of various “national roads” to socialism, an idea that Klement Gottwald, who was Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Party and became the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia after 1946, adopted in his own rhetoric.<sup>264</sup> As Gottwald described it, the unique “Czechoslovak road” to Communism would be a “national and democratic revolution” rather than a replica of the “socialist” October 1917 Revolution in Russia.<sup>265</sup>

At play in Czechoslovakia, and in the Soviet bloc more generally, were two conflicting strategies for the realization of Communism. First, state leaders recognized the utility of remaking the narratives and rhetoric of the national past to foster the growth of Communism in their country. Second, Communist politicians and ideologues simultaneously were pressed to uphold the ideals of Marxism-Leninism which were frequently in conflict with national notions of belonging. For example, the Communist goal of building a united, international proletariat movement often clashed with expressions of exclusive ethnic national divisions. Precisely because the past national narratives of Czechs, Slovaks, and “Czechoslovaks” were for the most part ethnically exclusive, they were often in conflict with the internationalist vision.

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<sup>264</sup> Bradley F. Abrams. *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: Lanham, Maryland. 2004. 181-182.

<sup>265</sup> Abrams 2004, 181.

At the same time, Soviet leaders sought to maintain control over the Communist satellite states. The Soviet Union had the political status and the military power to force its hand on smaller Communist states such as Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in August 1968. While highly effective at crushing resistance in the short-term, Communist leaders feared that such military interventions would also increase national and international resentment and inspire opposition over the long-term. Therefore, these leaders positioned themselves not only as the military authority over the other states in the Soviet bloc, but also as the purveyors of the “true” interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. In other words, they attempted to legitimate its power over the Eastern bloc countries in part by deploying and revising narratives of Communist ideology to suit its leadership policies in ways similar to how earlier agents of Czechoslovak and Slovak nation-states tailored old national narratives in school textbooks to support their new regimes.

Aware of the rise of the Soviet Union as a world power, the small, militarily vulnerable Czechoslovak state looked to Moscow for protection after World War II. The Munich Accords in 1938 had left many Czechs and Slovaks disillusioned with the West. As historian Bradley Abrams observes, Czechoslovakia had been the only Central European democracy before World War II and the failure of Western democracies to act on Czechoslovakia’s behalf at Munich made the Western powers appear, “at best, weak and fearful in the face of the Nazi threat or, at worst, like imperfectly self-interested collaborators with Hitler. In either case, their trustworthiness as allies and guarantors of Eastern European independence had been mortally wounded by the diplomacy of the

1930s.”<sup>266</sup> In addition, the fact that the Soviet Red Army had liberated most of the Czech lands and Slovakia from Nazi occupation made evident for many Czechoslovak citizens the choice of the Soviet Union as a reliable future ally.<sup>267</sup>

The textbook analyses in this chapter suggest once again that civic education and national historiography in schooling are informed not only by the political ideology of the regime, but also by the historical situatedness of political transitions. School texts in this period reflect the reality of the Soviet Union as a world power by portraying it as the unshakeable ally of the Czech and Slovak people. They also attest to other aspects of the postwar context, such as the stronger position of Slovaks in the new Czechoslovakia relative to the interwar period, and the diminution of ethnic minorities due to the Holocaust and the forced emigration of ethnic Germans and Hungarians from Czechoslovak territory throughout 1945. Also noteworthy is how the narratives for history and civics attempt to build an ideological bridge between the national identities of the past and the international working-class identity of Communism, which was to be devoid of “bourgeois nationalism.”

As with previous chapters, I begin by providing an overview of major historical events in Czechoslovakia in this period to contextualize the textbook narratives.

Furthermore, I review aspects of school structure during the Communist era. The

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<sup>266</sup> Abrams, 2004, 25.

<sup>267</sup> However, the US army did liberate sections of Western Bohemia, a fact that many Czechs continued to commemorate secretly during Communist rule. I was shown well-thumbed photos of Czechs with their US liberators in 1992 when I visited the towns of Plzeň, Klatovy, and Sušice. One Czech man remarked to me while pointing at a photo, “See, some of the soldiers were black. We knew they couldn’t be Russian. And we even kept one of the US army vehicles in a barn outside of town as proof that what the Communists were telling us, that the Russians liberated the whole country, was a lie.” Field notes, Sušice: May, 1992.

remaining sections of the chapter focus on the textbook narratives as they relate to the continuity and change in themes seen in earlier chapters: namely, primordial nationalism, cultural constructions of belonging, and civic nationalism in the Communist state.

### **Historical Background**

By 1944, Jozef Tiso's control of the Slovak state was unraveling. In December 1943, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London had established contact with dissidents in the Slovak army and members of the underground Slovak Communist Party to coordinate efforts to undermine Tiso's government.<sup>268</sup> These parties formed the Slovak National Council [Slovenská národná rada or SNR] and signed a treaty declaring their intention to re-establish the Czechoslovak state with Edvard Beneš, the Czechoslovak president in exile, as its leader after the war.

In March 1944 the SNR handed over preparations for a Slovak uprising to Ján Golian, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Slovak army. The timing for an uprising coalesced by late summer when Soviet troops neared the Slovak border with Poland. On August 27<sup>th</sup> in the Central Slovak town of Martin, Communist partisans under Soviet directives successfully assassinated 30 Nazi officers, spurring the Germans—with Tiso's acquiescence—to occupy the country. On the evening of August 29<sup>th</sup>, Slovakia's defense minister declared on state radio that the country was under Nazi occupation, and Golian ordered his partisans to begin what became known as the Slovak National Uprising [Slovenské národné povstanie or SNP]. Despite Golian's valiant efforts at coordinating the differing priorities and loyalties among the various anti-Nazi factions that participated

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<sup>268</sup> Dušan Halaj and Dezider Tóth, eds. *Nezodpovedané otázky: K spochybňovaniu odboja a SNP v našich národných dejinách: Materiály zo seminára s medzinárodnou účasťou, Banská Bystrica, Múzeum SNP 24.-25. septembra 1996* (Bratislava: Peter Juriga, 1996).



in the uprising—including Slovak partisans, Slovak defectors from Tiso’s army, communist partisans from a range of nationalities, Czechoslovak democrats, and others—missteps in the military operations eventually led to the failure of the uprising by late October. Nazi retributions were characteristically fierce: over 90 Slovak villages were destroyed and an estimated 5, 300 Slovaks executed under suspicion of collaboration in the uprising. Golian was also eventually captured and executed in November.<sup>269</sup>

Despite the shortfalls of the SNP, the end of Hitler’s Third Reich—and with it Tiso’s Slovak state—was only months away. Between December 1944 and April 1945, the Red Army wrested all of Slovakia from Nazi control. Tiso fled Slovakia, but was captured, tried and found guilty of treason on April 15, 1947 by the National Court in Prague in the re-established Czechoslovak state. Three days later Tiso was hanged, an act that renewed the tensions between the Prague-based Czechoslovak government and Slovak nationalists.<sup>270</sup> Tiso was buried at an undisclosed location in an attempt to keep Slovak nationalists from creating a shrine at the former leader’s gravesite.

On April 5, 1945, the day after the Soviet army liberated Bratislava, the temporary Czechoslovak National Front government under the leadership of Beneš met in Košice—a city of symbolic import because it had been part of Slovak territory in the interwar period but reverted to Hungarian control at the beginning of World War II, and now was returned to the Czechoslovak state. The decisions made at this meeting, recorded as the “Košice Governing Program,” would have a decisive impact on the state’s Communist future. First, the government in Košice determined that universal

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<sup>269</sup> Zoltán Katreba. “‘Skrytá’ mobilizácia na Slovensku v roku 1941.” *Vojenská história*, 4(2000): 3-4, 87-100.

<sup>270</sup> James Ramon Felak. “The Democratic Party and the Execution of Jozef Tiso” *Slovakia*, 38 (2005): 33-51.

elections would take place in 1946. However, only the left-wing political parties that were already members of the National Front would be permitted to participate in the elections. The provisional government justified banning other parties from the future elections because of a blanket association of “right-wing” with Nazis and their collaborators such as Tiso.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, in addition to ethnic nationalist and fascist parties, non-radical political players such as the Agrarian Party were also banned as being too far to the right in the political spectrum. As Derek Sayer points out, “parties made illegal after the war had between them received over half the votes in the last prewar national election of 1935.”<sup>272</sup> In other words, the Košice program guaranteed the election of a left-wing government in Czechoslovakia in 1946 to the exclusion of other, mainstream political alternatives. In Bohemia and Moravia, the parties that were allowed to run in the 1946 elections consisted of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [Komunistická strana Československa or KSČ], the Social Democrats, the National Socialists (a party pre-dating Nazism with no relation to Hitler’s party), and the People’s Party. Meanwhile, in Slovakia, there would be only two choices: the Communist Party of Slovakia [Komunistická strana Slovenska or KSS] and the Democratic Party.<sup>273</sup> Second, the Košice program assigned 25 officials to an interim government leading up to the 1946 elections. Among those designated were 8 Communists, two times more positions than the next highest placed party. In addition, the Communists received several prized ministries including those of the interior, education, and information, and two deputy

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<sup>271</sup> Pavel Mates. “K procesu retribuice v Československu v letech 1945-1947.” *Historický časopis*, 31 (1983): 1, 62-84.

<sup>272</sup> Derek Sayer. *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. 1998), 239.

<sup>273</sup> Sayer 1998, 239.

prime ministers.<sup>274</sup> Third, the Košice program publicly declared a new international orientation for Czechoslovakia toward the Soviet Union—and thus, implicitly away from the West. Fourth, it also appeased Slovak politicians by acknowledging Slovakia as a “sovereign nation” distinct from the Czech nation; however, these promises of Slovak autonomy would soon fade, only to resurface again in the late 1960s.

When May 1946 arrived, the Communists won a substantial victory in the Czech lands, gaining over 40% of the vote; however, in Slovakia, where only two parties competed, the Communists came in second gaining a mere 30% of the Slovak vote while the Democrats won 62%. Clearly, a political divide existed once again between Czechs and Slovaks. For many ethnic Slovaks, Tiso’s fascist government had not created conditions that drove them toward the Communist left. Nonetheless, because Slovaks were outnumbered nearly two to one in the state by Czechs, the Communists came out with over 38% of the national vote, which was a clear plurality.<sup>275</sup>

The left-wing orientation of the National Front government in Košice alone does not explain the Communists’ success in the 1946 elections. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, resentment over Munich led them to distrust the West. Simultaneously, in light of Munich, Czechoslovakia recognized its vulnerability as a small nation-state and its need for a powerful guardian in the international sphere. Turning eastward toward the Soviet Union presented an obvious alternative to the West for several reasons. First, the USSR had liberated most of Czechoslovakia and, therefore, was already in a position of heroic status. Second, as the cradle of Communism, the

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<sup>274</sup> Sayer 1998, 238.

<sup>275</sup> For the vote counts and other information on the 1946 elections, see Sayer 1998, 246 or Tony Judt. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press. 2005) 138.

USSR was perceived by many as the antithesis to the Nazis and the other extreme right-wing regimes of the Axis powers and their collaborators. Communists were disproportionately represented in the underground resistance in most of Eastern Europe, with the exception of in Poland.<sup>276</sup> In Slovakia during World War II, an estimated 3,000 political prisoners were arrested and more than half of them were Communist.<sup>277</sup> Third, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated, the national narratives of belonging for “Czechoslovaks” and Slovaks were built in part around a legend of pan-Slavic brotherhood and common primordial origins. In this way, turning to Russia could easily be contrived as returning to Slavic origins.

Another notable factor in the appeal of Communism in Czechoslovakia as a whole may be attributed to its demographics. Bradley Abrams convincingly argues that the population of the Czechoslovak state in the immediate postwar period was unusually young due to the devastation of older generations in the First World and Second World Wars. He observes that:

The generation of the post-World War I baby boom would have only scanty recollection of the measure of prosperity that emerged in the region in the 1920s. They would, however, have a living memory of the tribulations of the Great Depression. Similarly, they would have missed the relatively benign political climate of the first half of the 1920s, while having clear memories of the increasingly authoritarian dictatorships of the 1930s. Further, although generally too young to serve in the military in the late 1930s, they were disproportionately involved in the resistance movements of the region, ones which in many cases had a strong admixture of Communists.<sup>278</sup>

In short, the life cycle of this post-World War I generation of Czechs and Slovaks would have versed them in the crises of capitalism and the failures of interwar democracy, and

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<sup>276</sup> Abrams 2004, 35.

<sup>277</sup> Abrams 2004, 34.

<sup>278</sup> Abrams 2004, 33.

contrastingly inclined them toward the heroic stance of Communist resistance during World War II.

Yet another advantage for the Communist party in Czechoslovakia was their relative proximity along the political spectrum to the other left-oriented parties that were permitted in the 1946 elections. The other parties had difficulty defining their political programs as anything but adulterated versions of the Communist agenda. Meanwhile, in the euphoria of the postwar era, the public did not demand from the Communists any detailed program; rather, rhetoric of change and the Communists' decisive distance from any Central European regimes in the past served to increase their popular support. The Communists in Czechoslovakia claimed approximately 50,000 members by the time Prague was liberated in May 1945. However, less than a year later, 1.2 million citizens had entered the Communist Party—an estimated 10% of the total country's population.<sup>279</sup>

Another factor contributing to the popularity of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia was that the Czechoslovak Communists towed a relatively moderate political line in the immediate postwar period. For example, in the first year after liberation, Communists refrained from denouncing religion and even upheld the ideal of religious freedom in the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party in 1946.<sup>280</sup> Klement Gottwald, who in 1946 became the Czechoslovak prime minister, reassured the public that “the Czechoslovak road to socialism” would deviate from the Russian Revolution and follow instead a “national and democratic” course.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Judt 2005, 138

<sup>280</sup> Abrams 2004, 196.

<sup>281</sup> Abrams 2004, 181.

What Gottwald and other politicians at this time seemed to mean by “national” was an ethnically exclusive path for the country. The Holocaust had already devastated the Czech and Slovak Jewish populations. Roma, who were frequently unnamed in official records, were nonetheless a population that the Nazis also had specifically targeted for genocide. Along with the Jews, the Nazi racial ideology placed Roma and Jews together in the lowest category of humans.<sup>282</sup> An estimated 70,000 Jews and 20,000 Roma from Slovak territory were killed during the Holocaust.<sup>283</sup>

Regardless of the devastation to the ethnic diversity of the region, post-war Czechoslovak politicians were still clamoring for an even more homogenous society. On May 17, 1945 in downtown Prague, Prokop Drtina, the head of the National Socialist Party, proclaimed in a speech to his party: “Our new republic cannot be built as anything other than a purely national state, a state of only Czechs and Slovaks and of nobody other than Czechs and Slovaks!”<sup>284</sup> Echoing the primordial land narratives described in Chapter 3—land as fertile and desired, land as body—Drtina continued: “although our land is beautiful, fecund, rich, it is small and there is no room in it for anybody other than us... The Germans were always a foreign ulcer in our body.”<sup>285</sup> Similarly, President Beneš, in a public speech also given in Prague just a day prior to Drtina, remarked: “It will be necessary... to liquidate out [vylikvidovat] especially uncompromisingly the

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<sup>282</sup> Angus M. Fraser. *The Gypsies* (London, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992). 256-269.

<sup>283</sup> For a thorough account of anti-Semitic policies and collaboration with the Nazis in the deportation of Jews from Slovakia under Tiso’s regime, see Ward, James Mace. 2008. *No Saint: Jozef Tiso, 1887-1947*. Thesis (PhD) Stanford University, 2008. For estimates and discussions on the number of Roma who perished in the Holocaust by country see: Barany, Zoltan D. *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>284</sup> Quoted in Sayer 1998, 240.

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in Sayer 1998, 240.

Germans in the Czech lands and the Hungarians in Slovakia, in whatever way this liquidation can further the interest of a united state of Czechs and Slovaks.”<sup>286</sup>

Rather than balk at phrases such as “liquidation” and “purely national” that recalled the horrors of the Holocaust, Czechoslovak politicians of all backgrounds scrambled to ride the popular wave of ethnic hate aimed against Germans and Hungarians. As Derek Sayer eloquently writes: “With an eye to the upcoming elections, the National Front parties outbid one another in vengeful Czech patriotism. Their support for a permanent solution to ‘the German problem’ was loud and unanimous.”<sup>287</sup> The pre-World War I era—when “ethnicity” and “nationality” held little meaning for most Central Europeans—was a bygone time of nearly unimaginable fancy. In the span of a mere three decades, nation-state builders had constructed national communities of us and them, defined by images of tribal blood ties and primordial origins, by language, religion, common values, and art, and by political ideology. Under the Nazis fabricated ethnic divisions were “scientifically” measured through skin color and facial features and extrapolated to horridly infer human worth and, thereby, who should thrive and who should languish in labor and death camps. Indeed, ethnicity now mattered in Central Europe, and Czechs and Slovaks seemed eager to play the ethnic card against the Germans and Hungarians. Nazi crimes and occupation and Hungary’s annexation of territory from interwar Slovakia fed Czech and Slovak willingness to make blanket assumptions of collective guilt based on ethnicity: by default, Germans and Hungarians were equated with traitors and collaborators.

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<sup>286</sup> Quoted in Sayer 1998, 241.

<sup>287</sup> Sayer 1998, 242.

At the Košice program in May 1945, the National Front coalition headed by President Beneš passed the first of a series of laws that confiscated the property and land of Hungarians and Germans living in the Czechoslovak state and forced them out of the country in so-called “population transfers.” The property of these Germans and Hungarians—whose families had often lived for generations on that territory but who were nonetheless considered “foreign elements”—reverted to the Czechoslovak state, and some of these holdings were then redistributed to ethnic Czechs and Slovaks. In addition to confiscating their land, housing, and movables, these laws, which collectively became known as the *Beneš Decrees*, revoked the Czechoslovak citizenship of Germans and Hungarians, closed schools, universities, and professional schools associated with these communities, and legalized the wholesale expulsion of these populations.<sup>288</sup> In December 1946, the Czechoslovak foreign minister Jan Masaryk, son of former president Tomáš Masaryk, announced that 2,256,000 Germans had been deported from the state.<sup>289</sup> The expulsions in Slovakia appear to have been considerably less acute than in the Czech lands. In the 1930 Czechoslovak census, 17.6% of the population declared Hungarian nationality and the majority of this population lived in Slovakia; by 1946, this number had decreased to 10.3%.<sup>290</sup> Of course, some of this decline could be attributed not only to the post-war expulsions but to a political climate in which individuals who may have identified privately as Hungarians deemed it wise not to choose a different nationality for the state census. Meanwhile, approximately 2 million Czechs and Slovaks were resettled

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<sup>288</sup> Sayer 1998, 240-243.

<sup>289</sup> Sayer 1998, 243.

<sup>290</sup> Sayer 1998, 243.



in these “newly recovered territories,” in an effort to render the ethnically defined nation contiguous with its state borders.<sup>291</sup>

The nationalization of property in the post-World War II Czechoslovak state involved not only the confiscated land of ethnic Hungarians and Germans. Jewish property and industries that the Nazis had expropriated during the war were also declared “enemy assets” by the Czechoslovak government and nationalized.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, industrial owners in general suffered during the post-World War II nationalization reforms regardless of their ethnicity or their political leanings during the war. As Sayer concisely states: “A simple equation [was] drawn between social class and national treachery; the bourgeoisie was, so to speak, ‘Germanized’ as a class.”<sup>293</sup> In other words, post-World War II Czechoslovak politicians drew on the association of Germans and Jews as industrial owners and Hungarians as large landholders to oust more broadly all upper- and middle-classes from the national community. By erasing the distinction between ethnicity and class—that is, by confounding non-Slavic ethnicity with the bourgeoisie and aristocracy—the Czech and Slovak nations were rhetorically made into national communities of the working class. Notably, the ethnically exclusive narratives of the national past required only a slight shift in the emphasis of their exclusion to suit the Communist-leaning ideology of the National Front coalition. The Communist-dominated government used this shift in the conceptualization of the nation to limit private

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<sup>291</sup> Abrams estimates that almost 2 million Czechs and Slovaks were resettled in the homes and on the land of the expelled Germans and Hungarians (Abrams 2004, 16). The erasure of ethnic diversity was also realized through renaming communities in the state. Sayer observes that a directory documenting the settlements that were either renamed or absorbed into other jurisdictions between 1945 and 1964 spans 102 pages, and the largest category of changes is for German names converted into Czech (Sayer 1998, 248).

<sup>292</sup> Abrams 2004, 20.

<sup>293</sup> Sayer 1998, 245.

landholdings to 50 hectares in 1947 and legitimate its confiscation of an estimated 11,500 square miles of land in the immediate post-World War II period, which helped pave the way “for a land reform that severely weakened the rural bourgeoisie and destroyed the aristocracy, further enhancing the social power of the left.”<sup>294</sup> Once again, the national narratives of the past were revised to legitimate a new regime.

In addition to this “national”—or more specifically ethnic national—aspect of the “Czechoslovak road to socialism,” politicians promised that what would set the Czechoslovak course apart from the Russian Revolution would be its democratic character.<sup>295</sup> After the 1946 national elections in which the KSČ won a clear victory against the other left-leaning parties that had been permitted to run, the Communist leaders assured the public that they planned to gain 51% of the popular vote in the 1948 national elections. Thereby, the KSČ deflected concerns that it would wrest control of the state by violent means and portrayed itself as carrying the torch of democracy from the First Czechoslovak Republic into the post-World War II era. In other words, “the Communist Party’s policy of pursuing a calm, evolutionary road allowed it to cast itself as the defender of freedom and democracy”—values that created a rhetorical continuity between the interwar past and the present.<sup>296</sup>

However, by the middle of 1947, the KSČ, which headed the Ministries of Interior and Information, was strategically purging non-Communists from the police

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<sup>294</sup> Abrams 2004, 21.

<sup>295</sup> As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and later in this chapter, ethnically exclusive nationalism and democracy were not contradictory in Czechoslovak and Slovak formulations of the concepts. Democracy’s promise of minority rights was understood as defending the collective rights of the small, ethnically defined Czechoslovak or Slovak nation to pursue self-determination.

<sup>296</sup> Abrams 2004, 196.

force and transforming state media into a vehicle of Communist propaganda. Once again, international events had a decisive impact on domestic politics in the country. The influence the Marshall Plan was having on winning political support for the US and the ousting of Communist ministers from the governments of France and Italy in May 1947 revealed to Stalin the tenuous position of his influence in Europe.<sup>297</sup> Whereas Stalin had tacitly permitted Czechoslovakia and Western Communists to pursue “national roads to socialism” up to this point, he now made clear that national interests were to be subordinate to Soviet concerns. In July 1947, the Czechoslovak government received an invitation from the US and unanimously agreed to participate in the American program. Stalin, fearful of losing power over Czechoslovakia, contacted Gottwald and convinced him to rescind Czechoslovak involvement with the Marshall Plan. In September 1947, Stalin convened the Communist parties of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, and Czechoslovakia to the first Cominform meeting. As historian Tony Judt explains, Cominform was “the Communist Information Bureau: a successor to the Communist International whose task would be to ‘coordinate’ international Communist activity and improve communication between Moscow and the satellite parties. But the real goal of both the meeting and Cominform (which only ever met three times and was disbanded in 1956) was to re-establish Soviet dominion within the international movement.”<sup>298</sup> Rudolf Slánský as Secretary General of KSC̣ was the Czechoslovak representative to the meeting and conveyed to his party this new hard-line, Moscow-centered approach that would ironically soon contrive his downfall.

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<sup>297</sup> Judt 2005, 143.

<sup>298</sup> Judt 2005, 143.

Meanwhile in Czechoslovakia, the Communists appeared to be losing public favor due to talk of collectivization, which upset many citizens in the agricultural sector, encroachments on the freedom of the press, political infiltration of the police force, and demands on workers to increase output and the length of shifts.<sup>299</sup> As the February 1948 national elections drew near, tensions between the Communists and the opposition intensified. Despite the left-oriented character of all political parties in the government, the KSČ strategically labeled its political opposition “reactionary,” accusing opponents of wanting to create a “new Munich.”<sup>300</sup> The National Socialist ministers in the cabinet reacted publicly in mid-February by demanding that the communist Minister of Interior Václav Nosek reinstate the non-communists who had in recent months been removed from the police force. They also called for an end to abuses of the country’s security forces, which had been used to quash dissenters of the KSČ. Gottwald repeatedly evaded these complaints, spurring all of the non-communist ministers to resign from the cabinet in protest. The dissident ministers apparently hoped President Beneš would reject their resignations and declare early elections, but they failed to communicate these plans to him.<sup>301</sup> KSČ was quick to deploy security forces to subvert dissent and also called on trade unions and other groups to show their support for the KSČ publicly in street demonstrations.<sup>302</sup> The Soviet ambassador to Prague Valerian Zorin with instructions from Moscow allegedly helped coordinate a coup and noted to Gottwald that the Red

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<sup>299</sup> Arnold A. Offner. *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 133.

<sup>300</sup> Abrams 2004, 196.

<sup>301</sup> Sayer, 1998, 248.

<sup>302</sup> Allen Hunter. *Rethinking the Cold War* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998).

Army was prepared to assist if necessary.<sup>303</sup> Fearing Soviet intervention and domestic upheaval, Beneš accepted on February 25 the resignations of the dissenting ministers and replaced them with communists in line with Gottwald's directives. Jan Masaryk, the foreign minister and son of the former president Tomáš Masaryk, was the only non-communist left in high office after the coup, but was found dead in the courtyard of his house two weeks later of apparent suicide.<sup>304</sup> Communist historiography would subsequently refer to this coup d'état as "Victorious February."

*The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the Stalinist Era, 1948-1962*

Soon after the Communist takeover, the Czechoslovak government ratified a new constitution, which President Beneš refused to sign. He resigned in June 1948, and the National Council named Klement Gottwald President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Despite the immediate postwar promises of a democratic path to socialism, repression and fear marked the early period of communism in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

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<sup>303</sup> John Ashley Soames Grenville. *A History of the World from the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge. 2005), 370-371.

<sup>304</sup> The circumstances of Jan Masaryk's death continue to stir considerable controversy. However, regardless of whether Masaryk was murdered or committed suicide, his death came to symbolize for anti-Communists and proponents of Tomáš Masaryk's First Czechoslovak Republic the assassination of a nation that was only reborn after 1989. For those who believed his death was a murder, the younger Masaryk's demise by defenestration echoed other legendary incidents in the national Czech history. In 1419 a Hussite leaders incited a mob to throw several councilmen from a window of the town hall on Charles Square in Prague. Nearly two centuries later in 1618, Protestant Bohemian aristocrats defenestrated two Catholic Habsburg governors and their scribe from a window of Prague Castle. In addition to the resonance of defenestration in this region's history, Jan Masaryk's death also captured the bloodline ideology of primordial nationalism, by which the elder Masaryk was the nation's founding father, and with the son's death, the nation passed away only to be reborn after the fall of Communism.

The 1948 split between Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito had repercussions for the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. Tito, who held the offices of the Secretary General of the Yugoslav Communist Party (1939-1980), prime minister (1945-53), and president (1953-80), had played a major role in leading partisans in the liberation of Yugoslavia from the Axis powers without the aid of the Red Army. Immediately after World War II, Tito demonstrated his independence from Moscow by engaging in military maneuvers to occupy territory held by Italy, namely on the Istrian Peninsula and the city of Trieste. These territorial incursions led to several armed incidents between Yugoslav and US troops—conflict that Stalin pressured Tito to avoid because the Soviet leader did not wish to provoke war with the Western Allies before the Soviet Union had time to rebuild its military forces. Similarly, Tito openly supported the Greek Communists in the civil war in Greece: a move that Stalin believed was “pursuing a lost cause and likely to provoke an American intervention” because, as Stalin and Winston Churchill had agreed in 1944 and as the Truman Doctrine reiterated in 1947, Greece was considered by the world powers to be in the Western sphere of influence.<sup>305</sup>

Tito also ignored Stalin by developing an economic plan that did not comply with Moscow’s model. In a series of tense exchanges between the two leaders, Tito wrote Stalin: “We study and take as an example the Soviet system, but we are developing socialism in our country in somewhat different forms...No matter how much each of us loves the land of socialism, the USSR, he can in no case love his own country less.”<sup>306</sup> In February 1948, Stalin denounced Tito for his irredentism embodied in his vision of a

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<sup>305</sup> Judt 2005, 141.

<sup>306</sup> Mark Mazower. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. (New York: A.A. Knopf. 1999), 264.

Balkan Federation. In addition, he ended trade negotiations with Yugoslavia and recalled Soviet advisers from Belgrade.<sup>307</sup> The breach between the two states was complete by the second Cominform meeting in June 1948: Tito refused to attend, fearing a Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia in his absence. Meanwhile, the other members signed a resolution banning Yugoslavia from Cominform for its “failure to acknowledge the leading role of the Red Army and the USSR in the country’s liberation and socialist transformation.”<sup>308</sup> With the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia just four months earlier, Stalin was making clear his message that the Soviet Union was to be the unquestionable center of the Communist universe and nationalist deviations in the orbit around Moscow would not be tolerated.

Stalin demanded purges of all so-called Titoists in other Communist European countries, which in Czechoslovakia translated at first as suppression of “bourgeois Slovak nationalism.” Among the Slovak party members purged was future Czechoslovak president Gustáv Husák, a committed Slovak Communist who had been repeatedly jailed for his communist activities during World War II and had served as a leader in the Slovak National Uprising in 1944. Another high-ranking Slovak, Vladimír Clementis, was also arrested. He had joined the Communist movement before World War II, was part of the first post-war Czechoslovak government as vice minister of foreign affairs, and replaced Jan Masaryk as the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister in 1948. After these and other Slovak Communists had been purged, some mid-level Czech Communists were charged with partaking in a Titoist plot.

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<sup>307</sup> Judt 2005, 144.

<sup>308</sup> Judt 2005, 144.

In early 1951, the Soviet secret police took control of the purges, demanding that the crime of the accused be construed as a Zionist conspiracy rather than a Titoist one. This Zionist turn was again common in Stalinist purges in other countries as well. As Judt explains: “Even though Jews had lost more than anyone else, it was easy and familiar to blame those same Jews for everyone else’s sufferings...For Stalin himself it represented a return to familiar territory, his own anti-Jewish instincts underscored by his observation of Hitler’s successful exploitation of popular anti-Semitism.”<sup>309</sup> Among the fourteen accused in the Czechoslovak show trials, only three were not Jewish.<sup>310</sup>

By spring of 1951, none of the arrested Czech and Slovak officials ranked high enough to produce the public spectacle that Stalin exacted.<sup>311</sup> The second highest in command in the Czechoslovak government was Party General Secretary Rudolf Slánský, who was a staunch Stalinist but also Jewish. The Soviets provided President Gottwald with forged documentation of Slánský’s alleged collaboration with the CIA. Slánský and others were jailed in November 1951. The Communist state police [Státní bezpečnost], known colloquially as the StB, gathered confessions from the arrested through physical and psychological torture and scripted the horrendous theatrics of the upcoming show trials. Judt compellingly writes: “Finally, by September 1952, the indictment was completed. The text of the confessions, the indictment, the predetermined sentences and the script of the trial were then sent to Moscow for Stalin’s personal approval. Back in Prague, a ‘dress rehearsal’ of the full trial was conducted—and tape-recorded. This was to provide an alternative text for ‘live transmission’ in the unlikely event that one of the

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<sup>309</sup> Judt 2005, 182.

<sup>310</sup> Sayer 1998, 239.

<sup>311</sup> Judt 2005, 185.



defendants retracted his confession in open court.<sup>312</sup> The trials took place from November 20-27 in 1952, nearly three years after the purges had begun in Czechoslovakia. The trials went as scripted: eleven of the accused were hanged in December 1952 including Slánský and Clementis, while Husák and two others received sentences of life imprisonment.<sup>313</sup>

Despite the recent atrocities of the Holocaust, Czech and Slovak prosecutors and witnesses readily unleashed anti-Semitism in the trials, stressing that Slánský and others were Jewish and thereby likely traitors. An editorial printed on November 23 in the Czech Communist newspaper *Rudé Právo* pitted Jewish nationalism against Czech nationalism, alleging that Czechs could not have committed the crimes of the accused, “only cynical Zionists, without a fatherland...clever cosmopolitans who have sold out to the dollar.”<sup>314</sup> The old stereotypes found in the textbooks from the First Czechoslovak Republic re-emerge here: for example, the idea that Jews are driven by greed and therefore cannot be trusted, and an implied derogatory “cleverness.” Here is a stark example of how civic nationalism was overrun by ethnic nationalism: Jews who met the civic national demands of the Communist state by believing in Communist political doctrine are excluded from the national community because of their ethnicity. Notably, Stalin’s reasons for the purges included reorienting “national” roads to socialism so that all roads led instead to Moscow. Despite this intention, the Slánský trial fit ironically within extant Czechoslovak national narratives of ethnic exclusion in which Slovak

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<sup>312</sup> Judt 2005, 185.

<sup>313</sup> Sayer 1998, 240.

<sup>314</sup> Judt 2005, 186.

nationalism was portrayed as dangerously deviant from the Czech “norm” and old anti-Semitic narratives were revived.

Slánský was replaced as General Secretary of the Communist Party by Antonín Novotný who also held the office of the Czechoslovak president throughout the Stalinist era. By the early 1950s, in a country of approximately 13 million inhabitants, 100,000 Czechoslovaks had become political prisoners and tens of thousands more “disappeared” into prisons and were secretly shot.<sup>315</sup> Strict censorship of the media became the norm. Committees consisting of librarians, KSČ, and local government officials were formed to oversee at the local level the classification, circulation, and removal of material dubbed degenerate by central Communist offices.<sup>316</sup> Religious organizations became targets of explicit persecution; for example, the Catholic Church’s “properties were sequestered, monks and nuns forcibly driven from monasteries and convents and interned in ‘concentration cloisters,’ members of the hierarchy confined and in some instances put on trial.”<sup>317</sup>

Stalin died on March 5, 1953, and his successor Nikita Khrushchev denounced the crimes and cult of Stalin three years later at the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress. However, de-Stalinization was slow to reach Czechoslovakia because the old Stalinist guard remained entrenched in the government and the brutality of the show trials had left a deep scar on public memory.<sup>318</sup> In 1955-57 and then again in 1962-63, the Czechoslovak government set up commissions to supposedly investigate the Slánský

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<sup>315</sup> Judt 2005, 192.

<sup>316</sup> Sayer 1998, 259.

<sup>317</sup> Sayer 1998, 241.

<sup>318</sup> Igor Lukes. “The Rudolf Slansky Affair: New Evidence.” *Slavic Review*. Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), 160-187.

show trials; however, the fundamental purpose of the commissions was “to acknowledge the regime’s recent criminal past without loosening any control of the present.”<sup>319</sup>

Stalinism was over, but its impact continued.

Visually and metaphorically, even in death Stalin continued to oversee Prague until 1962. Beginning in 1952, the world’s largest statue of Stalin was constructed out of 14,000 tons of granite at Letná park, where it loomed over the capital and its inhabitants.<sup>320</sup> The statue depicted Stalin as the dominant figure at the front and lined up behind him with flags and guns were Soviets on one side and Czechs and Slovaks on the other. Locals derisively nicknamed the colossus “the line for meat [fronta na maso],” referencing the long queues in which Prague residents had to stand at the butcher to have a chance at purchasing scarce supplies of meat.<sup>321</sup> Without ceremony, the statue was dynamited in 1962, symbolically harking in a new era.

### *The Stalinist Thaw and Prague Spring*

By 1964, most of the victims of the 1950s show trials who had not been executed were released from prison, and those who had been killed were posthumously rehabilitated. Nonetheless, the Stalinist-era leadership remained in office. As Judt

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<sup>319</sup> Judt 2005, 436.

<sup>320</sup> Sayer 1998, 273.

<sup>321</sup> Sayer 1998, 272. During my years living in Prague, Czechs frequently recalled this nickname for the colossal statue of Stalin and indicated that humor was necessary to put up with “the stare of Stalin” that was visible throughout the city’s center. In 1996 I witnessed a giant inflatable statue located on this same spot: a likeness of the pop star Michael Jackson on his “History” tour. Then in the summer of 2003, before the Czech referendum for European Union membership, the giant metronome that had stood on Stalin’s plinth since 1991 was decorated with “Yes” and “No” signs on either side of the pendulum and the EU flag in the center. For a rich analysis of the multiple layers of symbolism in the topography of monuments in Prague, see Sayer 1998.

summarizes: “Czechoslovakia in the early Sixties was a hybrid, caught in an uncomfortable transition from national Stalinism to reform Communism.”<sup>322</sup>

Overwhelmingly the victims of the Stalinist terror had been middle class intellectuals, and disproportionately Jews. At the same time that the middle and upper classes suffered, the working class saw substantial gains in income and educational attainment during the 1950s. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic had the most egalitarian income distribution in the Communist bloc countries of Europe by the early 1960s.<sup>323</sup> However, this social transition came at the cost of economic stagnation to a degree that dismayed even Soviet officials. In December 1962 at the 12<sup>th</sup> Party Congress agreed to permit Czechoslovakia to pursue some non-socialist methods to revitalize the economy.

By 1963, the combination of some economic reforms and the rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinism had a liberating effect on intellectual and artistic activity in the country. Young directors created a rash of new films, including Miloš Forman, Věra Chytilová, and Jiří Menzel, who directed the 1966 Oscar-winning film *Closely Watched Trains*. Playwrights and novelists such as Milan Kundera, Ludvík Vaculík, Pavel Kohout, and the future president Václav Havel contributed mightily to the literary critique of the Stalinist years. This “New Wave” of art “called for a return to the literary and cultural heritage of Czechoslovakia and for the country to take up once again its ‘normal’ place in the center of a free Europe.”<sup>324</sup> Speaking in cultural terms, the “New Wave” was proposing an old way of thinking about Czechoslovak national identity.

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<sup>322</sup> Judt 2005, 436.

<sup>323</sup> Judt 2005, 437.

<sup>324</sup> Judt 2005, 438.

Judt surmises that two obstacles kept the Communist leadership in Prague and in Moscow from squelching the “New Wave.”<sup>325</sup> First, the stagnant economy was a political embarrassment not just to Czechoslovakia but also to the Soviet Union in its global competition with the capitalist West, and the Czechoslovak party leaders felt pressure to enact reforms. Second, there was social unrest in Slovakia. The economic downturn had hit the heavy industry in Slovakia harder than in the Czech lands. In addition, many Slovaks were displeased with the new constitution ratified in 1960, which afforded Slovaks less regional autonomy than the immediate post-war constitution. The economic reforms proposed back in 1962 were to take effect beginning in 1967, and many Slovaks welcomed their call for greater local autonomy in managing industry.<sup>326</sup> In spite of Slovak pressure to do otherwise, President Novotný stymied the reforms and bolstered centralization out of fear of losing centralized control over the country. Slovak Communists in response began to publicly propose federalization, arraiging the Prague Communists as aged, incompetent Stalinists.<sup>327</sup> The old alienation that Slovaks felt from Czechs resurfaced.

In the meantime, the atmosphere of reform was tangible not just among artists. On October 31, 1967, students from Prague’s Technical University held a protest in Strahov because of black out periods due to electricity shortages in the college dormitories. The students call for “more light” had an evident double meaning in this time of liberalizing

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<sup>325</sup> Judt 2005, 438-439.

<sup>326</sup> Judt also notes, however, that Slovaks were not uniformly pleased with the economic reforms; for example, workers in inefficient plants were resistant to proposals that tied productivity to workers’ wages (Judt 2005, 439).

<sup>327</sup> Eduard Táborský. “Slovakia under Communist rule, ‘Democratic Centralism’ versus National Autonomy,” *Journal of Central European Affairs* 14 (October 1954): 255-63.

reform.<sup>328</sup> The idea of a “Czechoslovak road” to socialism also re-emerged, but now reformists were advocating a different form of Communism than the Soviet model, not just a different path to the Soviet model.<sup>329</sup> The pace of liberal change unsurprisingly concerned the Czechoslovak apparatchiks in power.

In December 1967, at Novotný’s bidding, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev came to Prague to discuss the problem of his lagging control of Czechoslovak society. Brezhnev reportedly responded, “It’s your business.”<sup>330</sup> Given this signal of apparent permission from Moscow, the next month the KSČ elected a relatively young Slovak to be Party Secretary, Alexander Dubček. The appointment of a Slovak to the highest position in the country allayed for the moment Slovak federalist demands, and simultaneously Dubček’s past loyalty to the Communist Party also reassured Moscow.<sup>331</sup> However, soon after his election, Dubček was caught up in public protests demanding greater freedom of the press and legitimate investigations into the crimes of the Stalinist show trials.<sup>332</sup>

March 22, 1968, Novotný resigned as president and General Ludvík Svoboda—whose surname means “freedom”—replaced him. Merely five days after Svoboda’s appointment, the Central Committee passed a program requiring the “democratization” of the economic and political system, political parity for Slovakia compared to the Czech lands, and provisions for the development of other political parties that would genuinely

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<sup>328</sup> Judt 2005, 440.

<sup>329</sup> Abrams 2004, 196.

<sup>330</sup> Judt 2005, 440.

<sup>331</sup> Skilling, Gordon H. *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>332</sup> Judt 2005, 440.

compete for the popular vote.<sup>333</sup> Although the program was supposed to unfold over a decade, events were outpacing political plans. A month later, the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party adopted an Action Plan that Dubček famously described as “socialism with a human face.”<sup>334</sup>

During what would be an electrifying but brief moment, “the Prague Spring,” as this period of liberalization was called, picked up momentum as various interest groups—intellectuals, artists, Slovak autonomists, and students—pressed the government to broaden the gap between the Stalinist past and a liberal vision of what socialism could be. The government had cracked open the window, but action groups and individuals wanted the shutters thrown back. As Judt notes, many Czech and Slovak youth and intellectuals did believe in a “third way” between capitalism and Communism, and in the possibility of “a Democratic Socialism compatible with free institutions, respecting individual freedoms *and* collective goals [emphasis original].”<sup>335</sup> However, distrust of Communist apparatchiks persisted and led the writer Ludvík Vaculík to publish in newspapers and a literary magazine *Literární Listy* on June 27, 1968 a manifesto entitled *Two Thousand Words*, in which he entreated his fellow citizens to form civic committees that would

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<sup>333</sup> These reform ideas found their inspiration in earlier intellectual discussions in Czechoslovakia. For a thorough analysis of the intellectual history of the Prague Spring, see: Vladimir Kusin. *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia 1956–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>334</sup> Kieran Williams. *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>335</sup> Judt 2005, 441.

support the reforms against Communist reactionaries.<sup>336</sup> Presciently, Vaculík also warned of the possibility of “foreign forces intervening in our development.”<sup>337</sup>

Already in April 1968 the Soviet Defense Minister approved “Operation Danube”—a contingency plan to crush the Prague Spring with military force. In early May, Dubček and other Czechoslovak officials traveled to Moscow to ensure the Soviets that he had the situation under control. Dubček was a dedicated Communist and rejected outright Vaculík’s June manifesto and other demands that the party cede control of the state to the populace. However, the spirit of Prague Spring had proven infectious and spread well beyond Dubček’s jurisdiction: young Ukrainians, Poles, and East Germans were already demanding similar liberal reforms in their countries, and Russian students in Czechoslovakia could now read Russian literature that was censored back home.<sup>338</sup>

In mid-July, the Kremlin convened Communist heads from other Warsaw Pact countries—excluding the Czechoslovaks—to Moscow to discuss the Prague Spring developments. The result was a letter sent to the Czechoslovak Communist Party stating that: “The situation in Czechoslovakia jeopardizes the common vital interests of other socialist countries.”<sup>339</sup> Brezhnev and Dubček met at the USSR-Czechoslovak border in late July, but the Czechoslovak leader continued to insist that he had control of the situation in his country, while the Soviet leader remained unconvinced.

On August 3, the Warsaw Pact convened in Bratislava, and Brezhnev expressed his position that: “Each Communist Party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these

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<sup>336</sup> Williams 1997.

<sup>337</sup> Judt 2005, 442.

<sup>338</sup> Judt 2005, 442-443.

<sup>339</sup> Judt 443.



principles if it is to remain a Communist party... The weakening of any links in the world system of socialism directly affects all the socialist countries, and they cannot look indifferently upon this.”<sup>340</sup> This statement, which later was referred to as the “Brezhnev Doctrine,” provided the grounds for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Between August 20 and 21, an estimated 165,000 troops and 4,600 tanks invaded the country, and within a week approximately half a million Warsaw Pact soldiers and some 6,000 tanks patrolled the Czechoslovakia.<sup>341</sup> Resistance erupted despite Dubček’s calls for compliance. One amusing form of resistance was that Czechs and Slovaks removed road signs, except for those pointing the way toward Moscow—a maneuver that disoriented many invading troops and also effectively conveyed the message for the troops to “go home.”<sup>342</sup>

Dubček and other top Czechoslovak officials were arrested and brought to Moscow, where they were forced to sign a document acquiescing to Soviet occupation and revoking most of the Prague Spring reforms. The Kremlin did, however, keep Dubček in office so that his government could fulfill the federalization plans that made Czechoslovakia into a dual republic constituted by the Slovak Socialist republic and the Czech Socialist republic beginning on October 28, 1968. Communist apparatchiks hoped that granting Slovaks greater autonomy—the only reform proposed during the Prague Spring to survive the invasion—would appease Slovaks.<sup>343</sup> Mass emigration to the West

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<sup>340</sup> Document No. 128: Unofficial Enunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, September 26, 1968 (Excerpts). In Jaromír Navrátil. *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Document Reader* National Security Archive Cold War Readers (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 502.

<sup>341</sup> Williams 1997, 112.

<sup>342</sup> Williams convincingly argues that the Czech and Slovak resistance to the invading troops was considerably more pronounced than most historians have recognized. See Williams 1997.

<sup>343</sup> Judt 2005, 445.

followed the Warsaw Pact invasion, with an estimated 300,000 Czechoslovak citizens—who were often young adults, professionals, and intellectuals—fleeing the country.<sup>344</sup>

In March 1969, Czechs and Slovaks took to the streets again, this time to celebrate the Czechoslovak national ice hockey team's wins over the Soviet team in two rounds of the world championship in Stockholm. An estimated 2,000 people flooded into the center of Prague in jubilation after the first win on March 21, some shouting chants against the Soviets; the second win on March 28 inspired crowds totaling approximately 500,000 across the country to pour into the streets in a mounting euphoria.<sup>345</sup> Some broke off from the crowds and peacefully demonstrated against the continuing occupation of the country by foreign troops in front of Soviet garrisons; however, nine Soviet garrisons were attacked that evening.<sup>346</sup>

The Kremlin used these protests to insist that Dubček step down as Secretary General and leave the party. Gustáv Husák, who had been imprisoned for “bourgeois Slovak nationalism” during the Stalinist show trials and was later rehabilitated, replaced Dubček. Husák was an obvious choice of successor: he was Slovak and therefore might help build an affinity between the Slovak population and the central government; as a lifelong Communist, his loyalty to Marxism-Leninism seemed unwavering; and because he had been a victim of the 1950s show trials, Czechs and Slovaks could not construe him as another “old Stalinist.” Husák gained the nickname of “the president of forgetting,” and indeed his presidency was intended by the Communist party in Prague and in Moscow to be a period of amnesia when the Prague Spring would become a

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<sup>344</sup> Skilling 1976.

<sup>345</sup> Williams 1997, 198-199.

<sup>346</sup> Williams 1997, 199.

distant memory, an aberration from the “normal” course of Czechoslovak society toward socialism.

*Normalization and Dissidents, 1969-1989*

Following the demise of the Prague Spring, the so-called period of normalization: reformers were purged from the Czechoslovak Communist Party, censorship resumed, and individuals who had participated in the Prague Spring in any capacity were interrogated and pressured to sign confessions. Individuals who refused to sign were frequently stripped of their professional status and blacklisted along with their families. In blacklisted families, children were barred from higher education, and relatives’ lost access to certain coveted, state-controlled commodities including cars, apartments, phone lines, and travel permits.<sup>347</sup> The government’s strategy of “re-establishing ‘order’ lay in mollifying popular discontent with material improvements while energetically silencing all dissenting voices and references to the recent past.”<sup>348</sup>

After 1968 dissidents in Czechoslovakia adopted the strategy of declaring themselves apolitical and standing outside the discourse of the Communist system. Whereas the reformers during the Prague Spring had spoken the language of Marxism-Leninism to evoke change within the system, this new era of open repression demanded subtler forms of subversion. Rather than demanding new rights from the Communist

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<sup>347</sup> Vladimir V. Kušin. *From Dubček to Charter 77: A Study of ‘Normalization’ in Czechoslovakia, 1968-1978* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978).

<sup>348</sup> Judt 2005, 566.

government, dissidents in the 1970s instead aimed to render the state accountable for freedoms it had already agreed to uphold in laws and treaties.<sup>349</sup>

The Charter of 77 embodied this strategy. Signed by Czechoslovak citizens from a wide array of occupational backgrounds and political perspectives in early 1977 and distributed at first via samizdat, the document called upon the Czechoslovak government to live up to the 1975 Helsinki Accords, the United Nations' treaties on human rights, and the Czechoslovak Constitution—all agreements that the government had already ratified.<sup>350</sup> The original signatories totaled 243 individuals, but this number grew to over 800 by the end of the year and to more than 1,200 by 1986.<sup>351</sup> The manifesto's creators were careful to note that they did not constitute a formal organization and did not provide any foundation for oppositional political activities; these points were intended to keep within the legal bounds of dissent in a regime that did not tolerate direct opposition.<sup>352</sup> Nonetheless, the regime recognized the ideological threat of the charter, and thus pursued a course of intimidation, interrogation, and arrests of the signatories.

Among the original signatories and spokespeople for the Charter of 77 was the playwright and future president Václav Havel. In his essay *The Power of the Powerless* [*Moc bezmocných*] Havel advocated that under the repressive conditions of the Czechoslovak regime individuals attempt to maintain their moral integrity by acting as if

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<sup>349</sup> Judt on the approach of dissidents under normalization summarizes Petr Pithart, who signed the Charter of 77 and would become the prime minister of the Czech Republic from 1990-92: “the point was not to demand some right as yet un-possessed—a sure invitation to further repression—but to claim those that the regime already acknowledged and that were enshrined in law.” Judt 2005, 567.

<sup>350</sup> Judt 2005, 569.

<sup>351</sup> Janusz Bugajski. *Czechoslovakia, Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*. The Washington papers, 125 (New York: Praeger, 1987) 27.

<sup>352</sup> Bugajski 1987, 12.

they were free.<sup>353</sup> Twelve years after the Charter of 77 was first circulated, Communism was collapsing under its economic and moral failures and many of the charter's signatories helped organize the Velvet Revolution and transition to a democratic Czechoslovak government. Havel described this period as: "ultimately, a sensation of the absurd: what Sisyphus might have felt if one fine day his boulder stopped, rested on the hilltop, and failed to roll back down...It was the sensation of a Sisyphus mentally unprepared for the possibility that his efforts might succeed."<sup>354</sup> A new era in Czech and Slovak history had begun.

### **Schooling Under Communism:**

Schooling in Czechoslovakia after World War II was again center stage in a new regime's plan for validating its own legitimacy to rule and realizing its long-term political ideals. Among the 8 out of 14 ministries that the Communist Party secured in 1945 was the post of minister of education and culture. Shaped in part by the broader framework of international competition between communism and capitalism in the Cold War era, communist schooling was expected to produce citizens who would be superior to their Western counterparts in their capacity for rational thought, in the depth of their disciplinary knowledge, and in their ardor to work toward a socialist utopian vision through their loyalty and labor.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Václav Havel and John Keane. *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1985).

<sup>354</sup> Quoted in David Remnick. "Letter from Prague - Exit : The King Leaves the Castle." *The New Yorker*. (February 17, 2003) 90.

<sup>355</sup> Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Mirroring postwar trends in the West, the temporary Czechoslovak government expanded access to education at all levels. Nursery schools and preschools multiplied in part to enable women with young children to join the labor force. Nursery school attendance in the Czechoslovak Republic reached one of the highest per capita levels in the world, meaning that children began schooling on average at an earlier age than in many Western capitalist countries.<sup>356</sup> This early enrollment in schooling translated into extra years of socialist pedagogy, in which children under the age of 6 were expected to: “develop their powers of articulation, their intellect and their interest through games, work and learning. They learn social behavior and discipline and to live together as members of a community. The elements of aesthetic awareness and taste are inculcated in them, and they are taught self-reliance and the care of their health and of their bodies.”<sup>357</sup>

Another effort in the postwar expansion of education was the widespread construction of public libraries in the 1950s in what one education observer called “the fight for the soul of the nation.”<sup>358</sup> These libraries were opened throughout the country, in villages as well as in urban centers, to ensure that the masses had access to Communist literature. State publishing houses printed and distributed in huge quantities classic Communist books to these libraries and made them available for purchase. Between 1945 and 1947, the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)*, Gottwald’s *Deset Let [Ten Years]*, and Stalin’s *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet*

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<sup>356</sup> V. Rosa, I. Turek, and M. Zelina. *Koncepcia rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15-20 rokov (project “Milénium”)* (Bratislava: Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky, 2000).

<sup>357</sup> Miroslav Kořínek. (1982). The Structure of Education in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. *International Review of Education*. 28(2), 274.

<sup>358</sup> Jaroslav Kladiva, “Boj o duši národa v předvečer února 1948,” *Československý časopis historický* 15 (1967): 69-70.

*Union* had sold 140,000, 70,000, and nearly 100,000 copies respectively in a country with a population of approximately 12 million.<sup>359</sup>

A desire to surpass the West economically through technical innovations and industrialization led Communist educational policy makers to develop secondary school curricula that emphasized math and science learning and spurred the proliferation of technical schools in the country. Those students who passed the requisite state exams and had an acceptable political record in the eyes of the Communist authorities were eligible to attend university with tuition, board, and a small living stipend paid for by the state. Also reflecting this economic and scientific priority, the mission of universities was to “train politically aware and highly qualified specialists and scientific workers for all fields of activity in society, and to prepare them to participate in the development of the national economy, science, culture and political life of the socialist state.”<sup>360</sup> By the 1960s, Czechoslovak officials touted to Soviet leaders the progress they had made on “the road to socialism” partly in educational terms; in Czechoslovakia, the percentage of students from working-class families who attended non-vocational higher education schools had jumped from less than 10% in 1930 to 31% by 1956 and to almost 40% by 1963.<sup>361</sup>

The number of Czechoslovak basic schools also increased during this period, but not just because of new construction. Due to the forced “population transfers” that the Czechoslovak government carried out under the Beneš Decrees, more than 2.6 million Germans and Hungarians lost their homes in the country. Meanwhile, an estimated two

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<sup>359</sup> Abrams 2004, 193 and Kladiva 1967, 70.

<sup>360</sup> Kořinek 1982, 275.

<sup>361</sup> Judt 2005, 437.

million Czechs and Slovaks were resettled in the areas from which Germans and Hungarians were expelled, and many of the schools were converted to serve Czech- or Slovak-speaking children. This switch in the ethnic designation of schools was by now a familiar ritual in Czechoslovakia: many German and Hungarian schools on the territory of the First Republic became Czech and Slovak after World War I, and this trend reversed when the Czech lands became a Nazi Protectorate in 1939 and nearly one-third of Slovakia's interwar territory reverted to Hungary in the 1938 First Vienna Award.

The changes to the educational system in Czechoslovakia after World War II were not simply structural but also philosophical. Marxist-Leninist ideology was to permeate the curriculum, and therefore it was the Communist party that created and oversaw educational policy even while the ministry of education was responsible for its implementation.<sup>362</sup> Because of the importance attributed to teachers as socializing agents, joining the Communist Party was generally a prerequisite to entering the teaching profession. To an even greater degree, school officials such as headmasters and school inspectors were required to be Party members and called upon to cooperate with the StB in monitoring teachers and students. Teachers who strayed in content from the mandated curriculum risked being dubbed “politically unreliable” and losing their jobs.<sup>363</sup> Not only did school officials monitor teachers' activities, students and teachers often monitored and denounced each other for actions that could be construed as straying from the Party line. The regime's overt concern for the potential of schooling to politically socialize

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<sup>362</sup> Ludovít Bálint and Ludmila Šimčáková. “Dokument Další rozvoj československej výchovnovzdelávacej sústavy—pokús o kritikú analýzu.” *Pedagogická revue* 1996, 48 (5-6): 219-227.

<sup>363</sup> Milan Šimečka. *The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia 1969-1976* (A.G. Brain, transl. London: Verso, 1984).



youth rendered teachers and university professors particularly susceptible to the purges during the Stalinist years.<sup>364</sup>

A dearth in teachers who were educated in Marxism-Leninism was an issue for the Party in the immediate postwar years.<sup>365</sup> Teacher training under Communism included courses devoted to Marxist-Leninist theory, but the relevance of Communist philosophy to all subjects was also inculcated in aspiring teachers. Teaching guides that were specified to a particular school subject and grade level instructed pedagogues regarding the aspects of Marxism-Leninism that they were expected to convey to their students. For example, a guide from 1973 entitled the *Ideological-Political Education of Students in History Teaching* states that history is the main avenue through which students learn “to understand the complexities of the fight for the transition from capitalism to socialism.” The guide stresses the aim that students should “*comprehend the law of the evolution of societies* [emphasis original],” which Marx expressed in his theory of “historical materialism.”<sup>366</sup> The guide does not offer alternative perspectives nor does it posit that historical materialism is anything less than a “law” of how the world works. The guide reminds its readers that the basic principle behind historical materialism is: “The ability of man to master various materials and ways of working with these materials determines people’s thinking and renders human development inseparable from material products. Students must learn to understand that productive power unfolds

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<sup>364</sup> John Connelly. *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>365</sup> Abrams 2004, 193.

<sup>366</sup> Oľga Drtilová. *Ideovo-politická výchova žiakov v dejepisnom vyučovaní* (Bratislava: SPN. 1973), 11.

within the framework of concrete relations of production.”<sup>367</sup> Another teachers’ guide published in 1965 for history teachers working in elementary school reviews the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism that history should foster in students—including dialectical materialism, atheism, proletariat internationalism, and socialist patriotism. It also explains how particular historical themes can elucidate these principles, for example prehistoric man’s mastery over particular materials for building tools, feudal relations, the Hussite “revolutionary movement,” “the Fight against the fascist occupiers,” and “the Victory of the socialist revolution.”<sup>368</sup> Civic education was the subject where students were introduced most directly to Marxism-Leninism. A methods handbook published in 1980 outlines lessons by the hour for teaching civic education in the fourth year of high school and states in its introduction that: “The goal of the first two hours of class is above all to awaken the students’ interest in the study of Marxist-Leninist philosophy.”<sup>369</sup> Because of the highly political intent of civic education, teachers of this subject were held to stricter criteria regarding their Party membership and “political reliability” than their colleagues.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Drtilová, 11.

<sup>368</sup> Luboš Balcar. *Výchova ke komunistickému přesvědčení v dějepise na základní devítileté škole* (Prague: SPN, 1965). This teachers’ guide is in Czech but was part of the Slovak textbook archival collection, along with many other Czech educational materials. As librarians and pedagogues explained to me, Slovak teachers often had to rely on Czech publications. Since Czechs outnumbered Slovaks approximately two to one, Czech publications were more frequent, received larger print runs, and were thus more widely distributed in the country than Slovak texts. Moreover, Czech and Slovak were generally considered mutually intelligible to native speakers.

<sup>369</sup> Jiří Bauer and Zdeněk Tyrychtr. *Metodická Příručka k Občanské Nauce pro IV. Ročník Středních Škol* (Prague: SPN, 1980), 13. This text is written in Czech. Please see footnote 102.

<sup>370</sup> Connelly 2000.

A concern with teacher quality was persistent across the Communist era in Czechoslovakia not only due to the fundamental role assigned to pedagogues in building a socialist society. Teachers, and other professionals with a university degree, often received lower salaries than factory workers, engendering low motivation among some in the teaching corps.<sup>371</sup> Safeguarding against unmotivated teachers—but perhaps also contributing to the problem—were highly structured curricula, which dictated what teachers needed to cover in each month and at times in each lesson throughout the school year.<sup>372</sup>

The pressures to meet the ideological designs of the central authorities discouraged teacher innovation and made adapting materials to the needs and prior knowledge of students both difficult and risky. “Communication between teachers and policy makers was very selective, especially visible in the discouragement of their [teachers’] independence and freedom to adapt material to their own conditions.”<sup>373</sup> Thus, pedagogy naturally tended to be more teacher-centered than student-centered. But even the notion of “teacher-centered” is somewhat misleading here, because state-produced textbooks and curricular materials were the true authority leaving little autonomy to the teacher. Many teachers reportedly found it safest to lecture directly from the textbook, thereby simply voicing the authoritative narratives of the state.

Similarly, students were often expected to memorize material and take detailed or even verbatim notes that they would reiterate in front of the class during oral exams or

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<sup>371</sup> Lenka Kalinová. *K sociálním dějinám Československa v letech 1969-1989* (Prague: Vysoká škola ekonomická, 1999).

<sup>372</sup> For examples of these schedules, see Bauer and Tyrychtr 1980 in each unit and Drtilová 1973, 38-40.

<sup>373</sup> Bálint and Šimčáková 1996, 222.

write out to ensure a passing grade on state tests. “A student was not supposed to learn the given material in his own terms, but learn by memory and reproduce.”<sup>374</sup> This approach to learning was also observed at the university level where students frequently recorded in complete sentences in their notebooks what their professor said in lecture.<sup>375</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, state testing served as another centralized control on teachers and on student learning. Because the content on state exams closely corresponded to the content of state-published textbooks and official curricula, students had a strong incentive to learn—but not necessarily believe—what the state dictated if they wished to complete the mandatory grade levels of secondary school and even more so if they aspired to attend university.

Despite the dangers of losing their employment or having themselves and their families blacklisted, some teachers under Communism found ways of broaching political topics in their classrooms, eliciting student opinions, and encouraging students to interpret readings in a manner that went beyond the “safe” boundaries of Communist doctrine.<sup>376</sup> Jonathan Larson observes that “the kinds of intimacies built between students, teachers, schools, and local communities let rather different values emerge from interactions than what [Communist] ideological regimentation of voice might have encouraged.”<sup>377</sup> For example, high schools might specialize in professional development or particular subject areas to give students an advantage on college-entrance exams for that field. Students from villages and towns from which it was too far to commute to such

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<sup>374</sup> Bálint and Šimčáková 1996, 225.

<sup>375</sup> Connelly 2000, 64.

<sup>376</sup> For accounts of such teachers under Communism, see: Marián Lapitka. “Škola na stražej nôžke“ *Kultúrny život* 3 (1990): 15.

<sup>377</sup> Jonathan Larson. “Whose Critical Thinking? Political Processes and Regimes of Voice in Western Slovakia, 1948-2005” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 281.

schools lived in state-run dormitories: teachers might serve as mentors and surrogate parents to such students. Also, because students in Czechoslovakia generally stayed with the same homeroom teacher and class throughout their high school years, relationships between students in the class and their designated teacher were often very close.<sup>378</sup>

Certainly schooling was not an omnipotent instrument of socialist indoctrination nor was it the only environment impacting students' thinking. One observation that supports the idea that official school doctrine had its limitations is the students and dissidents who grew up attending Communist schools and comprised a significant portion of the protest movements in 1968 and again in 1989. Students might perform official knowledge in school but believe something else and be influenced in their thinking by spheres outside of schooling. The "critical thinking" that led some individuals in socialist society to become dissidents might not have been so much a product of schooling, but rather the result of living in a society in which the disparity between what you believed and what you had to perform to succeed was more evident than in Western capitalist societies. The multiple regimes that any multigenerational family would have experienced in Czechoslovakia likely contributed significantly to an awareness of one's performativity in everyday life.

Even when only being performed for the teacher or a test, this study contends that school textbook narratives bear investigation for at least three reasons. First, although textbook narratives are not the same as teacher practice, in Communist Czechoslovakia, there is substantial evidence to suggest that the two were closely aligned. The cost of a

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<sup>378</sup> This tradition continues in the region. Unlike in the US where high school reunions entail all the students who graduated in the same year, Czech and Slovak students tend to have frequent and less formal reunions with their homeroom classmates and class teacher, numbering in total somewhere between 15-30 people generally.

misstep from the official Party line could mean for a teacher the loss of her or his employment and other state-controlled privileges. Therefore, as already mentioned, many teachers relied heavily on textbooks as a source of the official narrative of the state. Second, textbooks offer reliable insight into what the state wanted students to learn because of the state's tight controls on textbook production. Two state printers produced all of the school texts that I found from this period: the Slovak Pedagogical Publisher [Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo] in Bratislava for Slovak language texts and the State Pedagogical Publisher [Státní pedagogické nakladatelství] in Prague for Czech texts. The ministry of education, with oversight from the Communist Party, commissioned textbook manuscripts from Party members, often university professors who had survived the purges. "Self-censorship," as several Slovak professors explained to me, was an expected practice of textbook authors; authors anticipated what state officials wanted written in history books and, knowing that the state had control of the printing houses, authors who wrote textbooks were a self-selected group that agreed or was willing to comply with the socialist state's agenda. Under Communism, there was an additional reason why teachers would use ministry-approved books: the government sent free copies of approved textbooks to schools throughout the country.

Third, students had strong motivation to learn textbook narratives even if they did not necessarily believe them. The textbook narratives were directly tied to the content on state exams. If a student wrote an essay that countered Marxist-Leninist thought, he or she might be banned from pursuing a university degree and, because the state controlled employment, assigned a low-skill factory position rather than a career of the student's choice. Finally, I posit that textbooks narratives had significant impact on national

identity even when students and teachers resisted them. Like the billiard table cushion that impacts the trajectory of the ball that bounces off of it, textbook narratives were the official “cushion” to which counter narratives had to react and thereby on some level acknowledge.

### **Textbook Analysis**

Perhaps the single most interesting aspect of the textbooks in the Communist era was the centrality of a new “origins myth” about the rebirth of the Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of World War II. Unlike the stories of grandfather Czech, this new origins myth took place in recent history. But like the premordial stories, the story of valient communist partisans supported by the Soviet Red Army provided legitimacy to the reborn Czechoslovak state.

The role Communists and the Red Army played in the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) in 1944 was the favored World War II narrative of Slovak socialist-era history texts. In this section, I explore textbook depictions of Slovakia’s role in World War II. My data sample for this chapter included 44 history and civics textbooks approved by the state from 1948 till 1989. As in earlier chapters, in analyzing these texts I looked for continuity and change; however, in this case I was not just attending to regime change but also to changes within the regime over four decades of Communist control. As discussed in the previous section, these changes cover four main eras: Stalinism (1948-early 1960s); Liberalization and the Prague Spring (1962-1968); Normalization (1973 to mid-1980s); late-1980s (liberalization under influence of Glasnost).

My hypothesis here was that ruptures in political practice would lead to a readjustment in textbooks to meet changing state needs. Therefore, I reasoned that using these time periods as analytical frames would help me identify possible reasons for change and continuity in the national historical narrative. Because of the lag time involved in writing and publishing textbooks, textbooks whose publication dates fall 2-3 years after a political rupture tend to reflect that ideological shift better than books printed closer to the rupture.

As noted above, the most striking finding in the textbooks produced between 1948 and 1989 was the consistency of their content and message. Despite the enormous political, economic, and social upheavals in Czechoslovakia in these years, communist educators related a surprisingly stable set of lessons for students. First, these lessons explicitly promoted the legitimacy of the re-established Czechoslovak state—albeit with a different “origin myth”, which, in this case, began with the West’s betrayal of Czechoslovakia in Munich in 1938—and then turned to applaud the role of the Communist Party and Red Army in the country’s national rebirth. Second, the texts established a revised sense of “us and them” in line with Marxist doctrine extolling the centrality of the working class in Czechoslovak history and disparaging the bourgeoisie. Third, the narratives reproach nationalism, particularly in regards to the Slovak state in World War II, and, in an act of omission rather than commission, simply ignore the past and present existence of minority groups in Czechoslovakia. I discuss each of these aspects of the textbooks in turn.



*Betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the West: Munich 1938*

The history and civics texts from this era depict the non-Soviet allied forces in World War II in a negative light, which, of course, simultaneously served to spotlight the heroic actions of the Soviets and Czech or Slovak communists. For example, one text from 1950 written for the fourth year of secondary school describes the events leading up to the 1938 Munich Accord thus: “The reactionary bourgeoisie did not want to fight but favored cowardly capitulation. The English prime minister Chamberlain began to negotiate with Hitler on finding a solution to the conflict—apparently—in order to avoid war. Our sovereignty was not at all an issue, and it was an act of diplomatic-capitalistic violence.”<sup>379</sup> It is not so much the criticism of the Munich negotiations here that is noteworthy, because many historical analysts would characterize that event in hindsight as a tragic strategic error leading up to the war. Yet, the tone here is harsh due to words such as “cowardly” and “violence.” The use of the word “apparently” and the added weight that this single word carries in this statement because of being set off by long-dashes lends the text a note of sarcasm, judgement, and doubt when it comes to conveying the intentions of Chamberlain. The textbook’s treatment of the Munich Accords is also surprisingly terse and provides no original documentation or counter-perspective on the event. Finally, the excerpt is ripe with socialist language of class. The bourgeoisie are cast as the decisionmakers in England and they are labeled as “reactionary.” The Munich Accords are characterized as a “capitalistic” act of violence.

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<sup>379</sup> Učebnicová komisia. *Dejepis: učebné texty pre IV. triedu stredných škôl* (Bratislava: Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1950) 148.

This same textbook continues with two pages from a Klement Gottwald speech entitled *Ten Years*, in which this first Communist Czechoslovak president stated that behind the capitulation of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis on September 30, 1938 were:

...the powers of reactionary big capital. It was class interests of reactionary big bourgeoisie in England and in France that ruled in Munich to save themselves from Hitler's regime at the expense of Czechoslovakia. It was class powers of the big bourgeoisie in Czechoslovakia that commanded the capitulation and sacrificed the interests of the state, the republic, and the nation with the class interests of the big bourgeoisie 'cream.'<sup>380</sup>

Another textbook from this period describes US and Western European participation in World War II as a "Fight over colonies." Under this heading, the textbook says the reasons for America's participation in the war was control over the Philippines, Holland's was dominion over Sunda and Moluka, and England and France's interest was control over the Far East. In short, "They [the Western Allied forces] fought because of petrol, tin, rubber, rice, and the raw materials for textiles."<sup>381</sup> This use of classist language translates the World War II narrative into a Communist narrative with bourgeois, imperialist enemies and Communist heroes. Another textbook for secondary school entitled "History for a New Age" published in 1953 claims: "The post-Munich republic was a government of big landlords and big bourgeoisie."<sup>382</sup> Capitalism, as much as fascism, is the antagonist.

These narratives portray the US, England, and other Western European countries as "bourgeois imperialists" and then offer a counter narrative in the form of Soviet heroism and foresight: "W. Churchill and the reactionary circles of the governing class

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<sup>380</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 149.

<sup>381</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 169.

<sup>382</sup> Viktor Šándor. *Dejiny novoveku*. (Bratislava: Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1952), 224.

in England and the US saw what was already obvious to everyone: the Soviet Union would know how to defeat and finish off Hitler even alone. It liberated all of Europe and earned the everlasting gratitude of all nations.”<sup>383</sup> On this same page under the subheading “Imperialists and the fight for liberation” the text states: “The English started to occupy Greece, brutally disarming the heroic Greek freedom fighters and put the government in the hand of monarchic fascists (Fall 1944). This clearly demonstrated the difference between the liberators sent from the Soviet Union and the calculations of the Western Great powers. (The Americans in China proceeded like the English in Greece.)”<sup>384</sup> Elsewhere, the text states that the Soviet Union became an example for oppressed colonials because “nowhere in the world do so many different nationalities live together and in such ideal equality as in the Soviet Union.”<sup>385</sup>

The tendency to belittle the role of the US and England in the fight against Nazi Germany and simultaneously highlight the contribution of the Soviet Army remains consistent between the 1950s and 60s, as illustrated in the following excerpt from a 1963 publication:

The year 1944 became the year that determined the victory of the Soviet Army...The quick approach of the Soviet army forced the English and Americans to form the long-promised second front. On the day June 8, 1944 their soldiers disembarked on the northwestern part of France. The disembarkment of soldiers occupied only a third of the German army on the fronts of France and Italy and in the occupied countries. The Soviet-German front above all remained the decisive front in this war, because on it fought two-thirds of the Nazi divisions.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Šándor, 1952, 232.

<sup>384</sup> Šándor 1952, 232.

<sup>385</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 169.

<sup>386</sup> Karel, Bartošek. *Dejepis pre 9. ročník základnej deväťročnej školy* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1963) 121.

The betrayal of the West at Munich in 1938 and the subsequent “death of the nation” under fascism are themes that are consistent across the Communist era with no obvious variability in voice or content. Complimenting the West’s role as villain in these narratives is the depiction of the Soviet Union and Communists more generally as the heroes of the Czechoslovak nation.

### *Salvation from the East and Rebirth through Socialism*

The valorization of the Soviet Union was not an unexpected finding in the textbooks of this era, but what stands out was the degree of praise for the Soviets and the way that heroes who were in earlier regimes depicted as ethnic sons of the nation are now glorified for their adherence to the political ideology of Communism. One textbook author in the 1950s wrote, “The Soviet Union was the only state that was prepared and that wasn’t afraid of the fascist attackers.”<sup>387</sup> The text goes on for the next eleven pages to describe how Soviet Union saved Czechoslovakia from the Nazis and how the Red Army liberated Central Europe. Another textbook states, “Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Red Army, as the Communist Party correctly predicted, which became the leading factor in our national fight for liberty.”<sup>388</sup>

The alignment of Slovaks with Communism includes spotlighting individuals who were Czech, Slovak, and Communist. Most frequently, as seen in an earlier quote, the Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald comes to be the national hero who embraced Communism during the war. “The Communist Party alone, with Klement

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<sup>387</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 154.

<sup>388</sup> Šándor 1952, 184.

Gottwald at its head, strengthened by all means possible the state's defense against fascist attack and proved thus that in fact the Party was willing to fulfill its duty to the country and to the people. And the people were willing to follow its example."<sup>389</sup> Aligning a Czechoslovak leader with Communism functions as an instrument of linking Communist and national identity and serves to legitimize Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. The repeated reference to "the people" in this excerpt implies a concern in the text for demonstrating the consensus of citizens with the Communist Party.

While these textbooks position Tiso and the autonomous Slovak state in opposition to the interests of the Slovak people and Communism, the Slovak National Uprising [SNP] which attempted but failed to oust the Nazi-supported Tiso regime is the counter-narrative, used to connect the Communist Party and the Soviet Union to the interests of the "Slovak nation." One text describes the SNP as a "fight for the liberation of the Slovak nation and the Czechoslovak Republic."<sup>390</sup> Another excerpt claims that: "The liberators' fight peaked in two famous uprisings, in the Slovak National Uprising on the 29th of August 1944 and in the Prague Uprising of the Czech people on May 5, 1945. At the head of both revolutionary acts against the occupiers stood the heroic sons and daughters of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia..."<sup>391</sup> This text denies the autonomy of the Slovak state by claiming that the SNP combatants were fighting "occupiers," a term which connotes foreign, illegitimate elements, not a Slovak-led government under Jozef Tiso.

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<sup>389</sup> Šándor 1952, 147.

<sup>390</sup> Šándor 1952, 181.

<sup>391</sup> Šándor 1952, 235.

The Soviets are present throughout these textbook descriptions of the SNP. One excerpt describes how “On the border of the Soviet front in Eastern Slovakia, groups of Soviet partisans in the form of an open partisan army fought in 1944. On the rest of the territory, partisan groups, allied with Soviet groups, were heartened by the support of the local population and carried out successful actions against the Nazis...”<sup>392</sup> This benevolent portrayal of the Soviets is repeated in the following excerpt in stronger terms: “The Soviet Union gave the greatest help to the Slovak National Uprising. Yes, in the Slovak National Uprising, Soviet help was the help that decided it. Stalin, as the commander-in-chief of the Soviet army gave Slovak fighters weapons and experienced partisan officers...”<sup>393</sup> Stalin’s generosity to the cause is mentioned here, and, later in the textbook, the author characterizes Stalin as a “fatherly” figure in the Red Army and toward the Slovak soldiers who joined it.

These themes are interrelated and have particular effects on the narrative. By highlighting Soviet contributions to the SNP during World War II and Soviet disapproval of the Munich Accords, the textbooks portray the Soviet Union as the main international ally of the Slovak nation. Where Soviets and Slovak Communists are the protagonists of the texts, other allied nations, the US and England in particular, are the villains with colonizing, reactionary, bourgeois intentions lurking behind their actions. By underlining Chamberlain’s involvement in the Munich Accords, omitting any reference to American liberators in parts of Bohemia, and claiming that the allies had imperialistic interests in East Asia, the heroics of the Soviet stars appear all the brighter against the dark sky of Western European and US neglect. In these ways, the historical narratives locate Slovakia

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<sup>392</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 181.

<sup>393</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 168.

within a web of alliances and enemies in the international sphere and help to define Slovak national identity in an international discourse of “us” and “them.” The unifying factor of “us” in this discourse is Communism, and the “them” are capitalists, imperialists, fascists, and nationalists. Slovaks involved in the Tiso government are characterized as occupiers and traitors to the true Slovak nation. In other words, being an ethnic Slovak is not the defining characteristic of “the nation” but rather being a Communist or Communist ally.

The texts also insinuated that despite whatever missteps some Slovaks may have made by supporting Tiso’s regime, the nation showed its “true colors” during the SNP. One teachers’ guide from 1965 lists the SNP as one of five central themes in the teaching of national history at the elementary and junior high levels. This textbook states that the “Slovak National Uprising and the Prague April Uprising allow us to come to the conclusion that in the last years of the Second World War, our national liberation revolt took on the definitive character of a national democratic revolution with strong socialist characteristics.”<sup>394</sup> An account of SNP in one textbook focuses on the aid Slovaks gave to the partisan fighters during the attacks in the summer of 1944: “The Slovak people supported through self-sacrifice the daring fighters. They supplied them with foodstuffs, cared for the wounded, and participated in the fortification work. Simultaneously revolutionary changes were realized in the uprising territory. Among the people spread the slogan of Slovak Communists, ‘Factories in the hands of the workers’ and ‘Land for those who work it.’”<sup>395</sup> These narratives characterize the partisans as distinctly Communist—a claim that historians before 1948 and after 1989 would dispute—and as

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<sup>394</sup> Balcar 1965, 52-57.

<sup>395</sup> Bartošek 1963, 123.

representatives of the Slovak people who ardently supported their efforts. These depictions serve to legitimize Communist rule in Slovakia by locating Communist ideals in the “will of the people.”

A teachers’ guide that makes no mention of Tiso dedicates ten pages to detailing ways that educators can convey the importance of the SNP to students in history lessons.<sup>396</sup> The text states that in the teaching process, teachers should emphasize:

[The] natural tie between our national liberation movement [SNP], under the leadership of the working-class and the Communist party, which were supported by the unified national group of anti-fascist national front with the national liberation movement in other countries, with the significant ideological-political and organizational influence of the Communist internationalists and Communist party of the Soviet Union.<sup>397</sup>

Once again, the history texts assert a continuum between the present and past by declaring a common ideological foundation between the SNP combatants and the Communist Party. While the Tiso regime practically disappears from the narrative and with it the legitimacy of ethnic nationalist foundations for the Slovak state, the SNP functions as a symbol of the legitimacy of Communist rule.

### *The Tiso Regime As Aberration*

As noted, the Nazi-backed Slovak state and Tiso play only a minor role in the narratives of World War II, a stance that directly challenged idea that Slovaks should have had an independent homeland. In a Stalinist-era account of World War II, Tiso and the Slovak state are given only a fourth of a page, but that short paragraph implicitly

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<sup>396</sup> Jarmila Knorrová, ed. *Dejepis: odborná metodická príručka na vyučovanie v. 2. a 3. ročníku gymnázií* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1975) 399-409.

<sup>397</sup> Knorrová 1975, 401.



condemns both Slovak ethnic nationalism and the Catholic church, which supported the autonomy:

[Hitler] above all expected the help of the Hlinka People's Party in Slovakia and its chair the Catholic priest Dr. Jozef Tiso... On the 13 of March 1939, Dr. Tiso flew to Berlin and negotiated with Hitler on the creation of an 'independent' Slovak state under Hitler's protection. On the next day (14 of March 1939) in Bratislava, the Slovak parliament approved and Tiso announced the Slovak state. The formation of the Slovak state happened against the will of the Slovak people, and above all against the will of Slovak Communists.<sup>398</sup>

The author presents the formation of the Slovak state in a matter-of-fact, curt manner, but then emphasizes that this event was "against the will of Slovak people," thereby discrediting the legitimacy of the state. Another excerpt questions the autonomy of wartime Slovakia by placing the word "independent" in quotations: "On Hitler's command, Slovakia's parliament declared a so-called 'independent' Slovak state (14. March) and on the 15th of March, the Nazi army occupied most of Bohemia and Moravia..."<sup>399</sup> The text in particular underlines through the use of the term "above all" that Slovak Communists were opposed to Tiso's regime, emphasizing the oppositions of Communism to fascism. Including Slovak Communists in this narrative also serves to establish a continuity between the pre-war and post-war situation, marking Communism as a Slovak affiliation and thereby increasing the legitimacy of Communist rule in post-war Slovakia (despite the failure of the majority of Slovaks to vote for the Communist Party in 1948).

Another excerpt further illustrates how history textbooks discursively align Slovak Communists and the well-being of the Slovak nation and position these two

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<sup>398</sup> Knorrová 1975, 151.

<sup>399</sup> Šándor 1952, 224.

groups against Tiso and the Slovak state. The text once again highlights the active presence of Communists in Slovakia during the war:

Slovak communists witnessed the repulsive fight against the fascist attempts of the Hlinka Party. When power in Slovakia fell into the hands of the traitorous Lud'aks [members of the Hlinka People's Party], the first action of the so-called Tiso government was to stop the activities of the Communist Party in Slovakia. Already then Slovak communists entered the underground fight against fascism. In March 1939, after the breakup of the Czechoslovak Republic, an illegal Communist party of Slovakia formed...As the only organizational force of the Slovak nation against fascism, the party extended its activities across the whole territory of Slovakia...<sup>400</sup>

The drastic change in the political and social atmosphere of Czechoslovak society before and after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 appears to have had little impact on the historical narrative of World War II in Slovak school textbooks. However, Tiso does become less prominent in textbooks produced during this period than in the Stalinist or liberalization eras. For example, a world history textbook published in 1975 states that: “Domestic fascists declared Slovakia an ‘independent state,’ which was completely subordinate to Germany. Fascist Hungarians occupied Southern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ukraine and Tesinsko won Poland. The government of the USSR in its protest memoranda given to Germany called the occupation an expression of violent aggression.”<sup>401</sup> The text does not mention Tiso at all in its account of World War II. Not one individual but rather fascists more generally were responsible for the creation of the first Slovak state, according to this account. In emphasizing that World War II Slovakia

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<sup>400</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 175.

<sup>401</sup> Charvát, Jaroslav. (trans. Ondrej Stojka). *Svetové dejiny: učebnica pre I. a II. ročník gymnázií a I. ročník stredných odborných škôl*. (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1975) 227.

was not truly autonomous but under Nazi control, the text dissuades glorification of or nostalgia for the intrawar past. Finally, the text is in keeping with earlier narratives in that it stresses the benevolence and wisdom of the Soviet Union toward the interests of Slovakia.

Due to Glasnost, Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s experienced a return to some of the reforms of the liberalization era. However, the impact of reform is not evident in the historical narratives of World War II that were published in school textbooks during this period. Rather, themes from earlier socialist-era discourses on World War II persist.

Textbooks from this period characterize the Slovak state as a puppet of Nazi Germany, thereby discrediting any nationalistic pride Slovaks might feel for an “autonomous” past: “In reality, German fascists controlled life in Slovakia through the intermediary of Tiso’s government. The fascists ransacked the riches of the Slovak countryside and important armament factories were put directly under German military control.”<sup>402</sup> Similarly, another textbook states: “The clerical-fascist Slovak state was from its inception a military, economic and political satellite of Germany. It only had the external signs of statehood: a president—J. Tiso, a government—prime minister V. Tuka, a parliament, central offices, etc., but in reality it only fulfilled the demands and wishes of its creator.”<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Miloň Dohnal, Ružena Dobiášová, and Štefan Zelenák. (trans. Marta Butvinová). *Dejepis pre 8. ročník základnej školy* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1982) 27-8.

<sup>403</sup> Samuel Cambel, Jaroslav Sýkora, Zdeněk Macek, and Ivan Kamenec. (trans. Marta Butvinová). *Dejepis pre 3. ročník gymnázia: dočasný učebný text*. (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1985) 135-6.

### *Minorities as Bourgeoisie*

Marxism-Leninism's internationalist ideology predicted the dissolution of national animosities when the brotherhood of the working class emerged globally. In light of internationalism's integral role in Communist theory, the finding from my analysis that Communist-era textbooks tend to downplay ethnic national differences when compared with other previous eras might be anticipated. However, traces of old ethnic nationalist narratives and the omission of how perceptions of ethnicity shaped the history of Central Europe suggest that certain aspects of the Communist state's ideological aims in the textbooks were unheeded.

First, remnants of pan-Slavism are visible in the textbooks in terms of how ethnic relationships between Czechs and Slovaks and between all Slavs more broadly are formulated. In particular in the 1950s, history textbooks reiterate earlier narratives of the ethnic origins of all Slavs and describe how these early Slavs, denoted as—"our Slavic ancestors"—lived.<sup>404</sup> These texts likewise recall the Great Moravian Empire as the golden age of the nation and salute the language and culture of Czechs and Slovaks. Notably, great grandfather Czech is mentioned in only one of the post-World War II textbooks that I analyzed: a 1946 publication, which was prior to the Communist takeover.<sup>405</sup> Despite the absence of a romanticized ethnic origin myth, Czechs and Slovaks are still depicted as ethnic, Slavic brothers and the presence of any other

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<sup>404</sup> See for example Ondrej Stojka. *Obrázky z našich dejín: učebné texty pre 5. postupný ročník všeobecnovzdelávacích škôl* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1955) 9-14; Viktor Šandor. *Dejiny ČSR: učebný text pre IV. triedu gmnázií, pedagogických gymnázií a vyšších škôl* (Bratislava: Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1952) 22; Ferdinand Lovásko. *Dejepis: učebný text pre 7. postupný ročník všeobecnovzdelávacích škôl* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1957) 12.

<sup>405</sup> Ján Petrenko. *Prehľad všeobecných dejín, diel I. starý a stredný vek* (Bratislava: Nakladateľ Emil Hargaš, 1946) 48.

minority groups in Czechoslovakia is overshadowed by the assumed “we” of shared Czech or Slovak national identity. For example, one textbook published in 1950 begins on the first page with: “We, Slovaks and Czechs, live in the western region of the Slavic territory.”<sup>406</sup>

Second, Hungarians and Germans are depicted as *class* enemies and Slovaks and Czechs as typically members of the peasant classes. Communist vocabulary such as “exploitation of the working class” appears suddenly in feudal narratives. For example, in a description of “Slovakia in the Magyar state” a 1957 text describes how Hungarians migrated into the Danube region where Slovaks had settled and that “the small territory was insufficient to sustain the Hungarians with their pastoral livelihood. Therefore, they undertook campaigns to exploit neighboring lands.”<sup>407</sup> In short, history is reinterpreted to verify the presumed trajectory of historical materialism whereby resources and economic relations—not ethnicity—drive history.

Thirdly, the Holocaust receives little or no mention in the textbooks. I found only one in 44 textbooks that mentioned specifically Jews and the Holocaust. After describing how the Czech lands during the Nazi Protectorate were comprised of “privileged Germans...and the less valued population of the Czech nationality,” it mentions that “Jews were subordinated by the so-called Nuremberg laws. They marked them with a star, moved them out of their homes and concentrated them in special camps. From there they were soon transported and murdered in gas chambers. Similarly this happened even

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<sup>406</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 3.

<sup>407</sup> Ferdinand Lovásko, ed. *Dejepis: učebný text pre 7. postupný ročník všeobecnovzdelávacích škôl* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1957) 21.

in Slovakia.”<sup>408</sup> The publication date of this text may be an indication of why Jews were mentioned here and not in later texts: published in 1950 the text must have been prepared before the start of the show trials that victimized specifically Jews in Czechoslovakia. Roma receive no mention in any of the textbooks that I found despite the tens of thousands from the Czech lands and Slovakia who perished in Nazi concentration camps along with millions of Jews. Once again, the category of peripatetic nations of Jews and Roma receive different treatment in the textbooks than the historically powerful nations of Germany and Hungary. While during the interwar period Jews and Roma served as moral others in civic textbooks, both in World War II Slovakia and under Communism they received little or no attention as if to write these groups out of Central European history completely.

### **Conclusions**

Slovak historiography of World War II offers a poignant illustration of how national narratives vary with regime change. The Slovak National Uprising and the Slovak state under Tiso’s regime are two central symbols of Slovakia’s role in World War II. Despite variation in policy across the socialist period—i.e. Stalinism, liberal reform in the 1960s, normalization, and the return of reform with Glasnost—textbook narratives continued to focus on the SNP as the epitome of the Slovak nation’s participation in World War II. The narrative asserted that the nature of the revolt was Communist, thereby giving legitimacy for Communist rule in Slovakia. This Communist regime needed such legitimacy given that a majority of Slovaks, unlike Czechs, did not

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<sup>408</sup> Učebnicová komisia 1950, 152-153.

vote for the Communist Party in the 1948 elections. Tiso's government, on the other hand, was the counter-narrative under socialism. Tiso and his collaborators came to represent traitors to the Slovak nation and to socialist ideas by virtue of being "clerical-fascists" and "bourgeois nationalists."

Under state socialism, the state narrative of the SNP constructed a national identity based on Communist ideals that were embodied in depictions of the Communist SNP partisans and the loyal ally of Slovakia, the USSR. The counter-narrative of Tiso's state simultaneously contributed to that identity by circumscribing the alterity of "the Slovak nation," which included the bourgeoisie capitalists, nationalists, fascists, the Catholic Church, and Western nation-states, especially the U.S. and England. As the next chapter illustrates, the political context of post-socialist Slovakia would revise accordingly the Holocaust and the Slovak state during World War II into two oppositional narratives: one emphasizing a humanist perspective focusing on the Holocaust, the death of thousands of Jews from Slovakia, and the Slovak state's collaboration with Nazi Germany; and the other rehabilitating Tiso as the Father of the Slovak nation and restoring the narratives of ethnic nationalist glory associated with the first Slovak state.

## CHAPTER V

### Go West Young Nation:

#### **The Collision of Nationalism, Democratization, and Europeanization in Post-Socialist Slovakia, 1989-2005**

In 1997, the European Union discovered that it had unwittingly sponsored in Slovakia the publication of a history textbook that had ethnic national leanings. The textbook in question was *Dejiny Slovenska i Slovákov* (*The History of Slovakia and Slovaks*), written by a Slovak émigré Milan Ďurica.<sup>409</sup> The Slovak Ministry of Education had approved the textbook in 1995 for use in eighth-grade classrooms and ordered 90,000 copies of the book, which it would distribute free of charge to public schools throughout the country.

Although Ďurica's textbook is an exhaustive chronology of Slovak history beginning with the first century A.D., it focuses disproportionately on the years of the first Slovak state, 1939-1945. Ďurica's book received harsh criticism for its glorified portrayal of Jozef Tiso, who was the president of Slovakia during World War II and the leader of the first independent Slovak state. The textbook characterized Tiso as the father and protector of the Slovak nation without critically analyzing his collaboration with Hitler or the deportation of an estimated 70,000 Jews and an undocumented number of Roma from Slovak territory to concentration camps during Tiso's rule.

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<sup>409</sup> Milan Ďurica. *Dejiny Slovenska i Slovákov*. (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1995).



Ďurica's textbook was part of a larger movement among Slovak émigré historians to rehabilitate Jozef Tiso after 1993—the year Slovakia broke away from the Czechoslovak Republic for the second time in its history to form a sovereign state. The trend to rehabilitate Tiso was in part a reaction to socialist-era textbooks that for decades had unequivocally declared Tiso a traitor to his nation, when they mentioned him at all.

After the fall of Communism in 1989, and especially after the formation of an autonomous Slovakia in 1993, historians and politicians struggled with diverse and often unflattering images of Slovakia's role in World War II. While some Slovak émigré historians tried to reform Tiso's image in the national narrative, other Slovak historians, particularly a group from the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV), were outraged that the Slovak Ministry of Culture had approved this textbook over their own. Members of SAV went to the local media to publicize the falsifications and half-truths they found in Ďurica's text. The dean of Slovak historians, Ľubomír Lipták, who had authored several textbooks on Slovak World War II history, was particularly vocal. An international outcry ensued when news broke that EU monies had partially financed the publication of Ďurica's book. At this time the EU was lobbying hard to incorporate human rights and tolerance education in Central European schools by funding an array of civic education programs, teacher training projects, and curricular development initiatives.

### **Textbook Production and Distribution**

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Education began to charge schools for textbooks. Meanwhile, other textbook producers such as the EU often distributed free texts to schools; however, usually the distribution was not as expansive or complete as under the

socialist system. In short, state control of school publications became less hegemonic after 1989 when competing publishing houses emerged and foreign governments and supranational organizations such as the EU and United Nations funded the production of educational texts. Given this distinction in the context of textbook publishing before and after 1989, I would expect the national narrative in socialist-era textbooks to be more closely aligned with state agenda than in texts post-1989. Nonetheless, I have evidence that suggests that state influence over the narrative of the Slovak nation remained strong after 1989.

First, the Slovak Ministry of Education continues the practice used under previous regimes of approving certain textbooks. Where under socialism almost any book that made it to print was approved, the ratio of approved to printed books was much smaller post-1989. Yet educators at the pedagogical faculties in Slovakia where I conducted interviews during my Fulbright year maintained that teachers today generally elect to use ministry-approved textbooks. Not only does the ministry continue to dictate centralized curricula by subject, it manages the high school graduation and university entrance exams. Teachers, therefore, choose state-approved texts because they expect them to better prepare their students for these state exams than alternative texts. Thirdly, the ministry of education continues to be the major publisher of school texts in Slovakia, although the ministry may subsidize the cost of publications by seeking outside funding from, for example, the EU. Finally, some of my interviews with educators and historians indicated that “self-censorship” still happens in textbook writing. Authors continue to anticipate how the current government wants Slovak history to frame Slovak identity, and they adjust their narratives accordingly.

## **Textbook Findings**

The Velvet Revolution in November 1989 marked the end of the socialist era in Czechoslovakia and the beginning of a liberal democratic government under the presidency of the Czech dissident and playwright Václav Havel. National sentiment had been associated with bourgeois values and considered anti-Communist by the Communist regime; however, the fall of Communism in Central Europe in 1989 gave Slovaks the opportunity to reconsider their position in the Czechoslovak federation and lobby for a greater Slovak voice. In 1993, Slovakia peacefully split from the Czech Republic in what became known as the Velvet Divorce.

Few history textbooks were printed for public schools in large quantities between 1989 and 2004 in Slovakia. One Slovak historian and textbook author explained to me in an interview that the political situation in Slovakia seemed too unstable to propose a coherent narrative on national history. Civic education organizations sponsored by the European Union, the US, and individual Western European nations were active in promoting Holocaust education in Central Europe in the 1990s. In light of the civil war in Yugoslavia, civic education projects aimed at teaching human rights and tolerance bloomed in the region. This trend is evident in a few history texts that appeared in Slovakia in the 1990s. One Slovak historian in particular, Ľubomír Lipták, became a prominent author on the fate of Slovak Jews during the Second World War. In a history textbook published in 1992 for high school students that Lipták co-authored with Dušan Kováč, the section on World War II frames the Holocaust thus: “Nazi Germany attempted in the context of the twentieth-century to bring to the territory of Europe the

crudest method of colonial oppression, exploitation, [and] the genocide of nations... In this ‘Great German living-space,’ the ‘superior’ German race was to rule, the ‘lesser nations’—Slavs, Jews were to be decimated, or completely murdered, others became mere meat without rights, used to carry out dirty and manual labor on behalf of the ‘noble race.’”<sup>410</sup> The text continues by giving approximations by ethnicity of the number of people killed in the Holocaust. This introduction to a unit on World War II marks a substantial break from the socialist era when textbooks mentioned Jews and concentration camps in passing, if at all. While socialist-era discourses portrayed World War II as a conflict between the ideologies of fascism, capitalism, and bourgeois nationalism, this 1992 textbook identifies notions of German racial superiority as a motivating factor of the war.

This 1992 textbook is remarkable for its willingness to analyze Slovakia’s role in the World War II genocide. It notes that: “The Ludak government created anti-Jewish measures already during the time of [Slovak] autonomy, [and] after March 14 in particular, it was one measure after another. First, they systematically stripped Jews of all property and employment. Jewish industrial businesses, stores, trades, workshops, and homes went for a minimal sum into the hands of ‘Christian’ companies, their former competitors, or interested parties from the ranks of the families of prominent politicians took possession of them...”<sup>411</sup> The authors go on to describe a law that “forbade and punished any intimate relations between ‘Aryans’ and Jews.”<sup>412</sup> The descriptions of the racial oppression that Jews suffered under the Slovak government intensify: “*From*

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<sup>410</sup> Dušan Kováč and Ľubomir Lipták. *Kapitoly z dejín pre stredné školy* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1992) 41.

<sup>411</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 45.

<sup>412</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 45.

*March 25, 1942, when the first transport left from Poprad, to October 1942, 57,628 Jews were forcibly moved from Slovakia. Almost all of them perished* [emphasis in the original].”<sup>413</sup> The text also makes a point of mentioning that: “Even the Vatican protested to Tiso against the racist laws and later against the transports. In a memorandum to the Bratislava government, the Vatican announced that the racist laws were contrary to Catholic principles.”<sup>414</sup> This last statement counters the socialist-era narrative, which labeled Tiso as a “clerical-fascist” without analyzing the degree to which the Catholic Church supported the actions of his regime. A World War II historical narrative, which painted the Slovak state as not truly representative of the Slovak people but as a product of the Catholic Church, helped promote the socialist belief that religion was an opiate of the masses and a hindrance to higher socialist ideals. One socialist-era teachers guide lists “atheist education” as one of six goals of teaching World War II history.<sup>415</sup>

Kováč and Lipták’s text presents a more complex perspective on the Tiso state than textbooks of the previous regime. It recognizes the difficulty of attributing national will to the actions of a dictatorship because: “Dictatorships do not need some sort of obvious support from its citizenry; it suffices them if no one openly takes a stand against them.”<sup>416</sup> The textbook goes on to mention how censorship and media propaganda played a role in the creation of a pliant Slovak nation during the war. Finally, the text confronts the “widespread theory of ‘the lesser evil,’ which [the regime] could lean on from the start, [and which] helped the government maintain ‘peace’ in Slovakia. This theory,

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<sup>413</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 45.

<sup>414</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 45.

<sup>415</sup> Luboš Balcar. *Výchova ke komunistickému přesvědčení v dějepise na základní devítileté škole*. (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1965) 57.

<sup>416</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 43.

which in essence equals ‘otherwise it would be still worse,’ was used by the government to explain on March 14, 1939 (‘otherwise we would be occupied by the Hungarians’), but also to explain the unpopular measures of the government (‘The Germans would do something even worse.’).”<sup>417</sup> The authors then go on to speak about Tiso for two long paragraphs characterizing him and others in the Slovak leadership at this time as “fascist radicals.”

In short, the 1992 text confronts questions of how Tiso’s regime came to power whereas socialist-era textbooks were apt to describe the Slovak state as an erroneous blip in the political evolution of Slovakia as it progressed inevitably toward a Communist state. Another difference between the pre- and post-1989 narratives is in their descriptions of the Slovak National Uprising, or SNP. While the 1992 text substantially covers of the SNP, unlike the socialist-era texts it gives little mention to Soviet participation in the uprising and it characterizes the partisans as above all anti-fascist rather than pro-Communist.

The post-1989 era also marked a return of émigré Slovaks to Central Europe from the US and Western Europe. Some of these émigrés established Slovak cultural centers in Slovakia and promoted the rehabilitation of Jozef Tiso. One of these émigré historians was Milan Ďurica whose textbook *The History of Slovakia and Slovaks* was published in 1995 by the ministry of education. As already mentioned, this textbook led to an international scandal when the Slovak media and a group of Slovak historians at the Slovak Academy of Sciences revealed the book’s factual errors, ethnic nationalist character, and that 90,000 copies of the text were printed with the support of EU funds.

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<sup>417</sup> Kováč and Lipták 1992, 43.

The *Ďurica* textbook covers the history of Slovakia from 1 A.D. However, it is particularly detailed in its attention to the Slovak state and Tiso's presidency, giving an almost daily chronology of events during the war. Unlike the 1992 textbook and socialist-era accounts of the Tiso state, this text portrays the Tiso regime as a legitimate and beloved representative of the Slovak nation. This is evident in the author's description of Tiso's execution after the war:

*18. April [1947]\** In Bratislava the first president of the Slovak Republic Dr. Jozef Tiso was executed by hanging. Out of fear that there would be a massive reaction by the Slovak nation over this political crime, which was committed by Czech centralists from Beneš's camp and by members of the KSČ [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] and its Slovak collaborators, all armed forces were on the highest alert; in Moravia entire divisions of soldiers were amassed, and at the railway stations in Slovakia an assortment of trains were prepared to deport agitators if need be. The nation, even at the council of its spiritual leaders, retreated into churches, where it celebrated mass, and bells rang out in an expression of national mourning...<sup>418</sup>

This excerpt demonstrates the repeated evocation of the "Slovak nation" to legitimate Tiso's government. In this narrative, Czech centralists and the Communists are the villains responsible for the death of a hero of the Slovak people, who turn out en masse to mourn him and might have risen up against his executioners if not for the fact that the armed forces were on the highest alert.

Anticipating criticism of Tiso as a collaborator in ethnic genocide, the textbook goes to great lengths to depict Tiso's policies toward Slovak Jews as decent and humane:

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<sup>418</sup> *Ďurica* 1995, 219.

*17. March [1942]\** The chairmanship of HSLS-SSNJ under the leadership of Dr. Jozef Tiso undertook to solve the Jewish question in the context of Christian moral principles. It proposed building work camps for Jews in Slovakia and to collect a ratio of Jewish property...Each camp had its own economic division where livestock were raised for the purpose of personal consumption. Schools were established for children, and for older youth, apprentice workshops were established. During the summer holiday, children could spend a certain amount of time outside of the camps with their Jewish families, who lived in freedom...When in the year 1944 a representative of the International Red Cross visited Slovak Jewish camps, he stated in his report that the living conditions in these camps was close to that of the ordinary Slovak population.<sup>419</sup>

Whereas Lipták and Kováč emphasized in their narrative the anti-Jewish policies of the Tiso government, Ďurica details policies of a Slovak state that created reportedly humane living conditions for Slovak Jews. The émigré text underlines the supposed humanity of the Tiso regime presenting the following depiction of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler's reaction to the discovery that Tiso had granted deportation exemptions to Jews in his state: “[Himmler] reproached President Tiso for his inconsistency in particular with regard to Jews, and he showed Tiso his own presidential exemptions, which German soldiers had found on rebels whom they had shot or captured—[who were] Jews: ‘You could have saved us all this trouble if you had gotten rid of them in time!’” Himmler is cited as having told Tiso. This excerpt serves both to portray Tiso as different and more humane than the Nazis but also to demonstrate his autonomy by illustrating how he acted contrary to Nazi ethnic policies.

While socialist-era textbooks used the SNP to illustrate the continuity between Slovakia's past and its Communist present, Ďurica decries the SNP as an affront to Slovak independence and well-being. His description of the SNP focuses on the foreign

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<sup>419</sup> Ďurica 1996,156-57.



element in the uprising and on the damage the uprising caused to Slovakia's infrastructure:

*24. August [1944]\** The partisan organizations, which the Ukrainian personnel among the USSR partisans assigned to Slovak territory, began to carry out intensive, destructive activities. They destroyed tunnels near Strečno and Kľačany, which interrupted the transportation connection on the route Žilina-Košice. Members of the Russian First partisan group Čapajev attacked the railway junction of Margecany, killing seven people (including one woman); they completely ruined the railway station and tore apart six locomotives with mines. Afterwards they set on fire about 300 supply wagons full of Slovak wood, which all burned up. They ambushed foreign cars and murdered on the spot two captured Germans. The German emissary in Bratislava H. Ludin asked the president of the SR [the Slovak Republic] for his approval to send several German military units to Slovakia in light of the partisans' offenses. President Tiso at first did not give his consent because he wanted to confirm what the real situation was.<sup>420</sup>

What is most striking in this section of the text, especially in comparison to socialist-era textbooks, is the message that the partisans victimized Slovakia. In naming specific Slovak towns the author renders the narrative and the affronts more personal for Slovaks. The foreign invaders in this narrative are “the Ukrainian personnel among the USSR partisans assigned to Slovak territory” and the acts of this group are described as “destructive.” The Germans in the narrative are depicted as helpless victims, in contrast to the partisans who randomly ambushed foreign cars and killed “on the spot” two Germans. More subtly, the author underlines the autonomy of Slovakia's leadership in this scenario. The German emissary makes a suggestion, which Tiso rejects, at least temporarily, while he comes to an independent conclusion based on his assessment of the “real situation.” Tiso's rational, evenhandedness contrasts with the rash behavior of the partisans who murder extemporaneously.

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<sup>420</sup> Ďurica 1996, 180-181.

To sum up, émigré historians such as Ďurica after 1989 flip the symbols of the historical narrative and counter-narrative that had existed in socialist-era texts. Where Tiso was a villain and traitor before 1989, he becomes a hero of the Slovak nation by founding an autonomous Slovak state. On the other hand, Ďurica depicts the SNP as a treacherous revolt led by foreign elements who ransacked the Slovak countryside. Moreover, two Slovak academic historians, Kováč and Lipták, stress the Holocaust in their textbook, setting it apart from both the post-1989 émigré texts and socialist-era textbooks. Kováč and Lipták's 1992 publication discusses both the SNP and Tiso. However, in their textbook, Soviet involvement is not as central to the depiction of the SNP as it had been under socialism. These authors also present a more nuanced analysis of the legitimacy of Tiso's regime than did the émigré or socialist texts by questioning the rationale of Tiso and his supporters who claimed that an alliance with the Nazis was "the lesser evil" that allowed Tiso to save Slovaks and some Jews from Nazi destruction.

The re-articulation of the historical narrative in Slovakia post-1989 is consistent with political needs of the state at the time of publication. After 1989 when the socialist regime fell, the ideology of democratic liberalism encouraged a historical discourse that articulated minority rights. Lipták and Kováč were able to reassess Slovak involvement in World War II with the Holocaust as a central theme. In the years immediately following the Velvet Revolution democratic, civic values such as tolerance were to become the foundation of Central European civic identity.

Simultaneously, the end of socialism allowed émigré Slovaks who had favored Tiso's government to return from exile and promote a national narrative that rehabilitated Tiso. In the context of democratization, however, these émigré historians were careful to

depict Tiso as humane in his treatment of the country's Jewish minority. When Slovakia and the Czech Republic split on January 1, 1993, Ďurica helped legitimize the division through a detailed and heroic portrayal of the First Slovak Republic under Tiso's governance. He offered up the First Slovak Republic as a mirror to the post-1993 Slovak state. However, Ďurica and other nationalist émigré historians came under attack for their World War II historiography in part because it conflicted with a supranational identity—that of the European Union. In short, this analysis of Slovakia's World War II narratives confirms the “Janus-faced ambivalence” of national identity.<sup>421</sup> It also illustrates the ways in which state regimes try to “adjust” national narratives to legitimize their governance of a nation.

### **The Invitation to Rejoin Europe**

For over forty years, the Iron Curtain insulated states in the Soviet bloc from Western European initiatives to unite the continent in closer economic, cultural, and political relations. However, the demise of state socialism heralded a call for post-socialist states to “rejoin Europe.” The idea of “Europe”—or more precisely “Western Europe”—was immensely attractive to many post-socialist citizens, as it signified material prosperity, democracy, and protection against Russia.<sup>422</sup> Yet, even as this invitation of continental unity permeated the former Soviet bloc and the world witnessed the initially euphoric reunification of East and West Germany, other areas of the post-socialist region were dividing into smaller states that defined themselves to varying degrees along ethnic lines. For example, beginning in 1991, civil war devastated and

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<sup>421</sup> Homi K. Bhabha. “Introduction: narrating the nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-7.

<sup>422</sup> John Borneman and Nick Fowler. “Europeanization.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 1997. 26: 487-514.

divided Yugoslavia; on the heels of the unsuccessful coup d'état in Moscow in August 1991 Estonia and Latvia declared independence from the Soviet Union; and Czechoslovakia, in what became dubbed the "Velvet Divorce," split peacefully in 1993 into two autonomous states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This unraveling of the geo-political map of Central and Eastern Europe alarmed many international observers, but perhaps none more so than representatives of the Council of Europe (CoE) and European Union (EU) for whom the renewed nationalisms of post-socialist Europe seemed profoundly counterproductive to their goals of European unity, peace, and cooperation.

To counter this rise in ethnic nationalism, the CoE and the EU sponsored civic education projects and publications in post-socialist Europe that emphasized tolerance and minority rights.<sup>423</sup> The intention was that a civic education curriculum based on these democratic values would both assuage nationalist tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and return the region to democratic Europe. Although the cultural bonds of a pan-European identity remained contentious, the political identity of the continent was clearly to be democratic, as the European Council confirmed in its 1993 meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark by making democratic governance a prerequisite to EU membership.<sup>424</sup> By the late-1990s, through programs like the CoE's expansive *Education*

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<sup>423</sup> For an overview of the CoE's activities in democratic civic education see, Recommendation (2002) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship, adopted on 16 October 2002 and Birzúa, César Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC): Project on "Education for Democratic Citizenship." Strasbourg, 20. June 2000. DGIV/EDU/CIT (2000) 21.

<sup>424</sup> For more details on the cultural debates of European identity, see Cris Shore. "Creating the people's Europe: symbols, history and invented tradition," in *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. (Routledge: London and New York, 2000), 40-65.

*for Democratic Citizenship*, civic education had become a fundamental vehicle for “making Europeans” out of Central and Eastern Europeans.

At the same time that European institutions were initiating civic education projects aimed at influencing European identity politics, states that reclaimed their independence in the post-socialist era were dusting off national narratives of social belonging that had been repressed under previous regimes. In this tug-of-war between Europe and post-socialist nation-states over the character of civic education, each side has had its points of leverage and weakness. On the one hand, European institutions have limited influence over national education.<sup>425</sup> While European institutions can make suggestions for education reform, they do not have the governance power to enforce implementation; the Treaty of the European Union, for example, guarantees that states retain the right to determine the content of their national school curricula.<sup>426</sup> On the other hand, the carrots of potential EU membership and funding provide European policy proposals with added clout.<sup>427</sup>

In this chapter section, I explore how Slovakia has managed competing initiatives to both Europeanize and nationalize their civic education curricula after the fall of Communism. Slovakia offers a compelling example of the continuing tension between ethnic national and democratic, inclusive supranational identities. Slovakia was “reborn” as a sovereign nation-state in 1993 after being largely dominated by the majority Czech interests in the Communist period. In this rebirth, national—and often ethnically

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<sup>425</sup> While the EU has found ways of overseeing economic and judicial policies, education policy remains firmly in the realm of state control, dictated by the principle of subsidiarity. See, for example, Pépin 2007.

<sup>426</sup> Article 149 of the Treaty of the European Union.

<sup>427</sup> See Kideckel (1994) on the power of Western European funding in post-socialist Europe.

nationalist—narratives emerged in history, language arts, and civics classes in particular. However, in this same era Slovakia courted EU membership and was admitted to the EU in the May 2004 wave of EU expansion. How did this tension play out in Slovakia’s civic education curriculum?

I open my analysis by considering different aspects of “Europeanness” and the historical binary of “East versus West” in Europe. I argue that a socio-historical perspective on what constitutes European identity is critical to understanding post-socialist reactions to the call to “Europeanize” their civic education curricula. In order to clarify where national and European conceptualizations of belonging overlap or contradict each other, I describe geographic, ethno-cultural, and political dimensions of “Europeanness” and explain how these elements relate to nationalism theory. My research findings demonstrate how proposals to “Europeanize” national civic education, when translated at the state level into curricular content and texts, can ironically reinforce rather than undermine ethno-cultural exclusion.

### *Orientalism in Europe*

As previous chapters have shown, identity politics in European education did not begin with the European Union, and yet much recent scholarship on Europeanization ignores the long history of religious, linguistic, and economic divisions that shaped relations across the continent long before the end of the Cold War. Although the concepts of “alterity” and “civilizational otherness” are perhaps most associated with post-colonial studies, European powers have for centuries propagated notions of essential difference, not just between themselves and their colonies, but along the East-West axis of Europe

itself.<sup>428</sup> How and why countries east of today's "European core" (as France and Germany are frequently dubbed) interpret the call to Europeanize their civic education curricula should be understood in this socio-historical context.

The claim that Western Europe has imagined itself against an Eastern European "Other" for centuries does not deny that significant economic, political, and social differences have existed between these regions.<sup>429</sup> Rather, the point is that these differences were generalized, idealized, and elaborated to the extent of becoming a dominant paradigm of contrast that overshadowed similarities and unduly shaped how the West imagined and interacted with the East.<sup>430</sup> In *Inventing Eastern Europe*, the historian Larry Wolff meticulously illustrates how Western Europe defined itself in the Enlightenment against an Eastern—often referred to as "Oriental"—Europe. This Other Europe was characterized as inferior, even "savage" and "primitive." He cites the *Atlas Historique* published in 1720 in Amsterdam, which describes Hungarians as "cruel peoples" and "barbarians" and which exoticizes Bohemians as "a singular and unique species."<sup>431</sup> The French 18<sup>th</sup>-century encyclopedist Louis Chevalier de Jaucourt derisively referred to Poland as a "paradise of Jews" and a bastion of devout Catholic

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<sup>428</sup> Borneman and Fowler 1997; Maria Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>429</sup> David A. Kideckel. "Utter Otherness: Western anthropology and East European political economy," in *Europe in the Anthropological Imagination*, ed. Susan Parman (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 136.

<sup>430</sup> Ann Laura Stoler. "Sexual Fronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," in *Becoming National: a reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 286-322.

<sup>431</sup> Larry Wolff. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 162-164.

backwardness.<sup>432</sup> Jaucourt could have accurately connected the presence of Jewish communities to earlier policies in Poland of religious tolerance—an Enlightenment ideal upheld better for a time in Poland than elsewhere on the continent. However, the predominant picture in the West of a “backward” East and of Judaism and Catholicism as less “civilized” than Protestantism disqualified such a generous interpretation at the time of the Enlightenment.<sup>433</sup> As I illustrate later, these ethno-cultural ideas of what it means to “be European” persist in the post-socialist era.

In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes the power dynamics of the West projecting a positive definition of itself against the imagined dark screen of the East.<sup>434</sup> Although Said primarily framed “the East” in terms of Arab cultures and societies, other scholars have related his thinking to the East-West binary inside of Europe proper. For example, David Kideckel distinguishes between an Orientalism that judges the other as essentially different and beyond assimilation and one that devalues the other “not because ‘they’ are totally different, but rather because ‘they’ have fallen into difference over time.”<sup>435</sup> It is the latter definition that Kideckel applies to Eastern Europe, because Western Europe “holds out the possibility of redemption for the fallen through capitalism, democracy, civil society, privatization, and the like.”<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Wolff 1994, 188.

<sup>433</sup> Wolff 1994, 188. Some of Wolff’s most convincing illustrations of the power of the East-West binary in Enlightenment-era Europe concern chroniclers and scholars who described Eastern Europe in dire terms but had never traveled to the regions they depicted.

<sup>434</sup> Edward Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>435</sup> David Kideckel. “What’s In A Name? The Persistence of East Europe as Conceptual Category.” *Replika* Special Issue: “Colonisation or Partnership? Eastern Europe and Western Social Sciences,” eds. Miklós Hadas and Miklós Vörös (1996), 30.

<sup>436</sup> Kideckel 1996, 30.



Orientalism is, of course, not simply a way to describe a perception but a power dynamic. Kideckel notes that since the fall of state socialism, the “Western” model has “been elevated to unquestioned dogma by many in the West and East” and assumes that “the Eastern states are or should be supplicants to the West, not just for funds but for ideas and even cultural identity.”<sup>437</sup> Abraham Brumberg cautions that even seemingly benign terms such as that of a post-socialist ‘transition’ imply an Orientalist perspective that assumes “a clearly distinguishable point of departure and a discernible time of completion, and that the end of this process is either ‘normality’—that blessed state of prosperous capitalism, democracy and enlightened relations with the outside world—or a backslide into a barbarism even more chilling than that of the past.”<sup>438</sup> Here the ideas of the Enlightenment that depicted Eastern Europe as a land of dark civilizations in need of illumination seem to parallel certain attitudes about the region after the end of the Cold War.

I emphasize that my purpose is not to demonize Europeanization or post-socialist processes more generally. Rather, I wish to probe the history of power relations implicit in the term “Europeanization” and to ask: “Whose Europeanization is it?” or, more specifically, “By what image of ‘Europe’ should we evaluate the degree to which civic education in post-socialist Europe has ‘Europeanized?’”<sup>439</sup> Historians of Americanization have raised similar questions; where in the US context, inquiry often focuses on how particular ethnic and racial groups have dominated the terms of

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<sup>437</sup> David A. Kideckel. “Us and Them: Concepts of East and West in the East European Transition,” in *Cultural Dilemmas of Post-Communist Societies*. eds. Aldona Jawłowska and Marian Kempny (IFiS Publishers:Warsaw 1994), 134.

<sup>438</sup> Abraham Brumberg. “Sic Transit Post-Sovietology.” *The Nation*, 29: (1996): 29-31.

<sup>439</sup> Jonathan Zimmerman. *Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Americanization, in the European context, the issue relates also to which nation-states or regions have controlled the definition of Europeanization. Although much of the scholarship on Americanization emphasizes how white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant populations in the US dominated discourses on what it meant to “be an American” before World War II, other work has traced the ways that some immigrants who were excluded from that mold—including Eastern Europeans—wrote themselves into the American narrative.<sup>440</sup> For example, Polish and Slovak immigrants in the US evoked their ethnic heroes, for example Tadeusz Kościuszko and Casimir Palaski who fought on the side of the rebels in the American Revolution. Given that competing notions of identity are likely to exist with and challenge the dominant narratives, I investigate in this chapter how Slovaks might employ their own concepts of Europeanness to enhance and legitimize their national narratives. This approach, therefore, tests the common assumption that a supranational European identity necessarily contradicts national identities.

*Nationalisms and Europeanisms: Transposing Nationalism Types to the Supra-National*

Whether taught in formal civics classes or in other subject areas such as history, geography, and language art, civic education has historically been the realm of the state for producing national citizens. Understanding what types of “nationhood” civic education has tended to promote in the past can elucidate various ways in which European identity is narrated in classrooms and curricula today.

The primordial, cultural, and civic categories of nationalism that I described in the Introduction to this study are ideal types: they can be compartmentalized for theoretical

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<sup>440</sup> Jeffrey E. Mirel. *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization and European immigrants*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2010).

purposes; however, in social practice narratives of ethno-cultural and civic membership coexist in any given national context. Even though the prevalent discourse in European institutions circumscribes an inclusive, democratic civic identity, ethno-cultural terms for Europeanness are evident in the evocation of a “common Christian heritage,” in geographical debates about the borders and centers of the continent, and in racial references to Turkish or Asian “others.” Indeed, to only define European belonging along democratic civic lines would be to make “European” an area more diffuse than the EU or CoE are willing or able to govern.

Because of the persistence of the ethno-cultural elements of identity even at the supranational level, I suggest that analyses of Europeanization that only consider how ethno-cultural narratives at the national and civic democratic narratives at the supranational level clash is to miss other possibilities of intersection between the two along complementary narratives of civic belonging or ethno-cultural kinship. First, I illustrate how Slovak civic education texts attribute democratic identity to their national history—bringing a particular democratic notion of “Europe” to the nation. Second, I demonstrate how these texts inscribe a notion of ethno-cultural identity into the idea of “Europe”—infusing the supra-national identity with characteristics of the ethno-cultural national. Combined, these narratives defy an oversimplified notion of the Central East European nation as purely ethno-cultural or “primitive” in contrast to a progressive, civic democratic “Europe.”

### **Cases and Methods**

Post-socialist cases are fundamental to the study of Europeanization because these contexts contrast historically with Western Europe in ways that impact notions of

citizenship and belonging. First, due in part to over forty years of totalitarian rule, how Central and East European (CEE) countries interpret and adapt democratic civic narratives is likely to be different from in states with longer, established democratic traditions. Second, the fall of Communism led to the re-emergence of nation-states that had formerly been a part of larger states—for example, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Ethno-cultural nationalism in the 1990s served as both a motivation and justification for secession.<sup>441</sup> How ideas of European identity and citizenship would fare in this context of heightened ethnic nationalism challenges the influence of Europeanization programs. Finally, the history of the East-West binary that I have described suggests that contemporary narratives of European inclusion would have a different resonance in Eastern than in Western Europe.

Among post-socialist states, Slovakia is a useful case for analyzing interactions between national and supranational narratives because of its history as an ethnically defined nation frequently dominated by larger national ethnic groups. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the territory of present-day Slovakia fell under Hungarian rule during the Habsburg Empire, and policies of Magyarization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century made a secondary-school level education or higher education unavailable to Slovaks who did not speak fluent Hungarian and who were unwilling to move to the Czech lands or Vienna.<sup>442</sup> As Chapters Two and Four have shown, during the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1948-1989), by equating Czech and Slovak concerns as “Czechoslovak,” the larger Czech population could dominate state politics while pretending to be a bi-national state. From 1939-1945 Slovakia formed its

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<sup>441</sup> Ignatieff 1993.

<sup>442</sup> Johnson 1988 and Leff 1995.

first independent state under the totalitarian leadership of Jozef Tiso. During this period, an estimated 70,000 Slovak Jews and 20,000 Slovak Roma were deported to death camps. After World War II, Slovakia rejoined the Czechs in a federal state; however, to the detriment of Slovak interests, the country re-centralized with the Communist takeover in 1948. Over forty years later, the fall of Communism in Europe brought with it a liberalization that fostered the re-emergence of nationalist identities. Slovakia and the Czech Republic agreed to split peacefully in 1993. Despite nationalist politics under the leadership of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar from 1993-1998, Slovakia was admitted to the EU in the first major wave of post-socialist expansion in May 2004.

My data on Slovakia are drawn primarily from civic education textbooks, for all grade levels and types of schools, published between 1989-2005 and approved by the Czechoslovak, or, after 1993, the Slovak Ministry of Education. Some of these state-approved texts received funding from European agencies such as the CoE.<sup>443</sup> I mention at times in my analysis Czechs as well as Slovaks because the textbooks published before the Velvet Divorce in 1993 tend to present the two groups as one nation. Themes related to Europeanization became evident with multiple readings and coding of these texts. I present here a synthesis of the ways in which Slovak civic education textbooks interpret and realize “Europeanization”: (1) by illustrating how Slovak national heroes and events

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<sup>443</sup> As mentioned earlier, because of subsidiarity principles in EU educational policy, textbooks and curricular content remain under the purveyance of member states. Thus, the EU can offer to fund educational publications and in this way promote its message of Europeanization, but it is reliant on state educational ministries to approve and integrate those texts into the curriculum. Therefore, the process of publishing educational materials itself involves a sort of dance between the EU and the state: the promise of money is obviously attractive to poorly funded ministries of education in the post-socialist economy, but at the same time the EU can only offer or withhold funding, not dictate publication content.

reflect the civic democratic narrative of Europe; and (2) by inscribing ethno-cultural aspects of Slovak national belonging in European identity.

### **Slovakia: On the Democratic Path and At the “Heart” of Europe**

Democratization is a widely recognized and accepted facet of Europeanization. Yet as this analysis demonstrates, democratic narratives in civic education extend beyond the broadest conceptions of “Europe,” and thus do not foster a uniquely European sense of citizenship or identity. Slovak post-Communist textbooks recognize four types of communities in which the democratic civic narrative is relevant: the abstract/universal, the international, the European, and the national.

At the secondary school level, Slovak civic education textbooks dedicate significant space to explaining democratic principles independent of national, international, or supranational affiliations—that is, with no specific reference to a delimited community. Instead, in these sections, democratic ideals are presented as universals constituting a global democratic identity. Lists of democratic freedoms and responsibilities, descriptions of what constitutes a civil society or “democratic culture,” and explanations of concepts such as majority rule and minority rights are common across texts in the upper grade levels.<sup>444</sup>

One textbook defines “equality” as equal treatment regardless of “race, skin color, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, gender,

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<sup>444</sup> Alexandra Krsková and Darina Krátka. *Občianska výchova pre 8. ročník základných škôl: základy práva a ochrana spotrebiteľa* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1994), 16-17, 20-21.

property or other position.”<sup>445</sup> However, the text fails to situate the ideal of equality within specific cases or contexts. Debating the concept of equality or inequality as it pertains to issues of local and national import would ground the abstract concept of equality in real-life applications. Nationally relevant examples include proposed affirmative action policies for Slovak Roma [often referred to as “Gypsies”], state-sponsored minority-language schools for Hungarians in Slovakia, and the treatment of Jews by Slovak ethnic nationals before and during the Holocaust. Not only are prompts for such discussions uncommon in the textbooks, I also found in classroom observations that teachers rarely facilitated conversations that related democratic principles to contentious issues in a national or international context. Teachers and students were more concerned with memorizing textbook definitions and lists related to democratic principles because these items were likely to appear on the state graduation [maturita] exams.<sup>446</sup>

At the international level, civic belonging based on democratic ideals extends beyond Europe. A majority of civic education textbooks in Slovakia, for example, glorify the American Revolution as a turning point in democratic history. In the early 1990s the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln replaced earlier images of socialist heroes such as Marx and Lenin.<sup>447</sup> One widely distributed textbook

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<sup>445</sup> Barát, Dragúň, et al. 1993, 123.

<sup>446</sup> Barát et al., *Občianska náuka/Náuka o spoločnosti: prehľad stredoškolského učiva pre maturantov a uchádzačov o štúdium na vysokých školách* (Bratislava: Enigma, 1995) 123.

<sup>447</sup> See for example: Tomáš Jílek et al., *Dejepis pre 1. ročník gymnázia* First edition. (Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo v Bratislave, 1997), 211; Kučírek et al., *Občianska výchova pre 6. ročník*. First edition. (Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1997), 19; and Dušan Kováč and Vojtech Kopčan. *Dejepis: Slovensko na prahu nového veku, učebnica dejepisu pre 7. ročník základných škôl a pre 3. ročník osemročných gymnázií*. Second edition. (Bratislava: Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, 1995), 23.

declares that the US is “the origin for today’s [democratic] constitutions.”<sup>448</sup> The United Nations (UN) also appears frequently in the texts as a democratic protagonist in the international community. Summaries and annotated versions of the UN Charter and *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are common in textbooks beginning in the latter half of elementary school.<sup>449</sup> Similarly the *Vienna Declaration*, signed in 1993 at the UN convention, is often cited in the textbooks as an illustration of the international community’s commitment to democratic human rights and the rights of minorities.<sup>450</sup> In addition to presenting democratic ideology as a universal value system and democratic history as an international movement, the Slovak civic education curriculum does draw specific connections between European institutions and democratic civic identity. In one Slovak textbook under the section “human and civil rights,” the authors remark that “[t]he Council of Europe was founded March 4, 1950 to secure the protection of

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<sup>448</sup> Alexandra Krsková and Darina Krátka. *Základy práva a ochrana spotrebiteľa: učebnicu pre stredné školy*. (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1995), 15.

<sup>449</sup> Examples include Mária Čapová and Božena Stašenková. *Metodická príručka k občiankej výchove na 2. stupni základných škôl* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1998), 110-113. Alexandra Krsková and Darina Krátka. *Základy práva a ochrana spotrebiteľa: učebnicu pre stredné školy* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1995), 88. Nadácia Milana Šimečku. *Všetci Rôzni, Všeci Rovní metodická príručka pre výchovu k tolerancii*. 2002. From the English original “All different—all equal,” Council of Europe 1995. Translation: Zdenka Marková, Mária Sattiová.

<sup>450</sup> Some representative examples include: Mária Čapová and Božena Stašenková. *Metodická príručka k občianskej výchove na 2. stupni základných škôl* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1998), 110-113. Alexandra Krsková and Darina Krátka. *Základy práva a ochrana spotrebiteľa: učebnicu pre stredné školy* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1995), 88. Nadácia Milana Šimečku, trans. Zdenka Marková and Mária Sattiová. *Všetci Rôzni, Všeci Rovní: metodická príručka pre výchovu k tolerancii*. Bratislava: Council of Europe, 2002.



democratic and human rights in Europe.”<sup>451</sup> Slovak civics textbooks and civic education exams post-1993 expect students to learn the general roles of European institutions, which are depicted as fully democratic, and to know a general sketch of European integration history, including the names and dates of major treaties such as Maastricht.<sup>452</sup> European governance and civic history are usually presented as dry, disconnected lists of facts, figures, names, and acronyms, with little or no context or narrative.

In contrast to the democratic European civic narratives, the national civic narratives often evoke emotion and engage the reader in a specific historical context. A textbook written by a respected Slovak historian describes the reaction of Czechs and Slovaks after the Soviet pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 in this way:

“Hopelessness befell the people. But they understood that real changes were not possible so long as a dictatorship existed in the Soviet Union and Europe continued to be divided. *An open fight with the dictatorship was impossible. The question of human rights became an important aspect in the race for democracy* [emphasis in the original].”<sup>453</sup> In this excerpt, human rights and “the race for democracy” are situated in the national context of the Prague Spring—which was, as described earlier in Chapter Four, a dramatic period of liberalization in socialist Czechoslovak history that ended when Soviet-led tanks crushed the movement. “The people” are implicitly Czechs and Slovaks, who want democratic change. “The dictatorship” is equated with the Soviet Union and, in this way, the text seems to deny any Czech or Slovak responsibility for the regime that existed prior to or

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<sup>451</sup> Pavol Barát and Emil Dragúň. *Občianska náuka. Prehľad stredoškolského učiva pre maturantov a uchádzačov o štúdium na vysokých školách* (Nitra: Enigma, 1993), 122.

<sup>452</sup> Barát and Dragúň 1993, 122.

<sup>453</sup> Lipták and Kováč 1990, 45.

after the Prague Spring and to align all Czechs and Slovaks with a homogenized, post-1989 image of “democratization.”

Stated in another way, national history in these Slovak textbooks is primarily a narrative of democratic struggle. One textbook states that, “The issue of human rights has been a part of Slovak and Czech history already from the 1848 revolution; although it [the revolution] was often masked by other titles and it is generally understood only as part of the fight for national independence.”<sup>454</sup> Here the authors are associating the period of the Czech and Slovak National Awakening with human rights, where Western commentators after the fall of Communism tended to posit ethnic nationalism and democratic history as oppositional.<sup>455</sup>

The ways in which textbook authors infuse national history with democratic belonging are further illustrated in narratives about the Hussites and the *Charter of 77*. Almost a century before Martin Luther, Jan Hus, who was a Roman Catholic priest born in Bohemia near Prague, encouraged major reforms in the Church such as the use of vernacular languages instead of Latin for mass, an end to indulgences, and the right of believers to receive both forms of communion (i.e. bread and wine). Hus was burned at the stake in 1415 for his teachings, but his followers continued to instigate liturgical changes after his death. They met with resistance from the Church and monarchy, leading

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<sup>454</sup> Krsková and Krátka 1995, 88.

<sup>455</sup> This democratic interpretation of the 1848 nationalist revolutions in the Habsburg Empire has credence in the sense that the German-speaking population was disproportionately represented in the Viennese parliament to the disadvantage of the empire’s many minorities. However, recent scholarship has emphasized the democratic successes and relatively high degree of tolerance that existed in the Austrian half of the multiethnic Habsburg Empire. The labeling of nationalist movements as democratic draws attention to one side of a fundamental tension in liberal democracy—that is, the democratic right to affiliate, even with ethnically exclusive groups, and the principles of tolerance and diversity.

to military battles from the 1420s until the mid-1430s, known now as the Hussite or Bohemian Wars. During the Counter-Reformation, many Hussites fled to Slovakia, where religious oppression was less severe at the time than in the Czech lands. Although the Hussite movements are anachronistic with Enlightenment developments in democratic philosophy, textbook authors call attention to a democratic spirit in the former: as one textbook puts it, “The democratic demand for ‘free religious expression,’ which the Hussite revolutionary movement and later the Reformation movement realized, had far-reaching consequences.”<sup>456</sup> This excerpt opposes the notion that democratic developments originated in “Western Europe”—an idea central to the East-West binary discussed earlier. This citation emphasizes that the Hussite movement was a call for a democratic value—religious freedom—and that it predated the “Western” Lutheran Reformation. A twentieth-century event regularly evoked in Slovak textbooks in a similar vein is the *Charter of 77*. This document, signed by Czech and Slovak dissidents in 1977, called on the Czechoslovak Communist government to uphold basic human rights, enshrined in the Czechoslovak constitution and in international pacts that the state had signed, including the 1975 Helsinki Accords.<sup>457</sup>

Evident in these textbooks is the portrayal of Communism as an aberration in the “natural” democratic trajectory of Czech and Slovak history. One textbook reads: “Although forty years of socialist development signified a sharp interruption in its [Slovak legal culture’s] original path of development, we are returning to our civilizational origin.”<sup>458</sup> The reference to a “civilizational origin” calls to mind the premises behind the

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<sup>456</sup> Kučírek et al. 1997, 216.

<sup>457</sup> Lipták and Kováč 1990, 46.

<sup>458</sup> Krsková and Krátka 1995, 21.

East-West binary, which defines Western European civilization as essentially democratic in contrast to an uncivilized Eastern Europe other. This quote is also reminiscent of the tropes of primordial nationalism that were described in particular in Chapter Three, whereby a people are called to return to their national roots and an origin myth evokes a common idea of ancestral beginnings and belonging. In this excerpt Slovakia is placed firmly within the confines of democratic “civilization,” associated with the West. To further underline this point, the authors highlight another democratic step in Czech-Slovak history: how the Czechoslovak government after 1989 ratified the *Bill of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms* [*Listiny základných práv a slobôd*]. They note that this document was later adopted as part of the Slovak constitution. Similarly, another textbook author, after describing the Velvet Revolution of 1989, ends a section of his text with the following sentence: “*Czecho-Slovakia after 42 years once again stepped out onto the path of democracy* [emphasis in the original].”<sup>459</sup> In this image, the period of Communism is dismissed as nothing more than a deviation from the democratic road that Czechoslovakia had started down in the interwar era (1918-1938) and in the years immediately following World War II before the Communist takeover in 1948. The history of the fascist government that founded the first Slovak state during World War II is in this statement erased from the “path” of the nation.

With few exceptions, Slovak civic education textbooks record positive examples of democratic events and periods in Slovak history and largely fail to acknowledge profoundly undemocratic ones.<sup>460</sup> The deportation of Jews and Roma to death camps

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<sup>459</sup> Lipták and Kováč 1990, 49.

<sup>460</sup> A notable exception to this trend is the textbook: Miroslav Kusý and Terézia Stredlová. *Tolerancia príručka o výchove k tolerancii* (Dunajská Streda: Vydavateľstvo

from Slovakia during the Holocaust, the expulsion of ethnic Germans and Hungarians from Czechoslovak territory after World War II, and current issues regarding the disproportionately impoverished Romani minority in the region are a few examples of the gaping holes in many textbooks' depictions of Slovak civic history, which is painted to appear unquestionably democratic.

Of course, comparable to portraying Slovak identity as unwaveringly “democratic” is equating “becoming European” with “becoming democratic.” European and Slovak history are rife with undemocratic events that defy an essentialist democratic notion of their civic identities.<sup>461</sup> Yet in a desire to foster unity through liberal tolerance, European institutions today generally limit their definition of “Europeanization” to these civic democratic aspects of governance and ideology. Likely the point of such narratives is not meant to be descriptive of the past or present so much as prescriptive for the future.

Unfortunately, this distinction is not often voluntarily exposed at either the national or supranational level through narratives that openly confront undemocratic realities with democratic promises and ideals. The point remains, however, that Slovak

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Lilium Aurum, 2003), 9. Kusý and Stredlová note examples of how Slovakia has failed to live up to its democratic promises embodied in international treaties. The tone is one of scolding the country and holding it to a high standard rather than the tone of glorification of national democratic successes that permeates other civics texts. Civic education teachers and teacher trainers from Slovakia interviewed for this study consistently noted, however, that they did not have time to employ texts like this one into their teaching because “multicultural education” was a suggested but not required aspect of an already demanding civic education curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education. Especially at the college-track, secondary school level teachers concentrated on subject material that would be covered on the state graduation exam, and knowledge of “multicultural education” issues, including the contextual aspects of minority rights, were not generally tested.

<sup>461</sup> James W. Loewen makes a similar point about the gulf between US ideals and its lived history in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American history Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

textbook authors in the post-socialist era and the state agents that approve their publications essentialize Slovakia as a democratic nation in the ways I have illustrated.<sup>462</sup>

In sum, in Slovak textbooks after 1989 the civic democratic narrative pervades notions of membership at multiple levels of governance—i.e. the national, European, international, and even global sphere. The ubiquity of the civic democratic narrative, which the texts describe as inherent to a broad spectrum of communities, dilutes its power to serve as a foundation of European identity and cohesion. The practice in Slovak civic education textbooks of inscribing the democratic narrative into Slovakia’s national history serves as both a means of bringing Europe closer to Slovakia by relating democratic ideals to a familiar national context and a way to move Slovakia closer to Europe by illustrating that Slovakia belongs to the Western civilizational ideal of Europe.

### **Slovakia as the Ethno-Cultural Core of Europe**

While narratives of democratic belonging dominate notions of “Europeanization” put forth by the CoE and EU, Slovak textbooks also assign, often in a subtle fashion, ethnic and cultural attributes to European membership. These “European” characteristics echo in several ways the ethno-cultural conception of the Slovak nation by evoking Christian religious heritage, geographical belonging, traditions, and claims to a common culture. These parallel narratives of Slovak national and European membership locate

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<sup>462</sup> Certainly, this criticism is also applicable to U.S. history textbooks. See again Loewen 1995.

Slovakia at the core of the continent, where it embodies the essential (and essentialist) elements of the whole.<sup>463</sup>

References to Slovakia as the geographic center of Europe illustrate an interpretation of European identity with primordial undertones. A civic education textbook for sixth graders contains a map of the European peninsula, which is shaded completely gray except for one white area—Slovakia. Slovakia is highlighted not only by the map’s coloration but also because the map is framed so that Slovakia is at the center of the image.<sup>464</sup> Referring to the map and speaking directly to the intended young audience, the textbook asserts: “As you see, Slovakia lies in the very heart of Europe.” This formulation of geographic space—in both how the map is framed and the matter-of-fact voice of the written text—leaves no room for any conclusion other than agreement that indeed Slovakia is not only in Europe, it is at its “heart”—a word which has a similar connotation in Slovak as in English of being vital and central to the whole. A 1994 textbook cites an accomplished Slovak who wrote in 1918 that Bratislava was the second city of the Hungarian Empire and “the most central town in all of central Europe.”<sup>465</sup> The dual iteration in this quote of Slovakia’s place in “the center of the center” stresses the notion of Slovakia’s fundamental belonging in Europe.

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<sup>463</sup> Although my focus in this section is on ethno-cultural narratives of Europe, these narratives seem to be extensions of the national ethno-cultural themes, which are even more prevalent in Slovak civics and history textbooks. The following excerpt explicitly sets out characteristics of the nation that reflect an ethno-cultural model: “We are not only members of a family, district or region. We are also members of a larger whole—*of a nation*. We are connected to the other members through our common *language*, the *territory* on which we live, a *common history, traditions, culture* (emphasis in original).” Kučírek et al. 1997, 58. It is this pattern of an ethno-cultural narrative that I am arguing textbooks extend into the supranational, European realm.

<sup>464</sup> Kučírek et al. 1997, 58.

<sup>465</sup> Vlasta Jaksicsová, ed. *Dejepisná čítanka* (Bratislava: Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, 1994), 77.

The critical place of Slovaks in Europe is further emphasized in exclusive ethnic and religious terms in civic education material. A civic education textbook quotes, without discussion or analysis, an 1822 speech of the Slovak poet and political writer Ján Kollár: “among all of the contemporary nations in Europe, the Slav, or Slavic [nation], is the largest and most widespread.”<sup>466</sup> This citation seems to serve as a reminder to ethnic Slovaks that although they alone are small in number, they can count themselves among a larger ethnic population in Europe—a theme echoed in earlier eras of Slovak history as illustrated in Chapters Two and Three. Because the speaker is Kollár—who figures highly in Slovak national history—the claim of the citation has added authority for the intended Slovak audience. The non-Slavic minorities of Slovakia, such as Hungarians and Roma, are not only omitted from the Slovak national narrative, their presence in Europe as a whole is implicitly minimized in comparison with the numerous Slavs.

Linguistic minorities in Slovakia are further silenced in narratives that glorify the Slovak language and its literature, but fail to acknowledge, for example, the many Hungarian-speaking writers who were born or resided on what is today Slovak territory. One textbook prophesizes that: “the learned world will see that the Slovak language and the literature written in it (and that is to say both spiritual as well as secular books) can always be with great praise compared to the other famous European languages and their powers of expression.”<sup>467</sup> Despite its praise for Slovak language and literature, the tone of this excerpt is one of wrongful under-appreciation: the learned world will—but does not yet—see the value of Slovak literature. The thrust of the excerpt is that Slovak language and literature nonetheless belong in the pantheon of great European literary traditions.

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<sup>466</sup> Jaksicsová 1994, 56-57.

<sup>467</sup> Jaksicsová 1994, 50.



Linguistic membership is a common feature of ethno-cultural conceptions of the nation; here, however, that measure is extended to the supranational level as a measure of European belonging.

Christianity also serves as an exclusive marker of the ethno-cultural Slovak nation and then, by elision, of Europe. A sixth-grade textbook remarks: “In our country we traditionally celebrate Christian holidays.”<sup>468</sup> The “we” signifies here those who are “in our country” and yet these residents are religiously defined solely as Christians. The large Jewish communities that lived for centuries in Slovakia before the Holocaust—as well as the few thousand who remain—are disregarded, for example. Assertions of the centrality of Christianity to the Slovak nation are common in civic education textbooks. The state symbol is a double cross, which one textbook explains: “probably developed during the Byzantine empire. The missionaries Cyril and Methodius brought it to Great Moravia in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>469</sup> This excerpt asserts the bond between Slovakia and Christianity, but it also serves to write Slovakia into the history of Europe: the fame of these fraternal missionaries, who developed an alphabet that was the predecessor to Cyrillic, is associated in this text with Great Moravia, which, as civic textbooks repeatedly claim, centered on the territory of today’s Slovak Republic. Like Slovakia, Europe is also described as a Christian culture: “The birth of Europe reaches back to the era of the Roman Empire, the rise of Christianity.”<sup>470</sup> In this account Europe has its primordial origins in Christianity. “Europe” here is no longer simply a geographical entity but a civilizational body that does not simply begin but is “born.”

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<sup>468</sup> Kučírek et al. 1997, 21.

<sup>469</sup> Kučírek et al. 1997, 59.

<sup>470</sup> Anna Bocková et al., *Náuka o spoločnosti príprava na maturity a prijímacie skúšky na vysoké školy*. (Bratislava: SPN, 2004), 335.

The Christian narration of Europe continues in the civic education textbooks with the story of Pierre Dubois, a Norman lawyer who published in the year 1308 a proposal suggesting that the Christian monarchs of Europe agree to a system of international arbitration to resolve their differences. A Slovak textbook observes: “This [union] was to become an institution—the Most Christian Republic...”<sup>471</sup> The text attributes the second plan to unite Europe to the Bohemian-born Jiří of Poděbrady, who in 1458 was elected king by the Bohemian estates and soon after proposed a Christian, pan-European league in defense against the Ottoman Turks. The text highlights the role of Poděbrady by mentioning him twice but Pierre Dubois only once.<sup>472</sup> Poděbrady and Dubois are discussed in tandem as men who unified Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire. Implied throughout this section is the notion of the Ottomans as ethnic others—and Muslims as religious others. These early proposals to unite Europe as a Christian “republic” create an association between European unity—even in its contemporary manifestations—and Christianity. Furthermore, as illustrated in Chapters Two and Three, this narrative of a Christian civilization as the basis of modernity, progress, and ethnic national unity is a familiar theme in Slovak national history, and, therefore, an easy point through which ethnic nationalists can integrate the European and Slovak national narratives of belonging.

The narrative of Poděbrady functions to write “Central Europe,” at least (but not Slovakia per se) into “Western European” history. It extends the theme of European union into the twentieth century by describing how after Aristid Briand became the prime minister of France in 1929 he presented to the UN a proposal to create a United States of

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<sup>471</sup> Bocková et al. 2004, 335.

<sup>472</sup> Bocková et al. 2004, 335-336.

Europe.<sup>473</sup> The text weaves references to Poděbrady throughout the section, keeping the Central European protagonist foregrounded: “since the time of King Jiří of Poděbrady this was the first proposal with the idea of European unity, with which a government had concerned itself.”<sup>474</sup>

Similarly, the civic education textbooks are replete with claims regarding the cultural contributions of Slovaks to Europe. Exemplifying this pattern is a textbook with a section titled “Notable Compatriots.”<sup>475</sup> Eight men are named in this section (no women), including Jozef Kornel Hell (1713-1789), who is attributed with creating the prototype of contemporary oil pumps, and Ján Bahyl’ who, according to the text, constructed the first helicopter.<sup>476</sup> As if to counter the East-West historical binary that associates the Enlightenment only with the Western half of Europe, a textbook describes a man whom it calls “The Slovak Socrates” under the heading, “The Age of Enlightenment.” Adam František Kollár (1718-1783) was a lawyer and historian, and the textbook claims that: “For his wisdom and broad knowledge they gave him a name after the famous Greek philosopher ‘Slovak Socrates.’”<sup>477</sup> While such a magnanimous comparison is likely to bemuse non-Slovaks (and probably many Slovaks as well), it

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<sup>473</sup> Bocková et al. 2004, 336. Poděbrady trumps Dubois in a similar fashion to Jan Hus over Martin Luther. I assign the latter to “civic democratic” narratives because the text relates Hus to freedom of religion as a democratic principle. However, certainly another aspect of the Hus example is an ethno-cultural pride in “a son of the nation.”

<sup>474</sup> Bocková et al. 2004, 336.

<sup>475</sup> The Slovak word for what I have translated as “compatriots” is “rodáci.” At the root of the Slovak term is the notion of “birth,” making the primordial connotations of brotherhood—common birth or family—stronger in the Slovak than in my translation. Kučírek et al. 1997, 62.

<sup>476</sup> Kučírek et al. 1997, 62-63.

<sup>477</sup> Dušan Kováč and Vojtech Kopčan. *Dejepis: Slovensko na prahu nového veku, učebnica dejepisu pre 7. ročník základných škôl a pre 3. ročník osemročných gymnázií*. (Bratislava: Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, 1995), 20.

illustrates how Slovak textbook narratives substantiate Slovakia's place in a culturally defined Europe.

To summarize, Slovak textbooks employ multiple definitions of "Europe" to effectively write Slovak's ethno-cultural conception of itself into a narrative of Europe and, conversely, to apply selectively the democratic civic narrative that dominates European institutional discourses to Slovak history. Meanwhile, the evident tensions between exclusive narratives of ethno-cultural membership and democratic principles of pluralism and tolerance are largely ignored. In these ways, the Slovak Ministry of Education and the textbook authors it commissions subtly reconcile—rather than eliminate—Slovak ethno-cultural nationalism with calls to "Europeanize" their civic education curriculum.

### **Conclusions**

Conflicting accounts of Slovakia's role during World War II exemplify the dialogical nature of textbooks in this region. This dialog—which is at times more precisely a quarrel with each side asserting its own vision of history in reaction to previous or alternative accounts—occurs across time periods but also among authors within the post-1989 era when the state was no longer the sole proprietor of publishing houses and thereby no longer controlled which versions of history were published. In particular, this chapter outlined dueling representations of the First Slovak state (1939-1945) and the Slovak National Uprising (SNP). As Chapters Two, Three, and Four also illustrated, authors have refashioned past events in textbook accounts to legitimate the rule of the current regime and refit the "nation" into the image of the new state.

Where history textbooks during World War II unsurprisingly portrayed Tiso as the father of the Slovak nation, Communist-era textbooks portrayed him as a traitor and instead upheld Slovak Communist partisans and the Slovak National Uprising as indicative of the anti-fascist, pro-Communist sentiments of the whole Slovak nation. After the fall of Communism, as this chapter has demonstrated, textbook authors have countered the Communist-era historiography of World War II in at least two ways. First, Ďurica and other nationalist émigré historians tried to shout over the voices of the previous regime's textbooks by portraying the SNP as a randomly violent, decisively non-Slovak movement that destroyed Slovak property and people, as well as by rehabilitating Tiso as a national hero. Second, other historians such as Kováč and Lipták countered the Communist silence surrounding the Holocaust by detailing Slovakia's role in the systematic oppression and deportation of thousands of Slovak Jews and Roma to Nazi death camps. In addition, historians from the Slovak Academy of Sciences after 1989 entered the dialog by denouncing publicly the work of nationalist historians such as Ďurica and producing alternative textbooks.

Further complicating the post-1989 textbook scene is the arrival of European Union politics on the Slovak stage. Although the EU recognizes school policy as the jurisdiction of its member states, it can offer funding and other incentives that may influence state education. In post-Communist countries that were vying for EU membership, such as Slovakia, the EU used monetary and political clout to press for democratic and human rights instruction and the inclusion of a non-ethnic, civic vision of the national "we" in textbooks. As outlined in this chapter, the demand for Slovaks to remake themselves and their history in the image of Europe had profound outcomes that

reveal the shape-shifting nature of national identity. Slovak textbooks from this era wrote Slovakia into the democratic image of the EU, but also translated aspects of their own ethno-cultural national narrative of Christianity and geography into an image of what it means to be “European.”

Ironically the post-1989 mandate to permeate school texts with abstract democratic concepts such as the value of pluralism and minority rights had the unintended effect of obscuring any substantial inclusion of specific minority groups in most Slovak textbook narratives. Roma and Jews remain poorly represented in Slovak history textbooks; meanwhile, mention of these specific minority groups remains largely relegated to multicultural education—a subject that is recommended but not mandatory in the Slovak state curriculum, which is otherwise highly demanding in its content coverage, leaving little time for teachers or students to entertain elective courses. In sum, the Slovak nation represented in school texts and curricula is a conflicted, Janus-faced construction of inclusive democratic ideals on one side and exclusive ethno-cultural identity on the other. As alluded to in the Prologue of this dissertation, if the dilemma of the National Theater is to be democratically managed, it must confront its ethnically homogenous self-image with its ethnically pluralistic reality. School texts can help in this endeavor if they dare to bring to balance abstract democratic ideals with an acknowledgement of concrete, undemocratic practices of the state in the past and present.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

The community of the nation was reimagined as a caricature of its former self, and the instruments of that makeover were above all its own traditions and history.

—Derek Sayer<sup>478</sup>

#### **“Hussite Wars”: Textbook Battles Over the Meaning of Jan Hus**

The stories that Slovak textbooks tell across political regimes about Jan Hus and his followers encapsulates a central theme of this dissertation: that textbooks reflect a political dialog that happens not just between authors and their anticipated student and teacher audiences, but also among authors and their publics across generations of political regimes. Textbook authors in their accounts of history and civics must contend with the contemporary political ideology of the regime in power, but also with a cadre of expected heroes, villains, events, and symbols that are embedded in a tradition of imagining the nation. In this way, textbook narratives attempt—often awkwardly—to bridge the forward and backward gaze of the Janus-faced nation-state. Like the nation-state itself, the textbooks are wrought with contradictions and tensions. However, the web of common, historical referents that are evoked across regime change strives to maintain a degree of continuity and stability in the conception of the national community even during drastic revisions in the politics and structure of the state itself.

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<sup>478</sup> Derek Sayer *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Jan Hus was a Catholic priest in Prague during the late 14<sup>th</sup> century who advocated Church reforms that were radical in his lifetime and that predated Martin Luther's "95 Theses" by a century. Hus called for the administration of both bread and the wine to laypeople during communion, the use of the vernacular language of the community rather than Latin in church services, a return to vows of poverty for the clergy, and an end to indulgences. In 1414, the Church Council at Constance summoned Hus from Bohemia, and found him guilty of heresy. He was burned at the stake in 1415; however, his followers, known as the Hussites, led by the Bohemian General Jan Žižka, revolted against Catholic authorities in the region. Known as the Hussite Wars, these revolts ravaged the region between 1420 and 1434.

During the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938), history textbooks upheld Jan Hus and Jan Žižka as martyrs of the nation who stood in opposition to their Catholic oppressors. The history textbooks drew a direct parallel between the Catholic Church in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Catholic Habsburg rulers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, one textbook from this period states that: "The rise of Habsburg centralization came with Germanization, [and meanwhile] the aristocracy followed the [German] foreigners and led a lovely and costly life at the expense of the people. Hus' spirit disappeared."<sup>479</sup> Hus is depicted as a symbol of Czech ethnic resistance against "foreign" oppressors. Germans are equated with Catholics and Czechs with the Hussites as precursors to Protestantism. "Hus' spirit" stands in for the Czech national spirit in its purest form, uncorrupted by aristocratic greed, opportunism, and "foreigners."

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<sup>479</sup> Kratochvil, Rudolf (school inspector). *Prehl'ady z dejepisu* (Prešov: Štehravo kníkupectvo a nakladatel'stvo, 1924), 96.



However, defining the “nation” in this way would have alienated the many Catholics living in the Czechoslovak state during this regime. The interwar textbooks in their glorification of Hus were borrowing an image of Hus that Czech nationalists had proliferated during the National Awakening period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, evoking this interpretation of the nation as an embodiment of Hus’ spirit would have excluded Slovaks and Moravians, who identified as Catholics in larger percentages than their Bohemian compatriots to the west and yet were considered part of the “majority Czechoslovak nation.” Hence, it is unsurprising that when in 1939 Slovakia became independent of the Czech lands Slovak textbooks would offer a different interpretation of Jan Hus and the Hussite Wars.

During World War II when Tiso—a Catholic priest—led the government (1939-1945), the textbooks emphasized that “secular powers,” in particular the Hungarian King Žigmund, arranged for the death of Jan Hus rather than the Catholic Church per se.<sup>480</sup> In this way, Hus becomes a victim of the Hungarians—encapsulated in the persona of King Žigmund—rather than of the Catholic Church. With this sleight of hand, Hus remains a symbol that serves the Slovak nation because he, like the self-imagining of the Slovaks, represents the oppressed, a saint, and, a martyr. As during the previous regime, Hus’ 15<sup>th</sup>-century oppressors are implicitly associated with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Habsburgs by virtue of a simple equation that connects Hungarian Habsburgs back in time to a gothic king and elides the actions of Hungarian rulers more generally with an anachronistic vision of a Hungarian nation. The Catholic adherence of these oppressors no longer serves to

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<sup>480</sup> František Hrušovský. *Dunaj: učebnica dejepisu pre 7. postupný ročník slovenských ľudových škôl (Beh “B”)* (Trnava: Spolok Sv. Vojtecha, 1942), 55.

advance the identity of the now Slovak nation, and, therefore, is omitted. Ethnicity, rather than religion, becomes salient to the construction of “Slovakness.” In short, the textbooks maintain the dialog surrounding the image of Jan Hus but revise it to accommodate the needs of the new Slovak nation-state.

In contrast to Jan Hus himself, the Slovak World War II-era textbooks portray the Hussites as rampaging Czechs, paralleling the textbook depictions of other so-called invaders such as the Hungarians and Tatars. According to one publication written for students in the seventh year of elementary school: “The Czech Hussites considered themselves ‘warriors of God;’ however, they mercilessly destroyed the lands that they visited. Slovak towns that came under the control of the Hussites lost all of their property because the Hussites took everything that could be carried and in the end burned down the plundered towns.”<sup>481</sup> The use of quotation marks around the phrase “warriors of God” and the word choice “considered themselves” strongly suggest that the Hussites were delusional in their self-selected appellation. In contrast to the interwar era, the Hussites are now specified as being “Czech” and the damage they rendered to Slovak territory—the land being central to the primordial narrative of a Slovak self—underlines their position outside of the Slovak nation. Interestingly, even while the symbolic role of the Hussites flips between the interwar period and World War II—moving from archetype to antithesis—the textbook authors of the latter era still include the Hussites and Jan Hus as central historical referents, suggesting a need in the textbooks to respond to the narratives of the previous regime rather than simply ignore them.

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<sup>481</sup> Hrušovský 1942, 55.

Under Communism (1948-1989), the dialogical thread of Jan Hus and the Hussites continues, but the narrative is once again revised to reflect the political discourse of a new regime. Zdeněk Nejedlý who served as the minister of education during communism, wrote a book published in 1948 arguing that Hus and his followers represented the “revolutionary spirit” of the people and that their successor is Communism.<sup>482</sup> This interpretation of Hus and the Hussites as representatives of an early “people’s uprising” against oppressive, feudal, church institutions is evident already in the early textbooks of the Czechoslovak Communist regime. One textbook published in 1950 exemplifies how during the Communist regime the class status of Hus was emphasized: “Master Jan Hus was born sometime around the year 1350 to a poor family” and “[W]hen he went to Prague for his studies to become a priest, he lived in poverty like the majority of poor students.”<sup>483</sup> As with other texts from this era, Hus is portrayed as representing “the people”—a phrase used with inordinate frequency in the narrative—and as standing against the wealthy nobility: “[Hus] desired that the church would again become poor, as it had been in the first [Christian] era, and with this he expressed the class demands of the impoverished people against the church—the greatest of the feudal lords.”<sup>484</sup>

Whereas religious conviction and ethnic origin were paramount to the pre-Communist textbook narratives on Hus, social class holds center stage during the Communist era. One history textbook written for upper secondary school students and published in 1952 states this idea directly: “The Hussite revolutionary movement had

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<sup>482</sup> Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Slovo o náboženství* (Prague: Melantrich, 1948), 21-22.

<sup>483</sup> J. Dědina et al. *Dejepis pre III. triedu stredných škôl*. Trans. Ján Béder and Viola Béderová (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1950), 67.

<sup>484</sup> Dědina et al 1950, 68.

above all a social character. For the first time in our history the broadest popular classes from the towns and countryside stood up on the stage not only as the strata of the powerless and exploited but also as fighters, as decisive actors, and for a moment as the rulers of the country.”<sup>485</sup> Hus and the Hussites become early manifestations of Communism, connecting the nation with an inherited lineage of working-class revolutionary traditions evoked through a common Communist vocabulary of “class,” “exploitation,” and the inevitability of the socialist evolutionary path: “Working people realize the long-ago dreams of the Hussites, of a just social order which will secure the happiness and blossoming of our country, turn with pride to the Hussites as early warriors on the long path of social and national freedom.”<sup>486</sup> Once again, the constant figures of Jan Hus and the Hussites are suffused with the ideology of the current regime, remaking the nation to fit a new political discourse, while maintaining the outward symbols of the national past.

### **The Role of the “Other” in Imagining the National Self**

Another fundamental finding of this dissertation research has been a pattern of imagining the national self consistently against an image of an “other.” This strategy for defining the nation is captured in the lineage of textbook depictions of Hus and the Hussites just outlined. During the First Czechoslovak Republic, the “Slovak” self becomes enveloped in the broader national “we” of a “Czechoslovak nation” that is nonetheless dominated by Czech ethnic narratives. The other against which the national self is constituted is primarily ethnic, but recognized through “objective” characteristics

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<sup>485</sup> Viktor Šándor. *Dejiny ČSR: učebný text pre IV. triedu gymnázií, pedagogických gymnázií a vyšších škôl* (Bratislava: Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1952), 90.

<sup>486</sup> Šándor 1952, 90.

of language and religion. Germans and Hungarians are homogeneously characterized as oppressors who stem from different primordial origins than the Slavs and have historically exhibited barbaric aggression. Germans and Hungarians fill the vessels of historical figures and events with a simplified signifier: in the textbooks, they are foreigners and foes no matter what time period or political context is being described. The interwar textbooks emphasize the non-Slavic tribal origins of the Germans and Hungarians, but also conflate these diverse populations with Catholics more generally and specifically with the Habsburg rulers, again functioning as a contrasting background against which a “Hussite Protestant” image of Czechoslovak national belonging is staged.

Minorities without a state during the First Czechoslovak Republic are relegated in the textbook narratives to a different role from the Hungarians and Germans. Jews and Roma are largely absent from the history texts, suggesting that having a modern state at the time of the textbooks’ creation was a prerequisite for being considered of sufficient historical import to warrant inclusion in an account of the past. Nonetheless, Roma and Jews are central to the civic education texts, functioning primarily as “moral” others who demonstrate in the moral tales behavior that is counter to the imagined and desired character of the Czechoslovak nation. The story of a Romani horse thief outsmarted by an ethnic Slovak and the recurring theme of the greedy Jew exemplify this type of interwar textbook narrative.

During World War II when the Slovak Republic seceded from the Czechoslovak Republic and aligned itself with Hitler, “the other” becomes in some ways a truncated version of the interwar textbook narratives. Whereas the Czech-dominated history texts of the previous regime focused more heavily on German oppression, Slovaks, who lived

in the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, could shift attention to Hungarians as the archetypal ethnic villain in Slovak history. Jews rarely receive mention except as a social group that aligned at times with the oppressive Hungarians and Germans living on “Slovak” territory. Roma disappear completely from the textbooks, perhaps due to the dearth of civic education texts published in the war years, but also perhaps because like the Jews, they were being deported by the thousands to death camps during the Holocaust and therefore establishing a relational identity with these groups no longer appeared relevant to textbook authors.

In the early years of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, ethnic national identity and Communist class ideology converge in the textbook narratives. Jan Hus is depicted as a representative of the underclass, but his ethnic roots in Bohemia are also emphasized. Meanwhile, the Church officials who eventually condemn Hus to death are characterized as members of the exploitative feudal upper class, but also as “primarily German.”<sup>487</sup> Similarly, the Communist-era textbooks portray Slovaks and Czechs as historically working-class people, as peasants consistently oppressed by the Germans and Hungarians whose bourgeoisie or aristocratic status is now stressed over ethnicity. While the ethnic undertones of the textbooks remain implicated in the usage of pronouns that distinguish Germans and Hungarians as “them” that contrast with the national “we,” the central story becomes that of the Czechoslovak nation as a nation of the proletariat. The “primordial origins” of the Communist textbooks are not founded on tribal bloodlines but on the construction of a socialist national heritage in which Jan Hus is depicted as a founding father of early socialism.

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<sup>487</sup> J. Dědina et al. 1952, 68.

Ethnic nationalism came bounding to the surface of political and social life after the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union disintegrated, Yugoslavia broke out in ethnic civil war, and Czechoslovakia peacefully split once again into two separate states. Democratic liberalism ironically allowed for the unbridled expression of ethnic nationalism in many post-socialist countries. In Slovakia, Vladimír Mečiar became prime minister after the 1993 Velvet Divorce, rising to power on a platform of Slovak nationalist rhetoric constructed in part against an image of Czech “otherness.” Meanwhile Slovak historians such as Milan Ďurica wrote history texts for the new Slovak nation-state that revived the role of ethnic Hungarians as the counterpoint to Slovak national belonging and rehabilitated Jozef Tiso, the first Slovak state’s leader during World War II.

Concurrent with this post-Communist rise in ethnic nationalism came a call for a broader form of identification within the supranational community of the European Union. The European Union based its prescription for membership largely on a democratic ideology, leading to a plethora of new democratic civic education textbooks in Central Europe. However, like the Communist notion of an international proletariat brotherhood before it, the breadth of a democratically defined European membership has proven problematic in that it does not offer the kind of social cohesion, the particularity of belonging, toward which human communities seem to gravitate.

In sum, due to its multiple regime changes in the course of the last century, Slovakia provides a fascinating case for examining how textbooks inform the nation-state and alternative sensibilities of the self and other. Slovak national identity was the object of my investigation, but a dynamic object that across political regimes has been

relationally defined against various others imagined in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, morality, social class, and political ascription. Not only has the “who” of the relational other shifted across regimes in Slovakia, but so too has the nature of that relationship. At times, the relationship between the national “we” and the “other” in the textbooks has drawn heavily on essentialized categories, for example, calculating national belonging based on imagined bloodlines inherited accidentally and irreversibly. These essentialized relationships tend to be embedded in images and symbols specific to a region. Their particularity and detail seems to provide these narratives with great salience and power in mobilizing social groups toward a shared identity. Meanwhile, transnational ideas of belonging, whether democratic or Communist internationalist, struggle to find sufficiently particularistic bases of building a sense of the communal “we” while maintaining their broad and liberal ideologies of elective civic inclusion.

This undulation between more and less particularistic or essentialist characterizations of the nation and its counter-punctual “other” happens in the Slovak case not just across regime changes but within regimes. Protestant religious affiliation is more universal than the Czechoslovak ethnic myths that characterize the textbook narratives during the interwar period, as is Catholicism in the heavily ethnic accounts of the Slovak nation during World War II. Communist-era textbooks in Czechoslovakia made the ruling upper classes of the past the primary villain of their historical accounts, but continued to elide indiscriminately class status and ethnicity, equating Hungarians and Germans with the aristocratic and Jews with the bourgeois classes. Chapter 5 elucidated how various Slovak textbooks have written particularistic narratives of the



national “we” as the center of Europe into the broader definition of European democratic identity.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates how the symbolic shells of past historical narratives persist beyond the life of a single regime, and may be imbued with different political implications, which inevitably legitimize the regime in power. This study also suggests that effective and enduring narratives of identity depend on a mixture of both broad and particular notions of belonging. The challenge then for history and civics textbooks in democracies echoes the very tensions of the nation-state itself: a need to balance the inclusive ideals of democracy with a circumscription of belonging that is particular and detailed enough to effectively unify and mobilize a community. In school texts, this could entail bringing local details that stress the embedded belonging of minorities in their Slovak communities into accounts of how these minority neighbors exemplify civic national ideals. Forging a national identity that is simultaneously true to its liberal ideals of inclusion and compelling in details and specificity so as to evoke an emotional attachment to the community is a challenge that has eluded many generations of textbook writers, but one that is nonetheless imaginable.

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