

NAŠE DEJINY V PRAMEŇOCH. Edited by *Peter Ratkoš, Jozef Butvin, and Miroslav Kropilák*. Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1971. 380 pp.

This is a collection of over two hundred documents on Slovak history, designed as an aid to teaching history in Slovak teachers colleges. It begins with the earliest known "document" of Slovak history—a Latin inscription in the ruins of a Roman military outpost near Trenčín in present-day Slovakia dating from A.D. 179, and ends with the manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) issued on March 1, 1948, on the occasion of the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia a few days earlier. The shorter of the documents in this collection are reproduced *in toto*, but most of them are condensed.

As a concept, Slovak history first developed in the nineteenth century when the Slovak people, together with other peoples of East Central Europe, experienced a national awakening. Since then the concept has evolved considerably. Slovak historians have had to grapple with very difficult conceptual as well as practical problems. Except perhaps for nomadic peoples, the history of a people involves the geographic area they inhabit. The Slovak historians, therefore, had to answer the question "What is Slovakia?" before they could answer the question "What is Slovak history?" This was not easy to answer, since until 1918, when it became an administrative unit in the Czechoslovak Republic, Slovakia had been an integral part of the kingdom of Hungary for a thousand years. It lacked then even geographic definition. Moreover, the Slovak historians were prevented by the Hungarian government, which pursued a policy of assimilation toward Hungary's ethnic minorities and purposely sought to stifle the development of their national cultures, from developing Slovak history as a scholarly discipline.

The establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 freed the Slovak historians from this handicap, but they ran into a new conceptual problem when the Czechoslovak constitution-makers defined the Czechs and Slovaks as a single "Czechoslovak" people. Logically, the existence of a single people implied the existence of a single history. As implemented, principally by Czech historians, the new Czechoslovak history turned out to be largely the history of the Czech people and the kingdom of Bohemia *plus* the points of contact that existed between the Czechs and Slovaks before 1918, such as the activities of Czech Hussite mercenaries in Slovakia in the fifteenth century. Since, however, such contacts had been quite rare, the new concept of Czechoslovak history left out of consideration the bulk of the Slovaks' historical experience. In schools Slovak children were taught Czech history in considerable detail but virtually no history of their own. This concept of Czechoslovak history naturally encountered the opposition of Slovak nationalists, and was discarded after the downfall of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1939.

In the German-sponsored Slovak state, the Slovak historians sought to develop a new, nationalistic notion of Slovak history, which ignored not only the Slovak contacts with the Czechs but also with Slovakia's large non-Slovak minorities. It also tended to neglect those aspects of Slovak history that contributed little to building Slovak national pride, such as social and economic history, because the Slovaks had been servants more often than masters in their history and had seldom controlled Slovakia's wealth. This view was in turn discarded in 1945 when the Slovak state collapsed and Czechoslovakia was restored.

There was no return, however, to the old idea of Czechoslovak history. For

tactical reasons, the Communists, who had emerged as the strongest party in the new Czechoslovak National Front, insisted on resolving the old question of "one nation or two?" in favor of the explicit recognition of the Czechs and Slovaks as two distinct nations in the National Front's Košice program in April 1945. Since then, Slovak Marxist historians have developed the broadest notion of Slovak history yet. It comprises all history that has unfolded in the territory of present-day Slovakia from the earliest times to the present, whether or not it has had a specifically Slovak character. In this view, of which the volume under review is a good illustration, Slovakia's social and economic history is given due attention. It is much less satisfactory in dealing with political history, especially under the First Republic, when the Communists had to enter into free competition for Slovak votes and did not always come out of the contest with flying colors.

VICTOR S. MAMATEY  
*University of Georgia*

SLOVENSKÁ POLITIKA V STREDNEJ EURÓPE, 1890–1901: SPOLUPRÁCA SLOVÁKOV, RUMUNOV, A SRBOV. By *Milan Krajčovič*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1971. 302 pp. Kčs. 45.

Ever since the existence of a nationality problem in Hungary, there has been an abundant and continuous flow of scholarly and polemical writings on the subject. But until recently little was said about the attempts of the non-Magyar nationalities to form a united front to oppose the transformation of Hungary into a Magyar national state. The present volume is the first monographic study of the initial successes and failures of an "alliance" of Slovaks, Rumanians, and Serbs. It is built around the organization of the so-called Congress of Nationalities, held in Budapest in 1895, and deals primarily with political problems rather than with economic and cultural development.

The first three chapters describe the conditions in Hungary which persuaded Slovak, Rumanian, and Serb leaders to join forces and offer numerous examples of early cooperation among them, notably their support of one another at press and political trials like that of the Rumanian Memorandum of 1894. It is evident that the resumption of full-scale political activity after the doldrums of the 1880s coincided with the rise of a new generation of national leaders, who, less wedded to tradition than their forefathers, were eager to try new methods of struggle and became the chief promoters of the alliance. The innumerable conferences and meetings which led to the convocation of the Congress of Nationalities are described in great detail, and due credit is given to the Rumanians for their initiative and perseverance. Much attention is also accorded the internal political evolution of the Slovaks and the West European reaction to it.

The fourth chapter deals with the Congress of Nationalities, the platform it adopted, and the significance accorded it by the Hungarian government and the European press. The author suggests that its main accomplishment was to demonstrate the fallacy of the doctrine of the Magyar national state. After the Congress the alliance manifested itself in a few protests against the celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the founding of Hungary by the Magyars and government projects to Magyarize geographical and personal names, but, as the last two chapters make clear, it failed dismally to live up to the expectations of its creators.