Hungarian Historical Review 2, no. 3 (2013): 538–565

Leslie M. Waters

Learning and Unlearning Nationality: Hungarian National Education in Reannexed Felvidék, 1938–1944

Educational policy was a fundamental component of the integration of reannexed Felvidék (present-day southern Slovakia) into the Hungarian state between 1938 and 1944. In fact, the army of teachers and administrators deployed in Felvidék played a larger role in the reintegration process than Hungary's occupying military force. The Hungarian administration's aims were twofold: on the one hand, to instill loyalty and service to the Hungarian nation and participation in the further success of Hungary's revisionist project, and on the other hand, to delegitimize the previous regime and encourage students to reject Czechoslovak identity. This process revolved heavily around language, making Hungarian the primary language of instruction in most of the region's schools, devaluing knowledge of Slovak, and restricting Slovak-language educational institutions. For students in the region, the change in territorial administration resulted in a transformation in their language use. With these linguistic advantages, the Hungarian administration made tangible strides toward reintegrating Felvidék's Hungarian students into the national body, but struggled to do so with minority students.

Keywords: Hungary, Slovaks, Minority Policy, Identity, Education

Introduction

When Hungary reoccupied southern *Felvidék* [former Upper Hungary][1] in 1938, educational leaders had two goals for the youth now under their authority: for them to "unlearn" the Czechoslovak nationality allegedly forced upon them

1 The First Vienna Award divided Felvidék into two: "reannexed Felvidék," which was under Hungarian rule, and the Autonomous Region of Slovakia within the Czechoslovak Republic, after March 1939 the independent Slovak Republic. In contemporary usage, Felvidék is employed colloquially by many Hungarians to refer to Slovakia and/or the parts of southern Slovakia with large Hungarian populations. Though the term is now largely considered neutral by Hungarians, its historical association with Hungarian nationalism and revisionism has given Felvidék a strongly negative connotation for many Slovaks. As a result, some historians from both Hungary and Slovakia have advocated abandoning the designation altogether. But despite Felvidék's ambiguity as a term and its politically-charged past usage, it remains a valuable and, in my estimation, critical phrase for the historian of Hungarian–Slovak borderlands. First, given the unwieldy official name of the returned territories used by the Hungarian government (the Reannexed Upland [Felvidéki] Territories of the Hungarian Holy Crown), I shorten it to Felvidék for usability's sake. Also, reannexed Felvidék was governed separately from the rest of the country during its brief period under Hungarian rule, making it necessary to differentiate that area from the territory of Trianon Hungary.

during the twenty years of Czechoslovak rule, and in its place to learn to identify as Hungarian citizens. As schools, school districts, and curricula were reconstituted, loyalty and service to the nation became the educational focus throughout the regained territory. But there was more than the hearts and minds of the youth of Felvidék at stake: successful reintegration of the region would help justify Hungary's further territorial aspirations. If the people of the territory could be effectively and happily brought back into the state, Hungary's case for border changes in Ruthenia, Transylvania, and Voivodina stood a much better chance in the court of international public opinion. The government believed that Felvidék's inhabitants would have to be re-taught loyalty to the Hungarian state and how to be properly Hungarian. The Hungarian administration used the region's school system as the main vehicle for this endeavor.

Both the larger educational history of Felvidék and the pedagogical methods employed by the Hungarian government during the reintegration period indicate that national leaders in East Central Europe strongly believed in employing education in the service of their national agendas. Perhaps they would have agreed with philosopher Ernest Gellner's assessment that "the monopoly of education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence."[2] Indeed, an army of teachers and school administrators played a larger role in the reintegration process than Hungary's limited occupying military force. Education was also a feasible antidote to minority agitation. Nationalism theorist Anthony D. Smith's theory of "civic education" argues that "if ethnic cleavages are to be eroded in the longer term, [. . .] this can be done only by a pronounced emphasis on inculcating social mores in a spirit of civic equality and fraternity."[3] Hungary strove to use education to impart Hungarian mores and achieve a sense of fraternity, but failed fully to grasp what civic equality for its new minorities would entail. Thus, Hungarian treatment of minorities in the educational realm was riddled with inconsistencies and suspicion. Standing in the way of fraternity on Hungarian terms was a history of territorial back-and-forth that brought frequent and radical changes to the educational system in Felvidék. Each new regime signaled change in the region's political jurisdiction, privileged ethnicity,

Finally, the term Felvidék is important to highlight the strong regional identity of the Hungarians living in that area. Thus, unless otherwise stated, I use the term Felvidék to refer to those areas given to Hungary by the First Vienna Award, recognizing that this is an imperfect solution.

2 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 34.

3 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, Nev.: University Nevada Press, 1991), 118–19.

and educational policy, and a new blueprint for the upbringing of the next generation.

Transforming education was equally about the calculus of language use. The school system exhibited tremendous success in eroding Slovak language use in the seven years of Hungarian administration. It was largely a battle of attrition, as young Hungarian students entering school received no Slovak language instruction, older Hungarian students no longer perceived benefits of continuing to learn Slovak, and Slovak or nationally indifferent parents chose the dominant Hungarian schooling.[4] With these linguistic advantages, revisionists could feel confident that they had turned back the tide of two decades of Czechoslovak schooling and succeeding in reintegrating Felvidék into the Hungarian student and national body.

Nationalist Education in Hungary and Czechoslovakia

Hungarian education policy in Felvidék after the reannexation was formulated against a long backdrop of nationalist competition. From the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War, education was a keystone of the Hungarian government's Magyarization program, aimed at assimilating the kingdom's substantial minority populations to the dominant Hungarian culture and language. It was hoped that teaching a distinctly Hungarian curriculum would unify the diverse kingdom within a singular political nation. The assimilationist educational policies had mixed results, but were more successful, at least statistically, in this territory than elsewhere in the Kingdom of Hungary.[5] Slovak speakers in Felvidék in particular were targeted for assimilation by Hungarian nationalists such as Béla Grünwald, a historian and outspoken official in Zólyom County, and the members of FEMKE, the Hungarian Educational Association for Felvidék. Grünwald famously boasted in 1878 that "the secondary school is like a huge machine, at one end of which the Slovak youths are thrown in by the hundreds, and at the other end of which they come out as Magyars."[6] Slovak speakers also often assimilated because of the relative underdevelopment of the Slovak national movement, which lagged behind some of the other minority ethnic groups like Serbs and Romanians, who had the advantage of drawing from their ethnic brethren in independent states bordering Hungary. Along with many Slovaks, most Jews in Felvidék adopted the Hungarian language and identified as members of the Hungarian nation, as was the case throughout Hungary.[7]

In the late nineteenth century, at the height of Hungary's Magyarization drive, the government closed down the kingdom's three Slovak secondary schools along with the Matica slovenská, the leading Slovak cultural organization, charging them as agencies of Pan-Slavism.[8] Slovak education was further curtailed in 1907 when the Hungarian government passed the so-called Lex Apponyi, a wide-ranging piece of educational reform that mandated that minority students in the Kingdom of Hungary be able to express themselves in written and spoken Hungarian by the end of the fourth year of primary school.[9] This and other provisions in the Lex Apponyi meant that by 1918, only one in eight Slovak-speaking schoolchildren attended Slovak primary schools.[10]

After 1918, the government of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic, which took control of the region after the World War I, moved quickly to reverse the effects of Magyarization on the Slovak population. The state closed down several Hungarian secondary schools and converted the vast majority of the remaining institutions into Czechoslovak schools, sometimes immediately, sometimes phasing out Hungarian instruction one grade level at a time.[11] A new

4 For a discussion of the concept of national indifference, see Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

5 For an analysis of the results of Hungarian assimilationist educational policies, see Gábor I. Kovács, "'Törzsökös' és 'asszimilált' magyarok: 'keresztény allogének' és 'zsidók' a dualizmuskori Magyarország középiskoláiban," *Korall* 9 (2002): 193–232.

6 Quoted in Iván Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 271. For a description of Grünwald's most notorious work on Magyarization, *A Felvidék,* and the response to it by Slovak intellectual Michal Mudroň see László Szarka, "The Origins of the Hungarian–Slovak National Opposition in Hungary," in *A Multiethnic Region and Nation-State in East-Central Europe: Studies in the History of Upper Hungary and Slovakia from the 1600s to the Present* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 168–75.

7 Numbers are difficult to verify and the categories themselves problematic, but historian Carlile Aylmer Macartney estimated that among the approximately three million inhabitants of Slovakia in 1918, 1.9 million were Slovaks, 700,000 Hungarians, and 140,000 Jews, and that over half of Jews and around 200,000 Slovaks "must have spoken Magyar, and many of these were in a fair way to becoming entirely Magyarized." Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences, 1919–1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 79.

8 Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 26–27.

9 Joachim von Puttkamer, *Schulalltag und nationale Integration in Ungarn: Slowaken, Rumänen und Siebenbürger Sachsen in der Auseinandersetzung mit der ungarischen Staatsidee, 1867–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), 127.

10 Owen Johnson, *Slovakia 1918–1938: Education and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 34.

11 Ibid., 103–4.

teaching staff was brought in, made up of between 300 and 400 teachers from the Czech areas of Bohemia and Moravia, due to a lack of qualified Slovak teachers.[12] The result of this transformation was so rapid that by the 1925–26 school year, more students in Slovakia graduated from Czechoslovak secondary schools than Hungarian-language ones.[13] In less than ten years, the previously undisputed cultural dominance of Hungarians had been shattered.

The attempts by the Czechoslovak State to alter the status quo in the schools of Slovakia were vehemently protested by both the Hungarian minority in Felvidék and the Hungarian State. A 1920 report on schools to the President of the Czechoslovak Republic accused Hungarians in Košice of sabotaging the newly established Czechoslovak schools. Their rallying cry of "Don't put your son or daughter in a Czech school" had effectively suppressed enrollment at the city's Slovak secondary schools, at least temporarily.[14] Ultimately, however, such efforts were only marginally effective as the Czechoslovak state took complete control over the system of education. Leaders from Hungary proper urged the Felvidék Hungarians to resist the assimilation attempts made by the Czechoslovak government, but feared the consequences of the new system nonetheless. In an article on the Czechoslovak school system, Adolf Pechány, a Hungarian educator originally from Felvidék, noted that "Czechization is difficult among the Hungarians," but despite that, even in the purely Hungarian areas "the young generation beg[an] to speak broken Czech" by 1927.[15]

In order to combat this gradual assimilation, the Hungarian State worked to actively retain contact with and support the Hungarians living in Felvidék. They created organizations such as the Alliance of Felvidék Associations (*Felvidéki Egyesületek Szövetsége*) to strengthen ties between the Hungarian minority and their homeland state. The Alliance served the dual purpose of publicly organizing cultural activities for the Felvidék Hungarians while secretly agitating for territorial revision.[16] There was also some clandestine contact between Hungarian students in Felvidék and schools in Hungary. The Royal Catholic Gymnasium in Miskolc, for example, administered exams to Hungarian students who chose private home schooling over attending the Czechoslovak State Gymnasium in Košice. Once

12 Ibid., 110.

13 Ibid., 128.

14 Qtd. in ibid., 106.

15 Adolf Pechány, "A Felvidék közoktatásügye," in *Az elszakított magyarság*, ed. Gyula Kornis (Budapest: Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság, 1927), 199.

16 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MOL) [Hungarian National Archives] K28 (Miniszterelnökség), 37/77.

border crossings for students became more difficult, a board of examiners was set up in Košice and upon their recommendation, the gymnasium in Miskolc would issue diplomas.[17] Thus, there was a limited amount of cooperation between Hungarian educators in Felvidék and Hungary proper prior to the First Vienna Award in 1938.

The treaties concluded at the end of World War I contained stipulations for the protection of minorities living in the successor states of the Austro–Hungarian Empire, theoretically protecting Hungarian-language teaching in Felvidék. According to the Treaty of Saint Germain, which officially established the Czechoslovak Republic, all minority groups had the right to establish schools and utilize their own language as the language of instruction.[18] This obligation was upheld by Czechoslovak law 189/1919, the Minority Schools Act, which provided for minority schools in any district where at least twenty percent of the inhabitants belonged to a particular ethnic group. Policy and practice, however, did not always coincide. Czechoslovak authorities divided areas with many Hungarian inhabitants between several school districts so that a number of Hungarian-majority communities were without a Hungarian-language elementary school.[19] In 1928, at the request of the President of Czechoslovakia, British historian R.W. Seton-Watson undertook an independent investigation into minority conditions in Slovakia. He found that Hungarians in Czechoslovakia had critical grievances, especially in the realm of education. In addition to the problem of predominantly Hungarian villages without Hungarian primary schools, there were only seven Hungarian secondary schools in all of Czechoslovakia (down from sixty in 1918) and, most critically, there was no teachers' college for the 637,000 Hungarians counted on the 1921 census.[20]

17 Emil Buczkó, "A kassai premontreiek a húszéves cseh megszállás alatt," in *A jászó-premontrei Rákóczi Ferenc Gimnázium évkönyve az 1939–40 iskolai évről* (Kassa: Wikó, 1940), 15.

18 Miklós Zeidler, "A comparison of the minority protection articles from the treaties between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Czecho-Slovakia (September 10, 1919); Serb-Croat-Slovene State (September 10, 1919); Roumania (December 9, 1919)," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918–1938*, ed. Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková (Prague: Masarykuv ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2010), 177.

19 Jan Rychlík, "The Situation of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918–1938,* 36.

20 Robert William Seton-Watson, "The Situation in Slovakia and the Magyar Minority," Doc. 139 in *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks: Documents, 1906–1951,* vol. 1, ed. Jan Rychlík (Prague: Ústav T. G. Masaryka, 1995), 421–22. There was, however, a parallel Hungarian course of studies at the Slovak Teacher's College in Bratislava. On the number of Hungarian-language schools, see Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the first Vienna Arbitral Award: the Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic,*

The Kingdom of Hungary, which due to territorial losses was divested of most of its ethnic minorities, also provided minority protection in the field of education through law XXXIII (1921) and Educational Act 110.478 (1923), though not to the same extent as the Czechoslovak Minority Schools Act.

> In any commune containing at least forty children who belong to one (ethnic) minority group, also in any commune in which the majority of the population belongs to one (ethnic) minority group, instruction in the mother tongue is to be introduced upon the request of the parents or guardians concerned.[21]

Whereas in Czechoslovakia the threshold was twenty percent for the introduction of minority education across the board, in Hungary it could be as high as fifty percent. The Hungarian law potentially provided greater rights to small minority populations in urban areas, but was definitely a greater hindrance to rural minority education than the Czechoslovak law. Furthermore, the fact that instruction in a minority language had to be "requested" by a parent or guardian in order to be implemented meant that someone in the locality needed to be familiar with the law and know how to navigate the bureaucracy required to have minority education put in place. Thus, while Czechoslovakia and Hungary offered laws to protect minority education during the interwar period, in both states implementation often failed to meet the minimum standard these laws were meant to provide for. According to the terms of the First Vienna Award (Nov. 2, 1938), southern Felvidék once again became part of Hungary and schools in the reannexed territory transitioned from the Czechoslovak to the Hungarian educational system. In the process, they came under the jurisdiction of a different set of rules for minority education; a different segment of the population, now Slovaks, not Hungarians, would be those subject to minority education.

1918–1938 (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1981), 39. Census data is taken from Attila Simon, "The Creation of Hungarian Minority Groups, Czechoslovakia: Slovakia," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century,* ed. Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 60. Demographics were highly contested; upon the return of reannexed Felvidék in 1938, Hungarian officials put the number of Hungarians at 870,000. (MOL K28 215/428).

21 Quoted in Géza Charles Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies, 1938–1945," *American Slavic and East European Review* 12 no. 2 (April 1953): 207.

Educational Reintegration

The transition back to Hungarian rule meant yet another round of denationalization and renationalization for the schoolchildren of reannexed Felvidék. Hungarian educational administrators had no explicit criticism of the academic quality of the Czechoslovak educational system; their concerns lay with questions of nationalization and implied national values. Benedek Áldorfai, a Roman Catholic priest and Hungarian educator in the city of Kassa (Košice in Slovak), claimed that the pedagogical goal of the Czechoslovak state had been "to estrange the Hungarian youth in their souls, language, and spirit from Hungarian life, nationality, and homeland."[22] Alongside this estrangement, Hungarian educators argued, was a sustained effort to convince Hungarian youth in Felvidék to identify as Czech by adopting Czech language and culture so that they could enjoy the benefits of belonging to the titular nation.[23] But the criticism went beyond turning Hungarians into Czechs; Ministry officials claimed that Czechoslovak civic education was fundamentally antithetical to Hungarian identity because it "create[d] citizens loyal to the state against the spirit of their family upbringing."[24] Even if a student spoke Hungarian and identified as a member of the Hungarian nation, they were considered corrupted if they accepted Czechoslovak ownership of Felvidék and tried to integrate into the civic life of the new state. In Áldorfai's estimation, "these Czechoslovakified Hungarian mother-tongued youth were overwhelmingly infected in their souls and spiritually degraded."[25]

Reintegrating the schools in the returned territories into the Hungarian national school system thus meant familiarizing students who began their schooling under the Czechoslovak system with a distinctly Hungarian body of knowledge. The Ministry of Education introduced the "nation-related subjects" of Hungarian language, literature, history, and geography to all schools in the reannexed territory immediately following the border change.[26] Otherwise, however, institutions followed the Czechoslovak curriculum during the 1938–39

22 Benedek Áldorfai, "Feltámadtunk!," in *A kassai Magyar kir. állami (premontrei) gimnázium évkönyve az 1938–39. iskolai évről,* ed. Emil Buczkó (Kassa: Wikó, 1939), 6.

23 György Szombatfalvy, "A népoktatás a felvidéken," *Néptanítók lapja és népművelési tájékoztató* 22 (Nov. 15, 1938): 900.

24 Ibid.

25 Áldorfai, "Feltámadtunk!", 6.

26 "Irányelvek a felvidéki iskolák munkájának folytatásához," *Néptanítók lapja és népművelési tájékoztató* 22 (Nov. 15, 1938): 896.

school year in order to provide teachers with enough time to revise the program of studies. The Hungarian-language schools in Felvidék thereafter adopted the same textbooks as those used by schools in Hungary proper; by the beginning of the 1939–40 academic year, the Hungarian State curriculum was fully integrated into Felvidék schools.

Hungarian-language instruction was the cornerstone of the transformation of Felvidék schools. Statistical evidence from the secondary school yearbooks reveals that in terms of language acquisition, the Hungarian regime made significant inroads into strengthening their national language and reversing the progression of the Slovak language among the Hungarian population. At János Hunfalvy Gymnasium in Kassa, 57 percent of Hungarian students reported knowledge of Slovak in the 1939–40 school year (Figure 1). By the end of the 1943–44 academic term, the figure dropped to 24 percent. Conversely, students who reported speaking only Hungarian climbed from 38 to 74 percent over the same five-year period. The entry of younger students into the gymnasium that did not receive any schooling under the Czechoslovak system and thus no Slovak language instruction largely accounts for these dramatic changes. However, it also appears that some students gradually changed their responses to the question over time, disassociating themselves from the Slovak language. For example, in 1941–42, 60 percent of students from the third grade level at Hunfalvy reported knowing Slovak in addition to their mother language of Hungarian, while 40 percent claimed to speak Hungarian only. The following school year, among that same group of students, now in the fourth grade, only 44 percent acknowledged speaking Slovak, and Hungarian-only speakers jumped to 55 percent. Considering that this pattern is relatively consistent throughout grade levels and academic institutions not only in Kassa, but in the secondary schools in the territory in general, such statistics cannot be wholly attributed to changes in the student body.[27] Clearly, some students reported differently from one year to the next. With the absence of daily Slovak lessons and the reduced public use of the language, students' exposure to Slovak significantly diminished, and speaking it was no longer necessary or beneficial for the average Hungarian

27 It is impossible to ascertain how many individuals changed their responses from one year to the next. Circumstances such as students repeating a grade level, leaving the school, or new students enrolling could all possibly contribute to changes in the sample. However, as this pattern is widespread across grade levels and institutions, it is reasonable to conclude that some students altered the way they assessed their language abilities.

student. The unlearning of Slovak was a natural component of returning to the Hungarian curriculum.

Figure 1. Language Knowledge Among Hungarian Students at János Hunfalvy Gymnasium[28]

	Hungarian Students	Speak Hungarian and Slovak	Speak Hungarian Only	Percentage Bilingual Students	Percentage Monolingual Students
1939–1940	435	249	167	57	38
1940–1941	450	260	174	58	39
1941–1942	431	233	195	54	45
1942–1943	406	192	215	47	53
1943–1944	425	103	316	24	74

In addition to changing the language of instruction and teaching particularly Hungarian subjects, informal activities that revolved around celebrating the nation became commonplace in the weeks and months after Felvidék's reannexation. In the interest of inculcating patriotism and "releas[ing] youth from the Czechoslovak spirit," students at the Ferenc Rákóczi Gymnasium participated in the celebration of traditional Hungarian national holidays such as the commemoration of the 1848–49 revolution and went to see nationalist films such as *Magyar feltámadás* [Hungarian Resurrection] and *Észak felé* [Northward], which discussed the triumph of Hungarian territorial enlargement. They even gathered to welcome the returning soldiers after the country's latest expansion in March 1939 when Hungarian troops occupied Ruthenia.[29] Another popular technique for aiding Felvidék's reintegration was to create partnerships between institutions and educators in Felvidék and other parts of Hungary. Education Minister Pál Teleki made frequent trips to the returned territory in the months following the Vienna Award, including a visit to the Ferenc Rákóczi

28 László Födrős, ed., *A kassai m. kir. állami Hunfalvy János Gimnázium évkönyve az 1939–40 iskolai évről* (Kosice: Wikó, 1940), 56; Idem, ed., *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1940–41* (Kosice: Wikó, 1941), 72; Idem, ed., *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1941–42* (Kassa: Wikó, 1942), 42; Idem, ed., *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1942–43* (Kosice: Wikó, 1943), 37; Idem, ed., *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1943–44* (Kosice: Wikó, 1944), 32.
29 Emil Buczkó, ed., *A kassai Magyar kir. állami (premontrei) gimnázium évkönyve az 1938–39. iskolai évről* (Kassa: Wikó, 1939), 15.

Premontory Gymnasium in Kassa, where he and a delegation of Hungarian scouts ceremonially presented the school's teachers and pupils with a Hungarian flag.[30] Teachers and administrators often enlisted schoolchildren in Trianon Hungary to welcome home their Hungarian brothers in Felvidék; charitable causes ranged from making flags for Felvidék schools to collecting Hungarian-language children's books to be distributed in classes in the returned territory.[31] Such activities and partnerships were meant to encourage Felvidék's students to envision themselves as part of the Hungarian nation and faithful adherents to the cause of territorial revisionism.

The Irredentist Curriculum

At the same time as the adoption of Hungarian curricula in Felvidék schools, the returned territories were being newly emphasized in schools throughout Hungary and in the country's textbooks. Hungarian educational materials continued the interwar practice of advocating for the complete restoration of the historic Kingdom of Hungary, but after 1938 slightly revised the message to reflect the revisionist triumph of the First Vienna Award.

The goal of geography lessons at the primary school level was, according to the national curriculum, the "inculcation of a love for the pupil's native country and nation, and awakening of a national consciousness."[32] The native country that these pupils were taught to love was not the independent Hungary created after Trianon, but the thousand-year-old Kingdom of Hungary with its pre-1918 borders. "In the discussion of Hungary's economic and political geography we first show historical Hungary," explained the introduction to one geography textbook. "Only in this way will the student truly understand the huge degree of truncation."[33] Only after students learned about the physical characteristics,

30 Ibid., 10–11.

31 "Magyar nemzeti zászló a visszacsatolt felvidéki iskoláknak," *Néptanítók lapja és népművelési tájékoztató* 21 (Nov. 1, 1938): 882. "A m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi miniszter 112.009/1938. IX. sz. rendelete a visszacsatolt területi ifjúság számára ifjúsági könyvek gyüjtése tárgyában," *Néptanítók lapja és népművelési tájékoztató* 22 (Nov. 15, 1938): 926.

32 Julius [Gyula] Kornis, *Education in Hungary* (New York: Teachers College of Columbia University, 1932), 55. For a discussion of the development and utilization of geography during the interwar period, see Zoltán Krasznai, *Földrajztudomány, oktatás és propaganda: A nemzeti terület reprezentációja a két világháború közötti Magyarországon* (Pécs: Molnár Nyomda, 2012).

33 János Karl and Ferenc Prochaska, *Általános földrajz, Magyarország gazdasági és politikai földrajza a polgári fiúiskolák IV. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1939), 3.

ethnic makeup, and economic capacity of historic Hungary did the lessons turn to Hungary's contemporary situation.

The image of Greater Hungary was constantly reinforced in school activities and materials. Geography exercise books were essentially outlines of Greater Hungary printed over and over, upon which students were asked to draw the location of various geographic elements such as rivers, natural resources, and major cities.[34] Many textbooks presented three maps of Hungary: Past, Present, and Future; the Past and Future were represented by Greater Hungary, while the "Present" showed the current political borders of the state. As Hungary's territory expanded, these images changed to reflect the new boundaries, but the "Future" nevertheless remained the pre-1918 borders.[35] The current political boundaries, these visual materials taught, were merely temporary. In 1938, the first Hungarian border change lent credence to the state of temporality that these images were meant to impart.

Hungarian history primers espoused the complete, "integral" restoration of the borders of Hungary throughout the interwar period.[36] The First Vienna Award, which used ethnography rather than history as the basis for territorial changes in Felvidék, did nothing to alter the discussion of revisionism in textbooks. School textbooks published after 1938 reveal a continuity in the overt irredentist language seen in earlier editions, despite the new borders and the different justification on which they were obtained. An elementary history textbook from 1941 triumphantly stated that "the enlarged Hungarian homeland waits for a better future with the trusting belief that the thousand-year-old border will be completely restored."[37] A high school geography textbook likewise reminded readers that "the mournful lynching of Trianon was broken in 1938 and is now only a bad memory," although "our great cultural cities, Pozsony (Bratislava in Slovak), Brassó (Braşov in Romanian), Arad (Oradea), Temesvár

34 István Albrecht, *Ezeréves hazánk a Magyar medencében. Térkép és munkafüzet a népiskola V. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942).

35 See Ferenc Marczinkó, János Pálfi, and Erzsébet Várady, *A legújabb kor története a francia forradalomtól napjainkig a gimnázium és leánygimnázium VI. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1940). For the map of the "Present" this particular textbook shows Hungary's 1940 borders, including areas awarded by the First and Second Vienna Awards and the Occupation of Ruthenia, though not those areas conquered during the 1941 invasion of Yugoslavia.

36 Eric Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon, 1931–1938" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2007), 215.

37 György Szondy, *A Magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V–VI. osztálya számára* (Debrecen: Debrecen sz. Kir. Város és Tiszántúli református egyház kerület könyvnyomda, 1941), 114.

(Timişoara), and Fiume (Rijeka in Croatian) are still under occupation."[38] The primer ends with an explicit call for complete territorial revision:

> The natural endowments of the territory and the lives of its inhabitants […] show the truth that Truncated Hungary is no country, Greater Hungary is heaven. Once and for all, this assures us that we will all the sooner regain, in its entirety, our thousand-year-old homeland's historical territory. So let it be![39]

The indoctrination of school children thus continued in much the same manner as it had prior to 1938, with unflagging emphasis on total territorial recovery, not just the recovery of ethnically Hungarian areas. These textbooks refute the assumption that the territorial revisions brought about a decrease in Hungarian irredentism because the public was satisfied with partial concessions. Rather, it demonstrates a high level of domestic production and consumption of irredentist materials continued even after territorial revisions stopped in 1941.

Hungarian textbooks presented a number of historical interpretations of the First Vienna Award. Some, like a 1941 secondary school geography primer published by St. István Society, elicited the rhetoric of divine intervention in righting the wrongs of Trianon. "Our enemies believed that the Trianon peace would determine the borders of Hungary and her neighbors for a long time, perhaps centuries" noted the textbooks author, Lajos Bodnár. "With the help of God, however, after two decades the Trianon borders were successfully changed, at least in part."[40] Though Bodnár's line of reasoning is perhaps to be expected from a Catholic publishing house, it resonated with the broader revisionist campaign's calls for divine justice and the belief that natural order necessitated a powerful Hungarian state encompassing her historic borders. Other textbooks took a more political approach to Hungary's territorial revision. A history primer from 1940, when Germany was dominant on the battlefields and the Western powers appeared overmatched, chose to emphasize the changing geopolitical climate and Hungary's allies as the reason for the country's enlargement. "The military emancipation of the Hungarian territory of Felvidék," the textbook

38 János Karl and Győző Temesy, *A magyar föld és népe földrajz a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium I. osztály számára,* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1939), 109.

39 Ibid., 111.

40 Lajos Bodnár and Gusztáv Kalmár, *Magyarország helyzete, népessége és gazdasági élete földrajz a gimnázium és leánygimnázium VII. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1941), 96.

claimed, "was the outcome of our cooperation with Germany and Italy."[41] Another history primer, however, written two years later, presented a very different explanation for the First Vienna Award; it put the primary agency not in the hands of God or the Axis Powers, but in the hands of the Hungarian Army.

> The year of St. Stephen [1938] changed the fate of our homeland. [. . .] Now the *Hungarian army* again became the guardians of our internal order and the outer authority of the country. When thereafter the Czech lands came out against the German Empire, then began to disintegrate into parts, our homeland also began to demand its rights in blood. Inasmuch as a peaceful agreement did not come into being, the foreign ministers of Germany and Italy as requested arbiters, awarded us back from the Czech occupied territory 12.000 sq. km, but the heroic fight of the warriors of Munkács had already stamped the seal of this observance.[42]

Though still recognizing the formal role of Germany and Italy, the "warriors of Munkács" are the real actors in this passage. The city of Munkács was significant due to a border skirmish between the Czech army and Hungarians shortly after the First Vienna Award and because of its historical role as a bastion against Habsburg absolutism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, it was Hungarian struggles for freedom, both in the past and the present, which enabled Hungary's territorial expansion. The emphasis on the heroic Hungarian army's role in territorial revision reflects a development in Hungarian education that coincided with Hungary's formal entry into the Second World War. Schools were now a place where support for the war effort and the Hungarian army needed to be fostered alongside national identity.

The minority question also made its way into Hungarian textbooks in relation to Felvidék and the subsequent territorial expansions. Once again referencing the arguments of the revisionist movement, the textbooks often emphasized that the differences in lifestyles of Hungary's various peoples in the tradition of the perceived ideals of St. Stephen's medieval kingdom, were actually complementary and contributed to the overall success of the state. A geography textbook from 1941 enthusiastically claimed, "we have no doubt in the returned minorities, [. . .] that according to the ideas of St. Stephen, peoples of different

41 Marczinkó, Pálfi, and Várady, *A legújabb kor története,* 173.

42 Albin Balogh, *Magyarország történelem a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium III. osztály számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942), 115. Emphasis in the original.

languages and religions will once again find each other and live happily within the frame of historical Hungary."[43] Reconciliation was first necessary, but could lead to a mutually beneficial partnership.

> We must love our national minorities like brothers! However, they also must stick with the Hungarians in good times and bad; they must finally understand that Hungarians don't want to oppress them. [. . .] Only with mutual understanding [and] cooperation can we support a happier and more beautiful Hungarian future.[44]

However, despite these types of optimistic statements, the message conveyed by the textbooks on minorities was decidedly mixed. Slovaks were often described in unflattering terms; for instance, one primary school primer from 1942 refers to them as "simple, unambitious people."[45] Just as Hungarian authorities struggled to reintegrate minorities into the educational system, they also had difficulty integrating them into the curriculum.

The place of the First Vienna Award and Felvidék's reannexation infiltrated the Hungarian curriculum deeply in history and geography and in other disciplines as well. Gyula Bognár, an instructor at the State Teacher Training Institute, encouraged teachers to "commemorate at great length the return of 12,000 square kilometers of territory and the homecoming of a million Hungarians in our geography lessons."[46] Furthermore, he argued, educators should utilize literature related not just to the returned areas but the entire territory of historic Felvidék in order to "awaken a love of Felvidék in the younger generations."[47] The minority experience of Felvidék Hungarians under Czechoslovak rule could also be used to impart patriotic lessons to students. The girls' textbook for the new subject of Homeland Defense Studies from 1943 featured an account of young Hungarian girls in Kassa remaining faithful Hungarians under a repressive Czechoslovak regime. The girls secretly sang the Hungarian national anthem, dressed in traditional Hungarian folk costume, and endured abuses from the

43 János Karl and Győző Temesy, *Hazánk részletes földrajza és térképismeret a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium VII. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1941), 116.

44 Marczinkó, Pálfi, and Várady, *A legújabb kor története,* 172.

45 Gyula Kiss and Ferenc Nagy, *Földrajz az osztott elemi népiskolák használatára IV. osztály tananyaga* (Budapest: Kókai Lajos Kiadása, 1942), 38.

46 Gyula Bognár, "A Felvidékhez kapcsolódó irodalom szerepe a népiskolai földrajztanításban," in *Néptanítók lapja és népművelési tájékoztató* 5 (Feb. 1, 1939): 157.

47 Ibid., 160.

authorities due to their patriotism.[48] Adding literature and cultural studies of Felvidék to the proposed course of study, educators like Bognár brought special attention to Felvidék's contributions to the national cultural canon, making the region an integral part of the curriculum.[49]

The Minority Question in Hungarian Education

The issue of minority education became an even greater point of controversy after the Hungarian takeover of Felvidék. Slovaks made up 11.6 percent of the 1.2 million inhabitants living in the area reannexed by Hungary, which also contained minority populations of Jews (who often identified themselves as Hungarian, especially in cities), Ruthenians, and Germans.[50] The official government line called for tolerance toward minorities in the region and emphasized their right to instruction in their native language. There was an ideological reason to encourage good relations with the minority ethnicities in the educational sector. During the 1920s and '30s, the Hungarian revisionist campaigns had emphasized the mistreatment of Hungarians living in the successor states and often pointed to problems in education to prove their point. They also claimed that a reconstituted multi-national Hungary would much more effectively protect minority rights. Now that the roles were reversed, the Hungarian government saw sound minority educational policy as one way to prove their claims were accurate and justify further territorial concessions. The awareness that satisfied minorities were important to the success of reintegration in Felvidék did not always ensure proper treatment of the Slovaks and other ethnic groups. It underlines the point, however, that the government believed that in order to receive more territory,

48 *Honvédelmi ismeretek a leánygimnáziumok III. osztálya, a polgári leányiskola III. osztálya és a népiskola VII. leányosztálya számára* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1943), 100–6.

49 Felvidék experienced a resurgence in the broader literary canon beyond schools. The Széchényi National Library supplied the public library in Kassa with 646 volumes in 1939. Included among these works were a number of books by classic Hungarian poets and authors like János Arany and Kálmán Mikszáth to rebuild the library's literary canon; national histories to reacquaint readers with the seminal events in Hungarian history like the 1848 Revolution and the Battle of Mohács; volumes extolling Hungarian achievement in fine arts, from painting to music; and practical works on industry, economy, and law to help with the reintegration process itself. Finally, books like Béla Imrédy's *National Ideas, Unity of the People, and Social Thought* and Ödön Tarján's *Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenes in the Danubian Basin* touched upon the all-important topics of revisionism and Felvidék's calling in the wider Hungarian national project. Archív mesta Košice (Košice City Archive), 1938–1945 Collection, Box 20, File 18641.

50 MOL K28 215/428.

and potentially territories with a much lower percentage of ethnic Hungarians, the illusion of decent relations with the minorities of Felvidék must be fostered.

Due to the expansion of the minority population brought about by the First Vienna Award and the subsequent territorial expansions, the Hungarian government reiterated the rights of minorities to receive an education in their mother tongue guaranteed by the 1921 law.[51] The Ministry of Education issued a new order regarding minority educational instruction in 1939 to address the status of the minority language schools that were acquired in the First Vienna Award (1938) and the occupation of Ruthenia (1939). The order stipulated that "in schools with Slovak or Ruthene or German as the teaching-language, instruction shall be in the mother tongue, while the Magyar language of the Hungarian State shall be taught as a compulsory subject."[52]

In reality, many of the minority language schools in Felvidék were closed or combined with Hungarian language institutions after the area came under Hungarian jurisdiction. In one example from Kassa, three secondary schools—the Czechoslovak State Gymnasium, the Hungarian Language Czechoslovak State Gymnasium, and the Slovak Language Premontory Gymnasium—were combined into one, the Ferenc Rákóczi Premontory Gymnasium. According to the school's 1939–40 yearbook, only thirteen teachers were retained from these institutions: ten from the Hungarian language school, three from the Slovak language school, and zero from the Czechoslovak State school.[53] Though the yearbook claims that none of the teachers from the Czechoslovak school "requested to serve the Hungarian State," they would most likely not have been able to remain as teachers had they stayed. The remaining positions at the new combined gymnasium were filled by education ministerial decree by a mix of temporary and permanent teachers, both from Felvidék and Hungary proper.[54]

Though many of the Slovak or Czechoslovak language schools experienced a similar fate, a number of Slovak-language institutions remained and had to navigate the difficulties of being minority institutions. In general, secondary education in Felvidék was divided along ethnic lines. The student body of Hungarian-language secondary institutions was made up of only around 5 percent Slovak students. Hungarian enrollment in Slovak-language schools was

51 Orders 133.200 IX (1939), 24.024 (1940), and 56.600 (1941) by the Hungarian Ministry of Education.

52 Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies," 208.

53 *A kassai premontrei gim. 1938–39 évkönyve*, 12.

54 At Ferenc Rákóczi Gymnasium, the principal was a local priest, Emil Buczkó, and the vice principal, Lajos Sipos, was brought in from Budapest. *A kassai premontrei gim. 1938–39 évkönyve*, 13.

similarly low.[55] Although Hungarian authorities recognized the right of minorities to attend school in their native languages, they were highly suspicious of minority schools and maintained tight surveillance over them. Local authorities continually reported on the activities of the Slovak schools to the central government. In 1941, the police in Bars County reported that the elementary school in the village of Hull (Hul in Slovak) did not fly the Hungarian flag on March 15, a Hungarian national holiday (since 1927). Local members of the Hungarian Levente, a paramilitary youth organization dedicated to physical and military training, searched the school for the flag in order to raise it but only found Slovak flags and nationalist materials. The Prime Minister's office responded to the report by urging the Ministry of Education to be diligent in calling for the "surrender and destruction" of "materials, pictures, and instructional tools in schools left over from the period of foreign rule."[56] Such incidents were continually reported and often drew the attention of officials from the lowest to the highest levels of government.

The vigorous surveillance that Slovak schools were under by the Hungarian authorities certainly did little to encourage a smooth transition to Hungarian rule or loyalty from the Slovak inhabitants, but local officials and the central government did not always agree on the proper course of action in minority issues in education. In another report, from the city of Nagysurány (Šurany in Slovak), local Hungarian authorities wrote the Interior Ministry to report that, despite an invitation, the principals of the Slovak secondary and primary school in the town did not take part in the celebrations commemorating the anniversary of the First Vienna Award. In this case, the Prime Minister's office followed up not by reprimanding the principals but by asking the county governor not to hold "patriotic celebrations" in minority areas. Their reasoning was to avoid giving Slovaks "the opportunity for demonstrations of passive resistance against the state."[57] Officials in Budapest thought better of flaunting Hungary's political dominance in a volatile, heavily minority town. In these matters, the

55 In the 1941–42 school year, yearbook statistics from eight Hungarian secondary schools, the Protestant Gymnasium in Rimaszombat, Menyhert Gymnasium in Rozsnyó, the Rozsnyó Commercial School, the Boys' Commercial School in Érsekújvár, Péter Pázmány Gymnasium in Érsekújvár, János Hunfalvy Gymnasium in Kassa, the Kassa Commercial School, and the Premontory Ferenc Rákóczi Gymnasium in Kassa give a total of 3,125 students, 155 of whom were Slovak, making up 4.9 percent of the student body of these institutions. At the Slovak-Language Instruction Gymnasium in Kassa, 6.1 percent of the student body in 1941–42 was Hungarian.

56 MOL K28 24/62.

57 Ibid.

Hungarian government was in a difficult position in multiple ways. Which was more pernicious: leniency toward potentially dangerous minority agitators with the power to influence the younger generation, or the fallout from alienating minority groups who, though perhaps not enthusiastic supporters of the state, were well-behaved citizens capable of in time becoming loyal members of the community? This is the question that Hungarian governmental officials had to weigh while trying to turn Slovak schools in Felvidék into loyal educational institutions but also to protect minorities from the excesses of local Hungarian nationalists.[58]

In a lengthy report by education ministerial advisor János Puszta, which investigated problems with Slovak students in Kassa, we see the complexity of minority education in Felvidék and further evidence of the cautious approach Hungarian authorities took in dealing with these issues. The investigation was prompted by reports that students from the State Slovak Language Gymnasium of Kassa had rioted during a special screening of *Magyar feltámadás* [Hungarian Resurrection].[59] Employees at the local theater extended an invitation to all of the secondary schools in the area to attend viewings. But the film was a questionable choice to screen for Slovak students. It was aggressively anti-Czechoslovak, portraying Czech soldiers as crass invaders who oppressed the downtrodden Hungarian minority, and it depicted Hungary's reannexation of Felvidék as a glorious triumph and return to natural order. When interviewed about the incident, the teachers at the Slovak Language Gymnasium admitted they had been concerned that some parts of the film may be inappropriate for the Slovak students or cause them embarrassment, but they feared it would give the impression that school teachers were anti-Hungarian should they decline the invitation, and so decided to take their students to the see the film. Hungarian students from other nearby schools attended the screening as well.[60]

Problems arose during a scene in the film that dramatized Czech soldiers occupying a Hungarian village in 1918. When the actors started singing the Czechoslovak national anthem, some of the Slovak students stood up and

58 Historian Gábor Egry has theorized a tripartite division for Hungarian nationality politics with a conceptual state-building level, a governmental policy level, and a local implementation level, which were often in competition with one another. The clash between these different levels of nationality politics account for much of the disagreement between local and state officials regarding minority education in Felvidék. For Egry's discussion of nationality politics in Northern Transylvania, see "Tükörpolitika: Magyarok, románok és nemzetiségpolitika Észak-Erdélyben, 1940–1944," *Limes* 2 (2010): 97–111.

59 *Magyar feltámadás* (1939), directed by Jenő Csepreghy and Ferenc Kiss.

60 MOL K28 23/62 file E 15623, 9.

began singing along. This prompted the Hungarian students to start hissing and shouting at the Slovak students. Then, in a later scene that depicted a group of Hungarian students secretly singing the Hungarian national anthem when it had been forbidden, the Hungarian students in the theater demanded that the Slovak students stand up and sing the anthem with them. After the film ended, some of the Slovak and Hungarian students encountered each other on the street outside the theater. A fight broke out, with eventually 30-40 students involved in the street brawl.[61] The fighting ended quickly, and the crowd dispersed before authorities could arrive.

In his report, Puszta, the education ministerial advisor who was sent from Budapest to investigate, noted that local news exaggerated the event—it wasn't so much an anti-Hungarian riot as an "unfortunate incident." However, the fight at the movie theater was indicative, he believed, of the problems the Hungarian state faced in reintegrating the minority Slovaks of Felvidék. Puszta stated that given their ideological indoctrination under the Czechoslovak system, it should have been obvious that the Slovak students would be offended by *Magyar feltámadás*. "There are marks left on the Slovak students from the last twenty years," he noted.

> They heard that the Czechs are their true brothers and the Hungarians their eternal enemies. They were taught that Czechoslovakia was Europe's greatest state and society. In contrast, [they learned that] the Hungarian state and society lives in darkness, oppression, subjugation, and injustice. The Czechs brought freedom after centuries of oppression: the Hungarians can only give the Slovaks the fate of the servant.

Given this educational legacy, Puszta acknowledged that it should come as no surprise "if part of the Slovak youth regards the Vienna Award as a Slovak Trianon."[62]

It was not only their previous state indoctrination that induced hostility towards Hungary on the part of Slovak students; Puszta also recognized that local Hungarian attitudes toward Slovaks played a role in furthering their anti-Hungarian dispositions. He noted that Slovak students' behavior at the movie theater was partially due to provocation by some of the Hungarian students

61 Ibid., 9–12.

62 Ibid., 14–15.

during the screening. The larger issue lay with the general attitude of some Hungarians—most notably many civil servants—toward the Slovak minority. According to Puszta, there were two variants of Hungarian attitudes towards Slovaks: one in line with the government's official standpoint, which "want[ed] the Slovak question resolved with tolerance and acceptance," and another that advocated for the "open and quick removal of the Slovaks."[63] The first group consisted of the younger generation of native Kassans and the mayor. The latter was made up of the older generation of Hungarians from Kassa, who had lost the most during the Czechoslovak takeover of the area, and many of the younger officials from Hungary proper who came to Kassa after the First Vienna Award, bringing with them uncritical stereotypes of Slovaks. People of this second group, many of whom were in the state's employment, were taking it upon themselves to enforce a brand of nationality politics that expressly conflicted with the policies of the state. "In the town center," Puszta noted, "they impatiently admonish Slovak speakers that the time has come for them to speak Hungarian."[64] More seriously, locals were responding to any anti-Hungarian action in independent Slovakia with demonstrations against the Slovaks of Kassa. Puszta lamented that "these people criticize authorities for their patient attitude towards the Slovaks." Such dispositions, he believed, were harmful to the country and the government's larger minority policy.[65] In the long run, failure to follow the government line could lead to greater unrest on the part of the minorities and even jeopardize Hungarian prospects for further territorial revisions.

Apart from the issue of minority politics, Puszta mentioned another major cleavage he perceived in Kassa society: the disconnect between those Hungarians born and raised in Kassa and the so-called "parachutist" Hungarians from Trianon Hungary who moved to the area to take civil service posts after the territory was reincorporated in 1938. The newly arrived Hungarians were only integrated with local Kassans slowly and with great difficulty, he explained, a consequence of different worldviews on economics, minorities, and social parity. There was also an element of competition, as native Kassans resented the parachutists for taking jobs they believed they had earned after years of sacrifice and discrimination living as minorities in Czechoslovakia.[66] Puszta also made mention of a certain type of official he believed was particularly dangerous to social cohesion: recent

63 Ibid., 24.
64 Ibid., 25.
65 Ibid., 26.
66 Ibid., 27.

transplants from Hungary that took to informing on locals as a way to advance their careers. Although these issues could surface throughout the civil service, they were particularly acute in the field of education, as many of these suspect officials worked as teachers or educational administrators.

Puszta's observations on Felvidék's social and political landscape suggest that the variance between the official minority policy of the government and its actual execution in Felvidék was an inhibitor to the region's successful reintegration. This was by no means a new problem, as obstruction of minority education by local officials had been "the most effective and habitual vehicle of Magyarization" since the late nineteenth century.[67] However, the territorial expansion in Felvidék added new urgency to an old problem, as Hungary's minority population had, after a long period of contraction, drastically expanded literally overnight. Any attempts by the Hungarian government to legislate minority rights would only be as effective as the local officials and populace allowed them to be. This was not, however, a simple variance between state officials advocating for tolerance and locals out for retribution. Puszta's descriptions reveal that while some civil servants fell in line with government policies, others violated them, and that attitudes toward the Slovak minority among native Kassans were not homogeneous, determined more or less by generational association. We also see that ethnicity was just one of many dividing lines within Felvidék society; Felvidék Hungarian claims to a distinct type of Hungarianness, in contrast to Trianon Hungarians, and the competition between these two groups for civil service jobs created social tensions as well. It also challenged traditional claims of a singular Hungarian nation with a unified history and culture by highlighting distinct regional differences between Hungarians of Felvidék and Hungarians of Trianon Hungary.

Puszta's recommendations that conclude the report are equally revealing. In line with many of the suspicions state officials held toward minority language institutions, he stated that the "turmoil of the Slovak students ha[d] one nest: the Kassa State Slovak Language Gymnasium."[68] To combat this problem, he suggested removing the principal, Jozsef Trochta, and replacing him with someone who was "definitely dependable from a Hungarian standpoint," spoke good Slovak, and was acceptable to the Slovak students.[69] Puszta also advised the Prime Minister not to blame anyone for the demonstration that broke out

67 Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies," 212.
68 MOL K28 23/62 file E 15623, 16.
69 Ibid., 33.

during the screening of *Magyar feltámadás* and that he should personally tell those involved that they would be pardoned, but that similar offenses in the future would not be.[70] Perhaps most interesting is Puszta's recommendation for the teachers; he stated that both the Hungarian and Slovak teachers in Kassa needed to receive further instruction in order to meet the State's pedagogical and minority policy expectations. Hungarians must be enlightened on inclusive nationality politics and Slovaks should be warned of their obligation to the Hungarian State.[71] "In the interest of peace and order," he suggested, some of the teachers brought into the region but found to be "differing from the government's minority politics" should be sent back to Hungary proper to serve as an example of the consequences of violating state policy. In the future, all teachers assigned to teach in Kassa should be required to have had experience teaching in a minority area.[72]

Puszta's findings highlight some of the complexities the Hungarian government faced in implementing their educational policies in the returned territories. The government had difficulties deciding when and how to reprimand Slovak educators for fear of alienating the Slovak community. The fate of Jozsef Trochta is a prime example of this. In the course of his investigation, Puszta learned that Trochta had participated in anti-Hungarian demonstrations, criticized the Hungarian government to a Czech reporter, and aided individuals in smuggling Slovak propaganda over the new border. Yet despite these indicators of severe disloyalty to the Hungarian State, the government treated Trochta with a great deal of leniency. Though he was removed from his post as principal of the Slovak Language Gymnasium in Kassa per Puszta's recommendation, he was not dismissed outright; he was moved to the Slovak gymnasium in Ipolyság (Šahy in Slovak), a community further from the border with far fewer Slovaks and thus far fewer minority problems than Kassa. By moving Trochta to Ipolyság, the goal of the Hungarian authorities was most likely to isolate him geographically instead of allowing him to remain in ethnically charged Kassa as an embittered, idle, cast-off. It is also an indicator of the dearth of qualified Slovaks who were willing to serve the Hungarian state as educational administrators. The Hungarian government navigated the fine line between alienating Slovak educators and students by making an example of Trochta but preventing his further jeopardizing of minority integration in Kassa.

70 Ibid., 35.
71 Ibid., 36.
72 Ibid., 37.

Conclusion

Hungarian officials saw the education and reeducation of youth as the best method to undo the perceived damages of Felvidék's period of separation from the Hungarian state and to assure the territory's successful reintegration. While alarmist nationalist educators decried the degradation of the "souls, language, and spirit" of the region's students under the Czechoslovak educational system, they fundamentally believed that, under the Hungarian state's resumed guidance, they could *learn* proper Hungarian nationality. The Hungarian educational system largely succeeded in the tasks of reintegrating Felvidék into the national curriculum and offering a Hungarian education to the students of Felvidék, but struggled with formulating and executing an effective program for the education of minority students. Tensions between pluralist and assimilationist minority policies, local and Budapest-based educational and governmental officials, and welcoming and antagonistic attitudes undermined the reintegration of minority students into the Hungarian school system.

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