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Doi: 10.51918/ceh.2021.2.1

Abstract

The main goal of the paper is to detect the creation and enhancement of the new Czechoslovak statehood and the Czechoslovak, let us say, the Slovak national identity after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The paper aims at demonstrating and comparing the practice of the symbolic assumption and establishment of power via the example of memorial culture in public spaces in the territory of the most significant towns located in Zvolen county (Banská Bystrica, Brezno and Zvolen). There are also partial aims: namely, to make the reader acquainted with the form and symbolism in three distinct periods: before 1918, subsequently in the first years of integration of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia until 1920 or 1921, and finally in the first decade of the republic's existence. Following the behavioral patterns of communal elites and inhabitants of these towns, facing new reality, it is also possible to take into consideration the social psychological processes such as acceptance, integration, adaptation, resistance, continuity, discontinuity, which were typical for the initial decade of the First Czechoslovak Republic's establishment. Finally, yet importantly, it is plausible to examine their attitude towards history and cultural heritage of their town.

Keywords

realms of memory, memorials, urban space, Zvolen county, the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century

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From Monarchy to Republic: Symbolic Assumption of Power in Zvolen County's Towns as Reflected in Memorial Culture¹

The end of the 20th century has been significant for Slovak historiography due to the innovative approach of research in the history of towns. However, urban ethnology and anthropology had already applied this approach long before. Since then, the town has not been viewed solely as the place for organizing the greatest political events, but as a dynamic place with its own identity and a unique development.² The new qualities in the area of the 19th and 20th century urban historiography in Slovakia were predominantly brought about by the historians who applied the cultural-historical concept of memory during urban space research alongside questions connected to collective identities' formation.³ This enabled them to specify, in more detail, political breakthroughs and changes on the local level, the take-over and legitimization of a new (or rather old-new) political power, as well as to observe the loyalty of towns' elites and common people in a more differentiated light. Moreover, the changes occurred not only on the real political scene but also on the cultural-symbolical level – generally through the means of re-defining *the realms of memory (media of remembrance)* in the public space. By the words of the French historians dealing

- 1 The article is a partial outcome of the project KEGA no. 009UMB-4/2020: Pamäť mesta v historických obrazových prameňoch [Memory of town in the historical visual sources] at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia).
- 2 Bácskai, "Historiografia miest"
- 3 To the research of historical / cultural memory in urban space in Slovakia, see Lipták, "Rok 1918", Csáky and Mannová, *Collective Identities in Central Europe*; Mannová, *Minulosť ako supermarket?*

with the given topic, Mona Ozouf and Pierre Nora, significance was attributed to the transformation of *realms of memory* (*lieux de mémoire*) in their widest sense - in terms of material, symbolical as well as functional meaning -, which happened when the regime was changed.⁴ The cultural program of new governments focused on: renaming the cities, squares and public institutions, destruction of any ancient régime's features and determination of new symbols, installations of appropriate statues, placement of commemorative plaques and "rewriting" the calendar of public holidays and commemorative days. The changes were supposed to be visible and understandable at first sight.

The inhabitants of cities had to cope with this situation after 1918, which was when the Slovak region of Upper Hungary was in the process of separation from the Hungarian state's framework into a newly defined Czechoslovak one. Secular, national-political - monuments, viewed as carriers of symbolic features as well as being symbols themselves, played their part in the symbolic occupation of public space, too. Building – demolition – building: this is the simplest and most general description of the treatment of monuments in Slovakia before 1918 and in the interwar period. It must have been quite complex and specific for each area to deal with the past in the given period and to confront oneself with a new constitutional situation and identity. The monument culture of three significant towns located in the Zvolen county – Banská Bystrica, Zvolen, and Brezno – could represent the examples in which one can explore the transformation from monarchy to republic, the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic as well as the strengthening of Slovak national identity in the first decade of the new state.

In my paper, I will focus on three phases: approximately the period of dualism that the first years of Slovakia's integration into Czechoslovakia (until 1920 or 1921) follows, and finally, the first decade of the republic's existence. Regarding these towns' inhabitants and communal elites along with their reaction to their new situation, it is possible to examine the social-psychological factors such as acceptance, integration, adaptation, resistance, continuity, discontinuity and so on, which accompanied the period after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Finally, it is also plausible to follow their approach to history and cultural heritage of their town.

4 Ozouf, *Revoluční svátky 1789 – 1799*, 146-147. and See also Nora, "Between Memory and History", 18-19.



Brezno in the early 20th century - with churches and a town's tower in the background
(Fortepan / Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum / Diagyűjtemény)

Monument as a Realm of Memory

Secular monuments were built from the 19th century onwards. It was a period when the statues of monarchs and saints disappeared, and the statues of national heroes came to prominence with the gradual transfer from estate-dynastic values to national-civic ones. On the one hand, their significance and number increased in proportion to the modernization of towns, secularization, and urbanization of society. On the other hand, rising nationalism and a boom of historicism came to the fore at the same time. Other factors contributed to the expansion of national-politically oriented monuments such as the advance of mass politics, print and propaganda as well as the increase of people in education. These political-social changes and national-emancipation processes called for a “new” kind of monument, which was

supposed to perform several functions such as orientation in culture and history, immortalisation as the preservation of historical traditions, and the building of the cult of personality, representation (promoting national and state ideology), legitimization (confirming the then political regime and power occupation of public space), identity-formation, and in some cases, aestheticization and urbanization.⁵

The aspect I intend to deal with in this article moves the meaning of the monument further, from an aesthetic and solely artistic nature towards a rather visible nature in the realm of memory – as a means of formation and cultivation of historical memory and national identity of the given community predominantly since the second half of the 19th century. National monuments helped create alternative history, a second life significant national figures, as well as fostered national traditions and often simplified pictures of the past: modern myths. Thus, it contributed to the formation of national identity of those who were able to decode the messages conveyed in them, take to heart their content - usually as participants of festivities, and self-identify with them. In the case of competing national movements, their realization changed into a political act and their ritualization became an instrument of control and political struggle.⁶ These tendencies may have been detected in the territory of the Habsburg monarchy as well as in the Kingdom of Hungary, including Upper Hungarian towns, more intensively since the second half of the 19th century. The more the national collective disposed of the relatively stable political, economic, and/or cultural-institutional background, the more favourable their starting position became. Then, the political elites of the successful national movements were the ones who decided whether the civic initiative of building monuments was to be supported (thus become *media of remembering*) or else limited or destroyed from the outset (and thus creating *media of forgetting*).

The situation on the Hungarian political scene since the first half of 19th century indicated that the politically as well as culturally more influential Hungarian patriotic circles had considerably more influence in deciding monument policy than the slowly developing Slovak national emancipation movement. However, it was not

5 Hojda and Pokorný, *Pomníky a zápomníky* 16. Pótó, *Az emlékeztetés helyei*, 22. Kessler, *Paměť v kameni*, 35-37.

6 Kurhajcová, "Dominancia a marginalizácia", 766.

until the Austro-Hungarian compromise that the power arena fully opened to them. The accentuation of political hegemony of Hungarian (i.e., Magyar)⁷ political representation within the borders of Hungary and their effort to present a multinational state as homogeneously *Magyar* were reflected to a great extent in the symbolism of public space – including monument culture until 1918. Squares, streets, parks, and public buildings were lined mostly with materialized heroes, significant people, and symbols of memorable events from Hungarian-Magyar history (Kuruc insurgents, revolutionaries, writers, and statesmen), royal couples (though less frequently found), and sometimes local figures and traditions were also present. Based on this research, it is possible to assume that monuments installed in the Upper Hungarian counties in the dualist era reflected on the prevalent historical memory of the Magyar nation, concurrently being the indicators of the Slovak nation's memory marginalization, as well as of the historical memory marginalization of German speakers at the beginning of the 20th century. Monument culture in the Kingdom of Hungary – in the same way as the later festive one – demonstrated a double historical narrative: predynastic, loyal towards the ruling Habsburg dynasty (*the Labanc tradition*) and, to a greater extent, a revolutionary one, directed against a foreign dynasty (*the Kuruc tradition*).⁸ While the monuments of monarch, his family members and Hungarian statesmen, as symbols of the Compromise between the throne and Hungary, represented the official memory of the governing liberal elite, the monuments of anti-Habsburg rebels mirrored the memory as asserted by the politically influential Hungarian parliamentary opposition, especially the Independence Party.⁹

The national monument of Slovaks as a *realm of memory* did not find a respective place in the period of dualism in Hungary. It was only minimally present in the public space. Due to the unfavourable Hungarian policy towards non-Magyars and subsequent administrative limitations or financial problems, a tombstone became nearly the one and only symbol in sculptural art used to “form” the Slovak

7 In order to point out the complexity of the Slovak-Hungarian issue before 1918, I will distinguish between the terms: “Hungarian” (state-political significance; in Slovak “uhorský”) and “Magyar” (ethnic-cultural significance; in Slovak “maďarský”).

8 Sinkó, “Zur Entstehung der staatlichen”, 251-271.

9 Lipták, “Monuments of Political Changes”, 72-75.

national pantheon. Only four inconspicuous individuals – Slovak poets and priests – were given the honour of having their commemorative plaques installed at their birth houses¹⁰ or in the church's interior,¹¹ outside of the cemetery. These sculptural artefacts were supplemented by sporadic busts of Slovak nationalists (*národovci*). However, they were hidden from the eyes of the wider public most of the time. Despite this unfavourable situation, the discourse that pertained to monuments and monument-building was paradoxically quite frequent in the Slovak environment in the period of dualism. The term “monument” as understood in the spirit of Horatio's verse – *I have made a monument more lasting than bronze* – was commonly used in biographies, jubilee articles, or obituaries for designation of significant literary works and deeds of merit in the area of Slovak language cultivation and national awareness enhancement.¹²

The events in autumn 1918 led to a turning point signaling a gradual change. As a consequence of the revolution of 1918 and the Hungarian Kingdom's disintegration, the pillars of the official historical memory were affected in four ways, as noted by Ľubomír Lipták: new monuments were created, most of the then existing monuments were destroyed or removed from public places, some were accepted or partially modified and kept, and another part was “dehungarianized” and incorporated into new Czechoslovak structures.¹³ The destruction of monuments was the most dramatic way of parting with the past insofar as it resembled the ancient régime and its unpopular protagonists. The first two waves in 1918-1919 affected mostly Kuruc heroes and revolutionary leaders, for instance, statues of Lajos Kossuth in southern Slovakia, the third wave in 1921 hit the “Habsburgs” in the time when the former King Charles IV attempted to take over the government in Hungary and even up-till-then overlooked millennium pillars in Devín and Zobor did not stay intact. Czech areas, such as Prague or towns with German inhabitants situated in border regions,

10 Namely: memorial plaque to the Catholic priest and poet Ján Hollý (Búrsky/Borský Svätý Mikuláš, 1885), the poet Ján Botto (Vyšný Skálnik, 1887) and to the Protestant priest Michal Miloslav Hodža (Rakša, 1911).

11 Namely: memorial plaque to the linguist and Catholic priest Anton Bernolák (Slanica, 1913).

12 Kurhajcová, “Dominancia a marginalizácia”, 774-784.

13 Lipták, “The Urban Middle Class”, 26.

met similar fate. The monuments representing symbols of a “three-hundred-year-en-
slavement” of the Czech nation and Germanization, such as statues of Habsburg rul-
ers, Marian Baroque Columns and statues of saints, seen as symbols of unsuccessful
battles at White Mountain followed by the oppression as well as hegemony of the
Habsburg dynasty and Catholic Church, were, however, removed.¹⁴



Banská Bystrica in 1906 – part of the main “King Béla IV” square with the Marian
Column. Today it is called The Slovak National Uprising Square
(Fortepan / Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum / Erdélyi Mór cége)

In Slovak territory, this was how new space was opened for the monuments of
19th century Slovak national heroes, liberators, founders of the republic, especial-
ly for the statues and busts of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, and other personalities of
Slovak culture. The monuments were also built to all those who died in the WWI,
which was a new element. As regards the rituals performed in the vicinity of the
monuments, however, there was no significant difference between the inter-war era

14 Lipták, “Monuments of Political Changes”, 76-80.

and the past; only the content of rhetoric and the symbols changed. The symbols of the Hungarian struggle for freedom were replaced by the Slovak ones – the symbols of Kossuth's and Petőfi's sympathizers were overridden by symbols of Hurban's followers and legionaries. The Magyarization project in the dominantly non-Magyar public space was replaced in Czechoslovakia by the similar (Czecho-)Slovakization project in the areas of southern Slovakia, which was inhabited mainly by the Magyar minority. However, the consistent “eradication” of the past of this ethnic minority “unsuitable” for the Czechoslovak state power, as shown by the example of the interwar town Komárno, was realized only after the WWII.¹⁵

In the following sections I will focus on how the public spaces of towns located in Zvolen county communicated outwards when referring to monuments culture.

Labanc or Kuruc Tradition prior to 1918?

The intensity with which the first secular monuments were built closely reflected the extent to which the towns of the Zvolen county were influenced by modernization, nationalization, or elements of historicism derived from their citizens' interest in local history and famous natives. Banská Bystrica, Zvolen and Brezno belonged to the group of small or medium Upper Hungarian towns in terms of the number of people, categorized as towns with settled council (*rendezett tanácsú város*). The seat of the Zvolen county (Zólyom vármegye), Banská Bystrica (in Hungarian Besztercebánya, in German Neusohl), was a modern administrative, economic and cultural-educational centre with more than 10,000 inhabitants at the end of dualism.¹⁶ Although administration, industry and trade were located in Zvolen (in Hungarian Zólyom, in German Altsohl) too, Zvolen was mostly known to the local people (in 1910 the number of population reached the number of 8,799) as a strategic transport railway junction. Brezno (in Hungarian Breznóbánya, in German Bries/Briesen), by its approximately 4,000 inhabitants, retained its agrarian and small-business-

15 Mannová, *Minulosť ako supermarket?*, 317.

16 Since 2020, the history and public space of Banská Bystrica in 19th and 20th centuries has been presented by the memory portal *PamMap – Memory of the City Banská Bystrica* (via digitization of historical sources, primarily image materials – postcards and photos): <https://www.pammap.sk/banskabystrica>

like character for quite a long time.¹⁷ Modernization influenced the abovementioned towns in the order presented with a different scope of intensity at the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In some places it overlapped the inter-war era. It was demonstrated by new functional buildings and areas, which were possibly thanks to the early intervention aimed at the removal of urban fortifications and gates, the rebuilding of old burgher's houses, the laying of railway and engineering networks as well as to the industry development.

Modernization supported by Hungarian ministries, fostered also the nationalization (Magyarization) of the public space. Simply put – the originally Slovak-German town of Banská Bystrica and the Slovak towns of Zvolen and Brezno transformed gradually into Hungarian-Slovak (i.e., Magyar-Slovak) towns superficially. Besides, it was not only for the medium of public institutions (schools, authorities, church) and communication in Hungarian that the implementation of the Hungarian state idea as an official ideology of the Hungarian political representation could have been realized, but also Magyar national symbols. At the same time, this was the way of suppressing and limiting all non-Magyars here, especially Slovak national manifestations.

The county's seat was under scrutiny by government organs from the very beginning due to the mentioned tendencies manifested in 1870s and more vehemently in 1880s.¹⁸ In Zvolen, the Magyarized groups supported by the town's municipality were spurred to action at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Their action might be described as a reaction against the activities of a few Slovak lawyers and journalists in the Slovak Folk's Bank [Ľudová banka] and editorial office of the Slovak newspapers called *Zvolenské noviny*.¹⁹ Among the three towns, Brezno was the only one which succeeded in maintaining its Slovak national character and local traditions. Actually, the number of people who expressed their appurtenance to the Slovak language in 1910 census was still stable (73.7% in comparison to 24.2% of the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants), even in comparison to the previous towns (with only 40.7% of Slovaks in both cases in comparison to 48.8% of the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants in Banská Bystrica and up to 56.5% in Zvolen).²⁰

17 Čéplö et al. *Výbrané populačné štruktúry*, 382, 387, 415.

18 Kurhajcová, "Príklad dominancie či marginalizácie", 113-122.

19 Valach, "Prenasledovanie kultúrneho", 88-96.

20 Čéplö et al. *Výbrané populačné štruktúry*, 1754, 1759, 1785, 1915, 1918, 1934.



Commemorative Plaque dedicated to Károly Böhm in Banská Bystrica, 1913
(A budapesti ág. hitv. evang. főgimnázium értesítője az 1913/1914-iki iskolai évről)

The end of the 19th century saw a gradual change in how public places were used not only as religious and marketplaces but more and more as places for organizing different mass events and festive processions. In this way, they were changed into realms representing political attitudes and ideas of a forming civil society. Their visualization was also to be supported by monuments as in other towns in the Kingdom of Hungary where, for example, the statues of the *Honvéds* or of the famous personalities such as Kossuth and Petőfi played a highly important role in reminding the people of ideals of freedom and the struggle of nation for Hungarian independence during the 15th March celebrations. The dominant feature of the main square in Brezno, as well as in Banská Bystrica was still a sacred object – the Baroque Marian Column. Although in the historic centre of B. Bystrica it was a common tendency of the county's or town's elite to lead by example and follow the footsteps of Hungarian patriotism, in the period of dualism, the financially non-demanding commemorative plaques, in comparison to statues, were elaborated, and during the Great War, only one bust was publicly erected. In 1896, the local Millennium Committee together with their chairman Emil Jurkovich, a local historian, and a pedagogue, were the first

to suggest marking significant historic buildings in the town in this way. It was this occasion which triggered the idea of erecting a statue to Béla IV, the King of Hungary, “the second great founder of the country who awarded Banská Bystrica with the title of the royal free town”²¹. But no specific steps were taken in order to realize it. The idea came true more than a century later – on June 25th 2021, when a bronze statue of King Béla IV was unveiled in Banská Bystrica.

The Jewish religious community in the county’s seat was one of the first to become involved in this area: in 1903, during the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Jewish folk school establishment, there was a commemorative plaque with the text installed in the hall, emphasizing the role of the local Jewish community and their school in developing the patriotic and religious sentiment of pupils. The accompanying ceremony of introducing the plaque into public life was a manifestation of doubled identity – confessional (Jewish) identity alongside state-cultural one (Hungarian-Magyar).²² The Jewish inhabitants’ self-identification with the Hungarian (Magyar) nation became more evident before, just like during the celebration of the Hungarian millennium.²³ Before the war, in September 1913, the long-term mayor of Banská Bystrica Július Česník (Gyula Csesznák) assumed ownership of a commemorative plaque in the memory of Karol Böhm (1846 – 1911), who was a well-known native university professor of philosophy in Kolozsvár (Cluj) and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This act was performed duly by the local Madách Society. The symbols on the commemorative plaque, attached on his birth house, reflected Böhm’s professional life: except for an inscription in Hungarian and the relief of his effigy, it was decorated by philosophical quotes and features of the Kolozsvár University, too.²⁴ The ceremony of unveiling a plaque symbolized not only national patriotism and local patriotism, but also demonstrated Hungarian science, education, and culture, which were attended by scientists from various Hungarian towns.²⁵

21 Ének a városról. (1896, April 12). *Besztercebánya és vidéke*, 9(15), 1.

22 Az izr. elemi iskola jubileuma. (1903, July). *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 16, 1-2.

23 Kurhajcová, *Nyilvános ünnepségek*, 276-277.

24 See picture of the commemorative plaque dedicated to Károly Böhm in: (1914). *A budapesti ág. hitv. evang. főgimnázium értesítője az 1913/1914-iki iskolai évről*. Budapest: Franklin-Társulat könyvnyomdája.

25 Böhm Károly ünnepe. (1913, October 2.). *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 26(40), 1-2.



Gathering for the unveiling ceremony of Rákóczi's bust in Zvolen, 1907
(Vasárnapi Ujság, 9 June 1907)

Another bust that carried an apolitical message was that of Joseph Dekret, a Chamber forester and pioneer in forestry, a native from Dobroč who settled permanently down in the town in 1814 until his death in 1841. The bust was created by sculpturer Ferenc Sidló in 1915 and it was placed in the building of the Royal Hungarian Directorate of Forestry.²⁶

Meanwhile the monuments in Banská Bystrica reflected local traditions and characters unburdened by the past, whereas public space in Zvolen in the period of coalition government were “occupied” by the Kuruc tradition. There was a wave of enthusiasm that swept the town’s representatives in Zvolen due to the return of the bodily remains of the leaders of the uprisings against the Habsburgs, which were delivered from the Ottoman Empire to Hungary in 1906 (as approved by the monarch), having agreed with the decisions of the Hungarian Association of Train Drivers in Budapest (*Mozdonyvezetők Országos Szövetsége*) to build the statue of Francis II. Rákóczi in the town. It would have been highly inappropriate to reject such a unique offer, the first of its kind, which was both a symbol of prestige and patriotism for Zvolen. The ceremony of unveiling the bronze bust of Rákóczi was held on 2nd June

26 Burkovský and Furdíková, *Život zasvätený lesu*, 60-61, 93-94.

1907 in the public park situated on the main square accompanied by Kuruc symbols and a great participation of the states', counties' and towns' representatives, various associations, and local schools. Rákóczi's heroic fight for freedom of the Hungarian nation, as well as his self-sacrifice and unselfish love for his homeland were repeatedly emphasized in numerous speeches.²⁷ Local memory of the last estate anti-Habsburg uprising was suppressed (except for the sporadic historical works)²⁸ – as it was inappropriate to recall the hard times which struck the inhabitants of Zvolen after their town was occupied by the Kuruc army from November 1703 and the burning of Zvolen after their retreat in 1708.²⁹ The official memory of Rákóczi was interlinked with the ideals of heroism, the struggle for the nation's freedom and patriotism. In general, Francis II. Rákóczi as a historical figure, was not viewed as problematic in Slovak culture. However, the Slovak national emancipation movement considered it a problem when the anti-Habsburg pre-national events (Rákóczi's uprising was one of them) were interpreted from national point of view – as the ideological part of the Magyar national narrative.

The same Zvolen elite, that initiated the Rákóczi statue, however, were also interested in loyalty towards the Habsburg dynasty since they planned to install the monument for Elisabeth of Bavaria, Queen of Hungary, at the opposite end of the same promenade.³⁰ Ultimately, however, this installment was not realized.

Even though there is a scarcity of information about the building of memorials in Brezno before 1918, I can be certain that the town park in the main square contained a pyramid-shaped stone memorial, on top of which was a mythical bird of prey *turul*,³¹ a Magyar national symbol (dating to the end of the 19th century).³² Based on this symbolism, one can deduce that it belonged to one of the numerous

27 For more details, see: II. Rákóczi Ferencz első szobra áll. (1907, July 1.). *Mozdonyvezetők lapja* 3(7), 225-239.

28 For instance Bánik, "Slobodné a kráľovské", 165.

29 Nagy, "Matej Bel o udalostiach", 135-137.

30 Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici, pracovisko Archív Zvolen [State Archive in Banská Bystrica, subsidiary in Zvolen], fond Mesto Zvolen/adm., 1906: Jegyzőkönyv az 1906. évi december hó 28-án Zólyomban megejtett helyszíni szemléről (no. 3659/906)

31 See picture in: Horehronské múzeum v Brezne [Horehronie Museum in Brezno], fond Zbierka dokumentov [Collection of documents], no. F2127.

32 Fillová, "Urbanizmus architektúra", 235-239.



The first Rákóczi bust in Hungary
(Vasárnapi Ujság, 9 June 1907)

projects established in Hungary on the Millennium celebrations.³³ It referenced the pagan past of the seven Magyar tribes who were led by this mythical bird to their new homeland. A part of this monument was a memorial tablet commemorating Elisabeth of Bavaria,³⁴ probably as a tribute to the queen after her tragic assassination in September 1898. Bearing the previous evidence in mind, the interpretation of the memorial's message encourages us to explore the monument in a completely different light: is it possible to speak about the combination of symbols of two opposing concepts – pagan-Kuruc on the one hand and Christian-Labanc on the other, which was not totally unusual during the millennium celebrations? Or was it about recoding the symbolism of the original “millennial” memorial to a “dynastic” one after the death of the queen? The intention of its creators and initiators is not known, but both possibilities could be considered since it was not an entirely unique phenomenon. In the two villages located in Veszprém county, two monuments were installed: the first so called combined obelisk, unveiled in August 1899 – “*to the memory of the Hungarian millennium and as a tribute to the tragically deceased Elisabeth the queen*” (Bakony-Magyar-Szombathely), and the second, so called recoded obelisk, which, despite being built during the Millennium, was later changed to the memorial of Elisabeth as part of the folk tradition (Lepsény).³⁵ Except for this, the concentration of symbolic features in one memorial could serve a practical purpose – providing individuals with the possibility to interpret what was close to their heart: for some it was the millennial homeland, for others it was the memory of the queen. The after-war news revealed the fact that there was also a Rákóczi bust in Brezno³⁶, although the sources dated to the period before 1918 do not mention so.

It cannot be omitted that the Upper Hungarian towns were connected with the

33 Varga, *The Monumental Nation*

34 Horehronské múzeum v Brezne [Horehronie Museum in Brezno], fond Zbierka dokumentov [Collection of documents], Erzsébet királyné emlék setatér, 1904 (photograph from the privat archive of Ladislav Baitrok in Budapest).

35 Vér, *Erzsébet királyné*. See appendix – Table no. 10: Erzsébet emlékművek, 1898 – 1914.

36 Orosová, “Problémové pomníky”, 146.

lives of many significant Slovak personalities such as the following: a writer and theologian Karol Kuzmány, born in Brezno and working in Banská Bystrica as an Protestant pastor; Gustáv Kazimír Zechenter-Laskomerský – a mining doctor and writer who worked in Brezno; Ján Chalupka – an Protestant priest and dramatist from Brezno; Adolf Peter Zátarecký – a pedagogue and a collector of folk literature from Brezno; Ján Botto – a romantic writer in Banská Bystrica, or Juraj Bánik – a lawyer and a notary from Zvolen. Before 1918, even in these towns, conditions were far from favourable for the erection of their statues in the squares or the attachment of their commemorative plaques to the building facades they worked in. The immortalization of well-known individuals was scarcely helped by the fact that local Slovak families³⁷ were present: the last four of the abovementioned personalities, who lived in the mentioned towns until their death, were awarded with a tombstone at most.

The monument building project, which failed to be realized, tells us a great deal about the attitudes of the county's or town's elites towards the official state ideology and the extent to which they could decide independently. Actually, they pose a number of questions: was it because of hesitation, disunited attitude(s), lack of financial resources, or it was due to a deliberate choice as to whom a monument should or should not be built? There were many of such cases in Banská Bystrica but the question of money did not pose a significant problem in any of them. One case which can exemplify the previous piece of information occurred in 1891. This was the year when the county board had the opportunity to honour a native of Banská Bystrica, Béla Grünwald (after receiving a message about his tragic death), a former county vice-administrator and a member of the Hungarian Parliament.³⁸ However, his personality was viewed contradictorily in that period: pro-governmental elites drew attention to his unselfish patriotism, his reformational activities, writings skills, as well as his fight against the threat of Pan-Slavism,³⁹ whereas his opponents, mainly from Slovak ranks, condemned his propaganda and zealous policy of Magyarization. The locals must have been aware of his private life interwoven with love affairs.⁴⁰

37 Schuster, "Poznámky k histórii Brezna", 55.

38 † Grünwald Béla. (1891, May 17.) *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 4 (20), 1.

39 É. (1892, December 11.). Grünwald emléke. *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 5 (50), 1.

40 Kodajová, "Negatívny hrdina v pamäti", 43-55. Demmel, "Spisovateľ politikom", 17-43.

The building of a statue in honour of Grünwald was postponed despite the intention being announced in the first half of the 1890s: ultimately, instead of the previous idea of a commemorative plaque, the county's representatives ordered a portrait of him to be made for the county hall and it was eventually unveiled in 1894.⁴¹ This type of prolonged decision-making, as was indicated in the local press, could be traced back to the town deputies having incongruent feelings and prejudices towards or against Grünwald.⁴²

In 1902, the committee under the presidency of the county's vice-administrator Mátyás Répasi, repeated the plan to build a statue in Grünwald's honor,⁴³ however, local Slovak contributors of *Národný hlásnik* from nearby Radvan and Zvolen strongly opposed this,⁴⁴ partly because of Grünwald's involvement in shutting down the Slovak cultural association – *Matica slovenská* – and Slovak secondary grammar schools:

“The gentlemen [those in power, who supported the state ideology – noted by A. K.] [...] are now searching for their merits in mocking not only our Slovak-national expression(s) but also our Christian-religious feelings. It is a great and praiseworthy activity to build monuments and statues to those who deserve such [...]; but to build them from the begged coins for those who committed suicide [Grünwald took his life on the bank of the river Seine in Paris – noted by A. K.]: is a shame for all those who build them as well as for those who merely observe [...] this comedy.”⁴⁵

Although the public financial collection for this memorial continued, it lost its significance after the collapse of the monarchy. I do not yet know the answer to the question why the building of Grünwald's memorial was deferred to such an extent. Firstly, it could have been due to the controversy of his personality or to the “pressure” from the public, reluctant to build “*a monument to a self-murderer*” or with

41 Vármegyei közgyűlés. 1894. május 9. (1894, May 13.). *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 7(19), 1; Répasi, M. (1894, June 24.). Alkalmi beszéd. Grünwald Béla arcképének leleplezésénél. *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 7(25), 1-2.

42 Városi közgyűlés. (1892, November 20.). *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 5(47), 3; É. (1892, December 4.). Grünwald emléke. *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 5(49), 1; É. (1892, December 11.). Grünwald emléke. *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 5 (50), 1.

43 Szobrot Grünwald Bélának! (1902, December 21.). *Besztercebánya és vidéke* 15(51), 2.

44 Radvaň, 13. júna. (1903, June 20.). *Národný hlásnik* 36 (12), 185.

45 Zvolen, 20. septembra (Grünwaldov pomník). (1902, September 27.). *Národné Noviny* 33(113), 3.

his controversial reputation, which could shed a bad light on the town and its inhabitants. When looking back to Grünwald's anti-Slovak activities, there is an irony - if it is plausible to trust the post-war press - that the collected sum aimed at building his statue was to be divided between two national associations in 1919, namely – *Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť* [the Slovak Museum Society] and the renewed Slovak Cultural Institution *Matica slovenská*.⁴⁶ Were there an effort to unveil a statue to a native, it probably did matter to which personality this honour would be awarded.



Unusual monument in Brezno before 1918 – with the Turul and the memorial tablet commemorating Elisabeth of Bavaria (Horehronské múzeum v Brezne [Horehronie Museum in Brezno], fond Zbierka dokumentov [Collection of documents], no. F2127)

Even Gabriel Bethlen, the Prince of Transylvania, was not given a tribute in the form of his own statue which would have been erected in the county's seat. Originally, there was a plan to unveil it on the 300th centenary of Bethlen being elected as

⁴⁶ Zasedanie župného výboru. (1919, September 3.). *Hronské noviny* 1(20), 1.

the Hungarian King at the Diet in Banská Bystrica, as the town's authority informed about it at the end of January 1918,⁴⁷ but the situation after the war changed dramatically. The year 1920 brought new challenges for the newly-born republic.

Coping with the Past in the First Years after the Collapse of Monarchy

Integration of the Slovak territory into the Czechoslovak Republic since its declaration on 28th October by the National Committee in Prague and subsequently in Turčiansky Sv. Martin on 30th October 1918 by the Slovak National Council - until the official signing of the Trianon peace treaty was not without problems. It was not only political and military struggle for public space but also it was a symbolic one.⁴⁸ The situation during the winter months of 1918 was quite disturbing in the towns of Zvolen county.

There were the towns such as Banská Bystrica and Brezno, which created Hungarian national committees, following the call made by the Károlyi's government in Budapest, which happened exactly on 1st November in Banská Bystrica and in Brezno, although the members in Brezno distanced themselves from the official name and accepted only the designation as "town council" - *mestská rada*.⁴⁹ In Banská Bystrica, by the end of November, there were still members of the municipal self-governing bodies remaining with the Budapest centre. They expressed their approval of the integrity of Hungary and the republic as its state establishment and opposed the integration of the county's seat into a new state framework.⁵⁰ In Zvolen, on the contrary, the active Slovaks centred around the Folk's Bank reacted to the statements made by the Slovak National Council in Turčiansky Sv. Martin, whose local district, and county committees were supposed to ensure a smooth separation of Slovakia from Hungary.

47 Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici [State archive in Banská Bystrica], fond Magistrát mesta Banská Bystrica [Municipal government of the town Banská Bystrica] (1020) 1255 – 1922, box 421, no. 916: Besztercebánya sz. kir. város képviselőtestületének, 1918. évi január hó 29-én tartott rendkívüli közgyűléséről felvett jegyzőkönyv kivonata (Bethlen Gábor szobor ügyében), XIV-387/1909.

48 Krajčovičová, "Začleňovanie Slovenska", 57-93. Kazansky, "Integrácia stredného", 7-40.

49 Alberty, "Brezno v 20. storočí", 58.

50 Kurhajcová, "Od monarchie k republike", 38-39.

They were the first to declare the creation of the Slovak National Council' Committee on 31st October in the premises of the Bank of Zvolen⁵¹, later in Brezno (from the originally "Hungarian" National Committee – "town council")⁵² and on 30th November in Banská Bystrica. Here that the two committees of the National Council functioned in a parallel way – Slovak and Hungarian. This power constellation was mirrored in the towns' spirit as well as in symbols at their public places.

By the end of 1918, the Slovak national flag was occasionally seen waving on houses and public buildings. Furthermore, in Brezno, one could sometimes hear the public singing of hymns which became a common feature of people's lives. However, the pro-Hungarian elite in Banská Bystrica promoted the new and fair Hungary – "without king and policy of the posh gentlemen and their tricks" through the medium of leaflets and papers – all until the arrival of the Czechoslovak military on 22nd December 1918, while the representatives of the Slovak workers called for the independence of Slovakia. The orders from Paris for the Hungarian military garrison to retreat from the towns and the news about the Czechoslovak army approaching to Banská Bystrica did not let the county's as well as the town's elite indifferent, which resulted the change of their behaviour to non-conflicting acceptance of reality and to a certain extent adaptation to new conditions. This elite did not resist which could have originated from the powerlessness and impossibility to oppose the stronger – winning powers (the Allies), avoiding thoughtless acts and counting on fair decisions, which were to be reached after the peace negotiations. Nevertheless, the continuity with the old regime was not completely broken: a new personality appeared in the Zvolen county's leadership in January 1919 – a Slovak lawyer from Zvolen, Vladimír Fajnor, alongside the old-new faces in the newly created Czechoslovak state service. The state service position was conditioned by taking a vow of fidelity to a new republic. In Banská Bystrica, for instance, this was done by more than two thirds of the former members of the town-council (the members of the newly-appointed municipality) – from spring 1919.⁵³ Július Česník in charge of Banská Bystrica with no interruption since 1893 and since 1910 Otto Rosenauer in charge of

51 Mičko, "Zvolen medzi dvoma svetovými vojnami", 168.

52 Alberty, "Brezno v 20. storočí", 58.

53 Kurhajcová, "Od monarchie k republike", 39-43.

Zvolen continued in the function of mayors until 1922.⁵⁴ Dušan Lichard became the newly appointed mayor of Brezno.

The continuity was more visibly broken due to the Czech and Slovak soldiers, legionaries and passionate groups in the Slovak population impacting the culture of secular monuments as symbols of the ancient régime. Banská Bystrica, however, did not have to deal with post-revolutionary waves of monument destruction (except one case) in the first few years. The smooth cooperation of urban officials during the occupation by the Czechoslovak army may have contributed to the fact that the monuments here were not destroyed. Even at the turn of spring and summer 1919, when fighting for the Slovak territory continued, the military encounters between the divisions of the Hungarian Red Army and the Czechoslovak army only partially influenced the town.⁵⁵ It is also important to point out to the fact that more monuments in the town were planned than built, so there was in fact very little to destroy. The bust of Joseph Dekret survived the uncertain times in its original place. The memorial tablets from Hungarian times (whose fate is unknown for now), besides the fact that they were not located in easily visible places, did not evoke any revanchist feelings. Purportedly, it was “the ceramic coat of arms on the Art Nouveau building of the Forest Directorate which attracted legionaries who knocked it down”.⁵⁶

Brezno and Zvolen were acutely confronted with the demolition of monuments. Military transport ran through Brezno during the conflicts of 1919, and the people from more stricken southern counties took refuge there. Zvolen was occupied by the Hungarian Bolshevik Army from 7th to 13th June 1919.⁵⁷ It is very probable that the reaction to these events materialized in the form of removing “problematic” pro-Hungarian oriented monuments in both towns: the unknown perpetrators in Brezno knocked down the mythical bird *turul* from Queen Elisabeth’s monument⁵⁸ and allegedly also destroyed the bust of Francis II. Rákóczi; they knocked him off his pedestal in Zvolen, too.⁵⁹ Since these iconoclastic activities were of mass character, the local authorities could not prevent them although they stressed the importance of

54 Szeghy-Gayer, “Mešťanostovia na rázcestí”, 334-360.

55 Kazansky, “Integrácia stredného”, 33-35.

56 Olay, “A magyar emlékművek”, 360.

57 Alberty, “Brezno v 20. storočí”, 60. Mičko, “Zvolen medzi dvoma”, 168-169.

58 Babják, “Osudy pomníkov”, 39.

59 Olay, “A magyar emlékművek”, 359.



Postcard from Brezno from the 1930s – The monument of General Štefánik standing in front of the building that was the Town Hall at the time.. Today it is the seat of the Horehronie Museum (Horehronské múzeum v Brezne, fond Zbierka dokumentov, no. F2355)

protection of artistic or historically valuable monuments. The monuments' boards in Slovakia called for their protection until the peace treaty with Hungary was signed, but as it was evaluated by Martina Orosová, the monument protection in post-war period was quite unfavourable. The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment of the Czechoslovak Republic condemned these acts as barbaric. The Hungarian government, however, saw mostly the Czech elements behind those actions, which created a starting point for the campaign against the Czechoslovak Republic. Therefore, they demanded compensation for all destroyed or damaged monuments based on the Trianon Peace Treaty on the exchange (among other things) of artistic and historical collections. When the State Department for Monuments Preservation in Slovakia (*Štátny referát na ochranu pamiatok na Slovensku*) examined the state of monuments and memorials in Slovakia in 1922, the busts of Rákóczi in Zvolen and Brezno had already been removed from the square: while the town of Brezno reported on not possessing it⁶⁰, the Zvolen bust was deposited to the Municipal Museum, after all the trouble, it finally ended up in front of the Manor House in Rákóczi's native village of Borša.⁶¹

Ultimately, the State Department (*Štátny referát*) refused the Hungarian government's demands for compensation for removed monuments since these monuments (such as the bust in Zvolen) had in fact been built by using the funds of local associations, town's, or county's citizens. The approach to dynastic monuments, and often to non-dynastic monuments, became more restrictive following the 1923 *law on the Protection of the Republic*, which aimed at removing the last remnants of any monument reflecting pro-Hungarian or pro-dynasty sentiment.⁶² The situation in Zvolen county towns had already stabilised, and it was more common to see the first efforts to prove loyalty and allegiance to the Czechoslovak state power.

60 Orosová, "Problémové pomníky", 145-148, 152.

61 Balassa, "Egy Rákóczi-szobor", 9-11.

62 Orosová, „Problémové pomníky”, 148.



Park in the main square of Zvolen with the Rákóczi bust, 1907
(Fortepan / Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum / Erdélyi Mór cége)

For Whom Were the Memorials Built in the First Decade of the Czechoslovak Republic?

After “decluttering” the squares and streets from the signs of memory of Magyar supremacy, the old-new elites were confronted with the task of filling the urban space with acceptable memorials. The new realms of memory were expected to declare the Czechoslovak statehood and identity, principles of democracy and freedom alongside an anti-Hungarian and anti-monarchist stance. The official state ideology, visions of influential political parties and their representatives often shaped the process of remembering the nation’s past, cultivation of historical memory, and revival of the national traditions. The memory of historical events and personalities in the inter-war Czechoslovakia was politically instrumentalized in terms of the official state idea of Czechoslovakism (i.e., the idea of national unity of the Czechs and Slovaks) on the one hand and the Slovak nationalism (i.e., the idea of the independent Slovak

nation) on the other. Regional conditions such as reorganization of county administration in February 1920, and competition between Banská Bystrica and Zvolen for the accolade of the county seat alongside the lack of finances for realizing greater sculptures, which were postponed till the end of the 1920s-1930s, indirectly influenced the intensity of memorials creation in towns.

When talking about Zvolen, it must be added that the first decade of the Republic can be described as “bleak” as regards the erection of memorials. At most, memorial trees – *the Linden Trees of Freedom* – were planted in honour of the first president, T. G. Masaryk, co-founder of Czechoslovakia, which took the place of Rákóczi’s bust. The case of Zvolen is an example of using trees as metaphorical memorials. The vandals who damaged the “Linden trees of Masaryk” were purportedly taken to court for destroying the “memorial”.⁶³ From January 1923, when Zvolen became the Hron County seat, which was a reorganized extension of Zvolen County named *Pohronská župa*, the city experienced dynamic development and a building bustle. However, the energy and finances invested to support the town were aimed more at the development of cultural life and at the construction of functional infrastructure, such as administration buildings, financial premises, and flats, rather than at building memorials.⁶⁴ On the other side, the Slovakness and loyalty of the town’s elite were barely shaken in comparison to the one in the former county seat, i.e., in Banská Bystrica. After 1918, Banská Bystrica featured in the newspapers and memoirs under the label “Magyar”, “*Mad’arón*” or “Magyar-Jewish one” for quite a long time. In Banská Bystrica “one can hear that even the gypsy plays Hungarian songs and there are Hungarians (Magyars) in their heart and soul, but Banská Bystrica is no longer an island, it adapts to its Slovak village, becomes Slovak and it will be a Slovak one [...]”;⁶⁵ this was how the editor from the local press *Hronské noviny* defended the town in 1922, in the period when only a little more than 8% of inhabitants claimed their Hungarian (i.e. Magyar) nationality.⁶⁶

63 Balassa, *Egy Rákóczi-szobor „utazásai“*, 10.

64 Mičko, “Zvolen medzi dvoma”, 170-173.

65 Aká je Banská Bystrica? (1922, October 1.). *Hronské noviny* 4(40), 1.

66 Čéplö et al. *Výbrané populačné štruktúry*, 1915.

The memories of the former roles of the town's elite in strengthening the Hungarian patriotism which nourished the picture of the "Magyarized" Banská Bystrica in the first years of the new republic were supposed to be eliminated by eternalizing memory of M. R. Štefánik – a military general, scientist, diplomat, an organizer of the Czecho-Slovak army (legions) during the war, a minister of war for Czecho-slovakia, and a significant agent in the establishment of the new state. Right after his tragic death on 4th May 1919, many began to consider him as the greatest hero ever and a symbol of the Czechoslovak statehood.⁶⁷ The privilege of being the first among others to hold the memorial of Štefánik was significant not only in terms of both legitimizing the existing state and promoting the official regime, but also it was important for the Slovakization of public space and the subsequent improvement of the town's image. The motif of prestige might have been strong in Banská Bystrica during that period, especially when the town strived for maintaining the county seat position. Financial problems ultimately confronted the apparently-auspicious initiative to build a memorial for Štefánik – an initiative which sprouted in the ranks of the town's military garrison officials. The town's committee did not show any willingness to provide the land for building the memorial either. Finally, the above lifesize statue of Štefánik, created by Miroslav Frico Motoška, the native of Banská Bystrica, was bought by the Slovak League of America for the public space in Cleveland. Purportedly, it was also the people of Zvolen who were playing with the idea of installing the memorial of Štefánik in their town, yet it was first realized in Brezno.⁶⁸

In the first years after the revolution 1918, Brezno was presented as "Slovak". The Slovak character of the town was either connected to the most significant Slovak families or with the readiness of Brezno "to accept the *Matica slovenská* into her lap" at the beginning of 1860s (this did not happen since it was Turčiansky Sv. Martin which became the seat of *Matica*).⁶⁹ Besides this fact, in 1921, 94.7% of the inhabitants of Brezno stated their Czecho-Slovak nationality in a census.⁷⁰ Brezno's

67 Macho, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik*

68 Macho, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik*, 420-428.

69 Zibrin, "Brezno za vojna", 74.

70 Čéplö et al. *Vybrané populačné štruktúry*, 1759.

Slovak character predetermined the town for building a memorial to M. R. Štefánik, a national hero and “great son of Slovaks”, according to the author of jubilee article.⁷¹ As is often the case with national heroes, his work ethic and life-story (of an advancing career and unexpected downfall) should become a model for present and future generations. The memorial of Štefánik acted as a symbol of harmony, freedom, and religious tolerance, persistence and immortal deeds, commitment to and love of family, nation, and state. After the preparatory works exerted by the town’s authorities - preceded by public collection in the Brezno district and among the Slovaks living in USA -, these ideas were successfully incorporated into public space in two phases: first, during the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Czechoslovakia’s birth on 28th October 1928, when the corner-stone of Štefánik’s memorial was laid, and second during the 10th anniversary of his death in May 1929 when the memorial was solemnly unveiled. The bronze statue of Štefánik as *a general – diplomat* rested on a stone pedestal, with the names of the fallen inhabitants of Brezno and soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army engraved on the back half of the pedestal.⁷²

As is evident, the symbolical elements and rhetoric of the celebrations articulated several period narratives in this realm of memory. During the First Republic it became the pillar of the Czechs’ and Slovaks’ idea of the common state, the symbol of continuity of their struggle for national and state independence which began according to the jubilee speaker, Štefan Krčméry, a secretary of *Matica slovenská*, in the revolutionary year of 1848 and was successfully carried out till the end under the leadership of Štefánik.⁷³ At first sight, the monument embodied incompatible elements – two actors fighting against each other: Štefánik as the representative of the victorious legionaries against fallen soldiers on the side of the defeated party. The linking element could be the motif of their tragic death and painful loss.⁷⁴ Except for this, as Peter Macho reminds us, the soldiers who fell on the “wrong” side became – after 1918 – neither heroes nor traitors, but were instead mostly viewed as victims of the ancient régime.⁷⁵

71 Repka, “Postavenie pomníka”, 9-22.

72 Babják, “Pomníky a sochy”, 92-93.

73 Štefánikova oslava v Brezne. Desaťtisíc Slovákov vzdávalo hold pamiatke Štefánikovej. (1929, May 9.). *Národný týždenník I* (11), 3.

74 Babják, “Pomníky a sochy”, 83.

75 Macho, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik*, 36, 39.



The unveiling ceremony of General M. R. Štefánik's statue in Brezno (Horehronské múzeum v Brezne, fond Zbierka dokumentov, no. F424)

Ročník I.

V Lučenci, dňa 9. mája 1929.

Číslo 11.

NÁRODNÝ TÝŽDENNÍK

Predpláta: Na celý rok Kša 40—
Na pol roka „ 20—
Jednotlivé číslo „ 1—

Neodvislý politický a spoločenský týždenník

Vychádza každý piatok.
Redakcia a administrácia:
Lučenec, Parková ulica 15.
Ruhopisy sa nevracajú.

Dr. Ľudovít Bazovský:

Sláva šlachetným.

Hovorí sa, že nevdak je odplátou sveta, že svet nevdakou platí. A tomu je aj tak. Za dobré skutky vďaky nečakaj. *Vďačným byť je len veľkým duchom, len charakterom dané.* Len tí sú vstave vďačnými byť, ktorí sa vedú pozvniest nad priemer.

Aj na tom mnoho záleží, z akej pohnútky pochodia činy na vďaku poukazujúce. Mnoho ráz aj vďaka je otázkou „kšeftu“, otázkou vypočítavosti.

V Brezno postavili pomník generálovi dr. Milanovi Rastislavovi Štefánikovi. Pomník tento teraz 5. t. m. bol odhalený. Ja sám osobne ľutujem, že som tam nemohol byť prítomný, lebo viem, že *Brezno postavilo pomník zo štachetnej vďaky.* Brezno kornalo zo slovenských národných pohnútok, keď Slované



Štefánikova socha v Brezno.

Ešte niečo o divných obchodoch viedenskej poisťovne.

V 6. čísle našich novin poukázali sme na obchody viedenskej poisťovne Fenix s válečnými pôžičkami, ktoré pravidzata na okoli banko-hystrickom, a ktoré neoravňavajú sa s patričným ministerským nariadením a takýmto vybavením poškodované sú stránky, ktoré sa svojho času posilily na válečné pôžičky a ukrátený je pri tom aj štát.

Poisťovňa Fenix nás požiadala cestou svojho úradníka, ktorý osobne bol u nás, aby sme nepokračovali v článkoch, pokiaľ samé riaditeľstvo Fenix-a nepoda nám listovne vysvetlenie. Osvedčili sa, že vysvetlenie príde do desať dní. Minulo od tedy už dvadsať dní, ale očakávané vysvetlenie sme nedostali. Konstatujeme, že poisťovňa Fenix skutočne tak vybavovala tieto obchody, ako sme to boli my uverejali. Konstatujeme aj to, že dia slov zastupcu poisťovne Fenix, obchody tieto uzavierané boli dia nariadenia riaditeľstva Fenix a suma poisťovne uznáva, že to nebolo fair, keď nás požiadala, aby sme vyzvali tie stránky, ktoré nie sú spokojné s takýmto vchovaním ale štátnu

Report on the unveiling of the statue of General M. R. Štefánik in Brezno (1929)

One of the more visible manifestations of Slovak national identity, which was duly emphasized, was the celebration of unveiling the memorial tablets dedicated to the personalities of Slovak culture and church of the 19th century such as the Protestant superintendent Karol Kuzmány, whose memorial was located at his birth house in Brezno (17th October 1926),⁷⁶ the Catholic bishop Štefan Moyzes (a memorial dedicated to him was situated at his bishop residence), and Karol Kuzmány whose memorial was located on the facade of the Protestant parsonage in Banská Bystrica. The last two memorial tablets were both unveiled on 19th June 1927 in Banská Bystrica.⁷⁷ The renewed *Matica slovenská* and its local branches cultivated the memory of both bishops, which was done as a gesture of thanks for their participation in the establishment of *Matica* in 1863 as well as for being her first leading functionaries – Moyzes as a president and Kuzmány as a vice-president. Their inter-confessional national work representing *Matica* in the first years of its existence made Moyzes and Kuzmány into an inseparable twosome in the nation's historical memory.⁷⁸ The Moyzes–Kuzmány tradition was not only honoured during the celebrations of unveiling the memorials tablets but was also updated and transferred to then-current political relations.⁷⁹ It was supposed to become an example of unity and common cooperation for political parties which – although standing on the platform of Slovak nationalism – were still religiously distanced from each other. This unity was – according to other Slovak speakers – supportive of “our Czechoslovak

76 Odhalenie pamätnej dosky dra Karola Kuzmányho v Brezne. (1926, October 22.). *Hronské noviny* 8(42), 2.

77 „Nehľadáme, čo nás delí, ale čo nás spája!“ Sviatok slovenskej jednoty a svornosti v Banskej Bystrici. – Len v duchu Moyses a Kuzmányho môžu zasvitnúť pekné dni slovenskej kultúre“. (1927, June 22.). *Národné noviny* 58(71), 2; Národné slávnosti v Banskej Bystrici. Odhalenie pamätných dosák Štefanovi Moysesovi a Karlovi Kuzmánymu. (1927, June 24.). *Hronské noviny* 9(26), 1.

78 Kodajová, “Oslavovanie Karola Kuzmányho”, 313-325.

79 See the occasional speeches: J. J. [Janoška, Jur]. (1926, November 1.). Pamiatka Dra Karla Kuzmányho. *Cirkevné listy* 40(19-20), 322; Moyzes a Kuzmány. Z prednášky dr. Jozefa Škultétyho v slávnostnom výbore Matice slovenskej 18. júna 1927 v Banskej Bystrici. (1927, June 22.). *Národné noviny* 58 (71), 1; Kázeň pri odhalení pamätnej dasky Dra Karla Kuzmányho 19. VI. 1927 v B. Bystrici; povedal pred chrámom Dr. Ján Slávik (1927, July 15.). *Cirkevné listy* 41 (12-13), 214-216.

homeland".⁸⁰ As was stated by the historian Július Mésároš, this tradition "*could only soften but not bridge the internal differences of political parties in Slovakia*".⁸¹

The citizens of towns of Zvolen County made use of the attractive power of political memorials as tools of power assumption, constitution and establishment of "new" identities not only in the then-Kingdom of Hungary but also after the birth of Czechoslovakia. There were not many memorials built in the first decade of the Republic, but those which were realized, fulfilled the "required" purpose of marking the particular trend: they proclaimed the loyalty to the Republic, they Slovakized public space, and symbolically fostered – among townspeople – the concept of belonging to the Slovak nation. However, the historian must bear in mind the fact that the process of identifying people with nation and state was far more complex and it was influenced by other factors such as political beliefs, social position, religious affiliation, or personal experience.

Translated from Slovak by Mgr. Anna Slatinská, PhD.

English Proofreading: Criostóir Ó Loingsigh

80 Janoška, Jur st. (1927, July 15.). Slávnostná reč pri odhalení pamätnej dosky Dra Karla Kuzmányho 19. júna 1927 v Banskej Bystrici; povedal pred evanj. farou biskup Dr. Jur Janoška. *Cirkevné listy* 41 (12-13), 217-218.

81 Mésároš, "Kuzmányovská tradícia", 300.

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