CZECH MINORITY IN A SLOVAK CITY: IDENTITY AND MEMORY.
(A case study from Bratislava) [1]

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Abstract:
On the model example of the Czech community, this paper focuses on the formation of the collective identity of an ethnic minority in a present-day city. The emergence of the community, its development in the 1st half of the 20th century as well as the forced departure of most of the residents of Czech nationality from the city during WW II have been firmly etched in the historical memory of the minority members and represent the cornerstones of their identity. In the 2nd half of the 20 century, processes of integration and assimilation took place. Revitalization of the Czech community after the division of Czechoslovakia points to the importance of macro-social processes in the formation of minority communities.

Key words: *collective memory, identity, Czech community, Bratislava*

My paper focuses on the diversification of an urban community in a period of great political and social changes and on implications of these processes for the formation of individual and collective identities. According to current findings of urban ethnology, it is apparent that the process of diversification of a stabilized social structure brings about, in multiethnic cities, conflicts between ethnic communities as well as smaller informal groups (family, friends, colleagues). The studied setting is Bratislava, which, after the split up of Czechoslovakia, became the capital of the Slovak Republic. My analysis of research findings focuses on:

a) the process of formation of the Czech community in the city and forcible expulsions of the Czechs before WW II that influenced the formation of individual identities of people of several generations. These historical events resonate in the historical memories of contemporaries until today;

b) evaluation of these processes in the Czech community, which used to be a majority in the city and now are in the position of an ethnic minority.

Czechs in Slovakia, just like Slovaks in the Czech Republic, became an ethnic minority as a consequence of the political act of the division of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on the 1st of January 1993. Activities of Czechs in Slovakia have their historical reasons and political contexts. From the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 throughout the whole interwar period as well as after WW II, the Czechs who relocated to Slovakia came from another part of the same state unit. Together with Slovaks, they were a so-called state-forming nation and their legal social position in Slovakia was in no respect different from that of the rest of the population. Their national identity, just like their Czech, Moravian or Silesian origin, was interconnected with the common Czechoslovak identity of belonging to the same state and they found their home in Slovakia in the tolerant climate of peaceful coexistence with the rest of the population. This was also facilitated by the linguistic proximity of both nations. Majtánová (1999) sums up the position of a Czech in Slovakia in the period of the former common state: "Czechs who permanently lived in Slovakia considered Slovakia their home – their homeland. Of course, in addition to the existence of central political, state and other bodies, these sentiments were also backed up by the bilingual federal TV and radio, easy availability of newspapers, equal opportunities in employment and career paths, mixed companies and institutions" (Majtánová, 1999).

The split of the Czechoslovak federation put Czechs in Slovakia in a position where they had to come to terms with the loss of their homeland and with the fact that instead of being members of the national majority they now belonged to an ethnic minority. They had to rethink the meaning of their Czechoslovak identity and decide between either leaving Slovakia as their homeland or the Czech Republic as their country of origin, i.e., decide between Czech and Slovak citizenship. In the Slovak environment, many of them experienced the "role of a stranger." This also resulted in disrupted family ties, existential problems and heightened sensitivity to social relations. The changes in individual identities were also related to the possibility of becoming active members of the ethnic minority, i.e., of accepting a new collective identity: "Before the demise

of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs living in Slovakia were not in a minority position; the Czech community was never organized; there were no barriers that would detach them from the dominant nation and homeland. Their homeland was Czechoslovakia as a whole" (Majtánová, 1999).

A unique problem of Czech-Slovak relations was the history of Czechs and Slovaks in their common state which, to a high degree, influenced their opinion about the division of the republic in 1993 and their views on the new identity of citizens with minority status. As Majtánová writes, the Slovak and Czech minorities "were formed under unusual conditions and their characteristics are not typical. This is due to the relations of both nations before the creation, during the existence and after the demise of the common state, when its formation and demise happened twice during the relatively short period of seventy years" (Majtánová, 1999).

The objective of this paper is to shed light on the background of these processes and to look at the extent to which historical memory influences the identity of a minority.

Theoretical and Methodological Background

A study of the 1st half of the 20th century points to common collective attitudes, goals and interests of communities formed on an ethnic principle. Similar processes of group formation could also be observed after 1989 when all urban ethnic minorities mobilized. We need not emphasize the important role played by collective identity in the formation and maintenance of collective ties. Collective identity is a supra-individual category and, in my understanding, it expresses the commonality of values, cultural habits, traditions and history. These sources of cultural identity were decisive for the formation of the Czech community in Bratislava in the period of the division of the Czechoslovak Federation. Especially their common history, related to the first years of the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic when Czechs moved to Bratislava on a mass scale and to their forcible relocation before and during WW II, points to the need to study their historical memory. In this concrete context, collective identity and historical memory are closely interconnected.

The above-mentioned historical events of the programmatic politically organized arrival and departure of a large ethnic group are also an interesting research topic from the perspective of the study of migration processes. In the case of Bratislava, the arrival of the Czechs induced similar tensions to those we encounter in present-day cities with a large ethnic diversity. At the time of their mass arrival, the Czechs importantly changed not only the demographic structure but also many aspects of everyday reality and the spiritual dimension of the community. They left their mark on the economic, social and cultural life, social relations, lifestyles and habits and other spheres creating the unique character (identity) of the city. Its "Czechoslovakization," but also "Slovakization," began. Diversification of the urban community caused by the growth of this "foreign element" and deepening of its heterogeneity, but also later expulsion of already integrated residents and reduction of diversity, are, from the present-day perspective, model situations for the study of implications of forcible, state-led interventions into developmental continuity.

The study of ethnic issues in historical societies encounters several problems. Given the time lapse, we cannot speak with eyewitnesses of events; testimonies are indirect, reduced and often dated. News of the period painted the picture of interethnic relations in the usual schematic fashion as "Us" vs. "Them." They usually conveyed values, goals and intentions of their own group and those of the other group in a confrontational fashion. For instance, for the census of 1921, the following instructions on how to declare one's identity were issued: "Everyone who was born of a Slovak father and Slovak mother, everyone whose mother tongue is Slovak is a Slovak."[1] Thus, critical reading of the period news must distinguish between the declared and the "lived" identity (Bittnerová, 2005: 10), created by everyday life in which one's own identity and difference is validated through experiences from social interaction and communication. Some contradictory stances and reports on the degree of conflictuality of interethnic relations in concrete historical situations can also be explained on this basis.

In the process of the transformation of post-socialist society and the formation of the Slovak republic, ethnic and national identity has had an important function. In my understanding, these concepts express the "difference between conscious identification with a certain ethnic group and its culture and conscious identification with a certain national-political subject formed by this ethnic group (Moravcová-Turková, 2001: 158). In the Czech-Slovak space, the concept of *national identity* was replaced by citizenship complemented by the term nationality in the meaning of the ethnic identity of an individual.

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[1] An article published in the republican press Bratislavský denník (The Bratislava Daily) 25 January 1921, p. 1.

For the purposes of collecting my research data on the studied topic, I proceeded from excerpting written sources and archive documents to researching the Czech community in Bratislava. I also used a survey[2] to collect data, and its summarized findings are presented in the publication "Minorities in the City" (Luther, 2004: 9-56).

Integration of the Czech Community in the Interwar City

At the beginning of the 20th century, Bratislava was a multiethnic city. The largest groups were Germans, followed by Hungarians, Slovaks, Jews and other nationalities. However, the population was, to a large degree, Hungarized although Germans were the dominant social and economic force.

Germans were the strongest economic and social layer in the city. They considered themselves to be autochthonous, culturally developed and tolerant of other ethnicities. They justified their own importance by "the right gained over the course of centuries through our work, diligence, virtue and conscientiousness."[3] They regarded the city as unquestionably "theirs" and they did not show open resistance towards the aggressive Hungarian minority. This was probably related to the size and degree of integration of the German community, the facts that they could freely use their mother tongue and that they had their own religious and cultural life etc., so they did not feel as threatened as, e.g., Slovaks. Command of the Hungarian language was very important in the public and economic sphere and command of German was another advantage in terms of individual success. Still, "what prevailed in the urban elite, which was, in spite of assimilation, still dominated by ethnic Germans, was covert resistance to Hungarization" (Mannová, 1999: 61). Their cultural model to emulate was Vienna and the developed German world, but they also looked up to Budapest. They regarded themselves as "Hungarian Germans" and also, according to their statements (although not made in a really free climate), as

Hungarian patriots. Their ties with Hungarians were so close in the ethnically mixed city that they were regarded as ethnically nondescript *Pressburger, Kraxlhuber*. They considered themselves to be old settlers, i.e. autochthonous residents of the city.

I attempt to characterize the ethnic position of the Hungarians through some Slovak and German attitudes with a different degree of empathy towards Hungarians. According to them, they behaved like the ruling nation, they "took their privileged position for granted" and they "never envisioned that their national borders could be shattered by any power in the world" (Medvecký, 1934: I. /374). In terms of its culture and population, the initially German city was gradually becoming Hungarian (in 1910, the number of German and Hungarian residents was already balanced). The principle of the Hungarian public administration was characterized by the statement: "slave-like submission to those on the top; tyranny towards those on the bottom," in which strong deference towards Budapest can be sensed. Cultural affinity to and open admiration of the Hungarian metropolis were an important point of orientation.

The number of Slovaks and their social influence in the city was steadily decreasing because of the assimilationist policies of the Hungarian government. As one of the memoirs of the social climate before WW I says: "Bratislava was not as German-Hungarian as is often thought. Slovak could be heard mainly in marketplaces, suburbs, around factories. There was less of it in the inner city streets as it was used more inside people's homes, usually in those rather poor ones. The Slovak element was usually poorer and hence silent, hidden. It came together only with difficulty; there wasn't enough cohesion, it was fragmented…" (Krčméry, 1931: 64). About a half of the Slovaks in the city belonged to the working class. Alongside them, there also lived Czechs, who constituted a small group of residents. The platform of common activities was the Slovak division of the workers' association "Forward" and the association of Czech workers "Brotherhood." More than 120 other associations were German, Hungarian and mostly German-Hungarian (Mannová, 1991: 68-69).

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy ceased to exist in 1918 and the era of the Czechoslovak city began. We do not know exactly how many people were expelled or left the city voluntarily, but it was a substantial number. Unrest related to army-assisted forcible incorporation of the city into the newly created republic contributed to the situation. From the news of the period, it is clear that it was mostly Hungarian families who left the city. The mass population influx to the newly established capital was mostly represented not only by

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[2]   The research was conducted in 2004. Given the number of active members of the Bratislava Czech Community we gave out 150 questionnaires (return rate 40%). Respondents were not selected according to some particular key; the only condition was that they be of Czech ethnicity, reside in Bratislava and be of age. We also asked about their (or their parents') presence in the city before 1938. In 2004 in Bratislava, there were 8,693 residents of Czech ethnicity (Czech, Moravian, Silesian), i.e., 2.04% of the population. Source: Štatistická ročenka hlavného mesta SR Bratislava 2005. Štatistický úrad SR – Krajská správa v Bratislave. (Statistical Yearbook of the Capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava 2005. Bureau of Statistics of the Slovak Republic – District Office in Bratislava).

[3]   Pressburger Zeitung, No. 34, 6. 2. 1919, pgs. 1-3. The article was published In: Bratislava, 1977 : 263.

Slovaks but also by Czechs. Their number can only be estimated, as the first census of 1921 did not record Slovak or Czech nationality – only Czechoslovak nationality. But place of birth and length of residence in the city were recorded. These data indicate that about 15,600 Czechs and fewer than 12,000 Slovaks moved in the city (Sčítání lidu, 1921). The Czechs were a rather numerous group (about 17%)[4] who identified themselves as Czechoslovak. Bratislava was not only a multiethnic city, but also a city of immigrants.

The political goal of the Czech immigrants was to build Czechoslovak political, educational, cultural, social, health-care and other institutions. Among the main tasks was the reform of the Hungarian educational system in order to swiftly educate the new Slovak intelligentsia. For instance, during the first year of the existence of the republic, Czech experts in Bratislava took part, to a large degree, in the restructuring of the Hungarian university to a Czechoslovak university, in establishing a business school, a secondary comprehensive school, a library, a music school, and so forth. The number of students enrolled in these schools was the best proof of the importance of these efforts. While, in the last years of the Hungarian era, only 4% of the Slovak children went to in elementary school, in the first year of the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic the figure was 97%; secondary comprehensive school went from 4% to 65%, and secondary school attendance for girls rose from 2% to 55% (Matula 2006: 37). Activities of Czechs in Slovakia were accepted at the beginning with gratitude and respect: "The Czechs placed in all offices are capable, qualified clerks, professors, and teachers who fulfill their duties with laudable enthusiasm and to the great benefit of all." (Holuby 1958: 102)[5]. But merit bred problems.

How did the German and Hungarian residents, until then dominant, come to terms with the new situation? In general, it can be said that they did not accept the new republic as theirs. They were a serious obstacle to social change because they held important offices and posts.[6] After the regime change, the Hungarian community found itself in a difficult situation as they felt the impact of the disruption of the continuity of their statehood and ties with their home nation. They gave up their positions of the ruling nation only reluctantly. In the city, they constituted the class of state bureaucrats directly jeopardized by changes in the public administration. The Germans from Bratislava were overtly more loyal to the new political regime since, as the class of entrepreneurs, they took into account the economic implications of their positions. However, they were more outspoken when it came to a higher visibility of Slovaks and Czechs in all spheres of the life of the city. They published the following opinion in their daily Deutsche Zeitung: "Important first class citizens are real cuckoos in the good German nest; they are aliens and newcomers... A good German loathes to hear that unpleasant language that has replaced Hungarian as the state language" (1922). In 1924, a Czech living in Bratislava wrote: "Nowhere else is old Austria moldering as much as in Bratislava. Every time somebody else is holding the flag: one time it the domestic element, then the corrupted element, then the bureaucrat, and the next time it is the clergy."[7] Difficulties of Slovaks and Czechs in the city were testified to, e.g., by the mayor of Bratislava Dr. Krno who, after almost 15 years of the existence of the republic, wrote: "Still today, a Slovak or a Czech cannot go to city hall, to his local representatives, with trust. This is because the elements of the so-called old settlers have been tightly holding on to their positions."[8]

One component of the political and ethnic conflict right after the formation of the new republic was anti-Czech propaganda. Its goal was to break the ties between both nations, and its main slogan was that the Czechs wanted to rob the Slovaks of their mother tongue and their faith. In this respect, it was in line with the ideas of the Slovak Catholic clergy and political parties with national orientation. Especially problematic was the employment of Czechs at the expense of Slovaks, the resistance of Czech teachers to religious education in the schools and also the use of the Czech language in official communication and schools. The anti-Czech attacks occurred more or less intensely during the whole interwar period. Factors in their background were described by a supporter of Czechoslovak unity Karol A. Medvecký (1934: I./375): "Besides a religious and moral breakdown, some Czechs have also brought to Slovakia their political sentiments, mindless bureaucracy, clientelism, untamed egoism,

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4   In 1921, Czech together with Slovaks constituted 42% of residents, compared to 30% of Germans and 24% of Hungarians.

5   The article by J. Ľ. Holuby "Slováci a Česi" (Slovaks and Czech) was originally published in Slovenská čítanka (Slovak Reader) in Prague in 1925.

6   Dr. J. Jesenský, for instance, wrote: "Various municipal, county, district, administrative, financial, railroad and judicial bodies have been occupied by foreigners. It is necessary to purge Slovakia of them and fill all position with our people. Many of them will turn into Slovaks in merely 24 hours, many will become our best friends only to stay in their offices..." In: Medvecký, 1934: Vol. I., p. 323.

7   By the domestic element is meant the German-Hungarian community, in the period press Jews were labeled as the corrupted element; many complaints about behavior of the municipal office point to the power of bureaucrats, and by the clergy are meant activities of local priests. Slovenský denník 22. 7. 1924, s. 1.

8   The daily newspaper Politika (Politics) 1932, no. 4, p. 39.

and national chauvinism, which was abused by Hungarian sympathizers to discredit Czechoslovak unity."

This paper does not provide enough space for a more detailed characterization of ethnic relations in the first Czechoslovak republic which, despite many difficulties, were kept within the limits of a democratic regime, acceptance of national claims, ethnic differences and customs. The fostering of Czechoslovak identity had an important impact on changes of the situation in the city and on attitudes of the German-Hungarian community toward Czechs and Slovaks. Although, officially, the "ruling nation" was the Czechoslovaks, German and Hungarian residents constituted an equal political force in the urban community. In daily life, mutual tolerance prevailed. This was very different from the era of Hungarian dominance in the city. At the beginning of the 20th century, Bratislava was an open, multicultural city.

Change in the tolerant character of the city was induced by the nationalistic orientation among German residents and by the politics of the strongest Slovak political parties. Among their programmatic goals were Slovak autonomy, departure of the Czechs and vacancies for jobs for Slovak applicants. In Bratislava they had no significant civic support.[9] Anti-Czech activities started to take place after 1932 (the assembly of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party) where a nationalistic program exemplified by the slogan "One God, one nation, one leader" was set up. The programmatic slogans of "Slovakia to the Slovaks" and "In Slovakia speak Slovak" were especially aimed at the Czechs living in Slovakia. While the former expressed the demand that Czech state employees leave Slovakia, the latter had a linguistic and cultural background and was aimed at Czech teachers.

Interethnic relations in the city gained sharp edges after Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany (12 March 1938). There are testimonies about the conceited demeanor of one part of the Bratislava Germans who inclined towards the Henlein's political current. Fascists in uniforms marched through the streets and cases of physical attacks on Jews and demolition of their businesses occurred. Social life also showed traits of German chauvinism and separation of ethnic communities. One example of theses developments is a newspaper comment about wine cellars of the Bratislava Germans: "Wine cellars are empty because only Germans and Hungarians go there. Slovaks and Czechs go elsewhere. But when some Slovak or Czech wanders in, joy is great and he is served with enthusiasm. But the fact is that they only visit a German

wine cellar either by mistake or out of ignorance of the local situation."[10] In this unfavorable social climate, thousands of Czechs decided to leave Slovakia. According to methodologically different statistical surveys, either 44, 2,000 or 28,000 Czechs left (Bystrický, 2000: 30). With the declaration of an autonomous Slovak Country in 1938, political power in Slovakia was taken over by the Hlinka People's Party and this move was accompanied by the introduction of totalitarian practices.

The totalitarian regime influenced the development of Slovak towns by ideological interventions into their structure and social relations. This discontinuous development was induced by the state dirigisme, constraints put on civil liberties and rights of certain groups of the population while privileging some others (political, ethnic, religious, economic), but also by forcible deportations. During the period of autonomy, 80 Jewish families were deported from the city and, during the wartime Slovak State, most Jewish citizens were deported to concentration camps.

Disintegration of the Czech Community

In Slovakia, Czechs constitute a rather large population group. In the first phase they arrived within the scheme of state aid to Slovakia. The reason for this organized movement of people from one ethnic milieu to another was that after the fall of the Monarchy there was a lack of politically reliable Slovak intelligentsia who could run the state and ensure its defense. Also, it was important to reform the educational system as teachers in Hungarian education had been fostering an assimilationist program, i.e. Hungarization of the Slovak people. Therefore, most of the Czechs who moved to Slovakia were soldiers, police officers, civil servants, teachers, railroad employees, postmen and also, in Bratislava, entrepreneurs.

After the declaration of autonomy in 1938, the main theme of the domestic policy in Slovakia was ethnic cleansing of the country from "undesirable elements." One of the measures was the program of expulsion of the Czechs. The government, via various legislative provisions and international treaties, launched the expulsion of one part of the Czech civil servants and tried to take over Czech companies and the whole private sector (Rychlík, 1989; Šisler, 1989). According to available data, about 62,000-63,000 people were expelled (Bystrický, 1997).

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[9]   In the local elections of 1935 the People's party gained 3 seats, in 1938 it was 6 seats out of total 48 seats in the municipal council.

[10]   Daily newspaper Slovenský denník, 1 July 1938, p. 4

However, expulsion plans elaborated by local authorities revealed that, even after twenty years of the existence of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs were not fully replaceable and authorities could individually take this fact into account.

The population expulsion had both an individual and social dimension. The expellees, of course, condemned this act as unjust and as ingratitude for their work. Much criticized also was the manner in which the expulsion was carried out. They had to face a journey filled with insecurity because of the bad situation in the protectorate ruled by Nazi Germany. Many of the expellees were leftists and they expected repressions. In the memories of those who were children at that time, we can find their parents' fear and loathing of the regime of the Slovak State. At first, the Slovak society perceived the expulsions as inevitable and just. Nevertheless, in some individual cases, the local community took into account individual characteristics, and the human dimension of the issue outbalanced its "overall benefit." Ordinary people showed them their gratitude.

An example of this unequal evaluation was events that took place at Bratislava University. Czech professors at the Faculty of Philosophy were under continuous pressure from Slovak students to teach in Slovak. The professors backed up their disagreements not with the state language law but with a pragmatic argument: "I wouldn't lecture in bad Slovak even if my life depended on it as I know how offended I would feel if I had to listen to a speaker with bad Czech."[11] There was also an item of news in the press that, at the opening ceremony of a new student dormitory, the Czechoslovak premier delivered his speech in Slovak, even though he was a Czech. However, a Czech professor who for years had been teaching in Slovakia delivered his speech in Czech. This was considered to be disrespectful and stubborn insistence on the concept of a unified Czechoslovak nation that was quite unpopular in Slovak society. The decision to discharge these Czech professors was accepted. The situation was different with professors at the Faculty of Medicine, about whom this decision was questioned. It was emphasized that they were irreplaceable and their merits in building the faculty and education of Slovak physicians were praised.

A legal and, first of all, moral problem related to the expulsion was the fact that Czechs had merits in the creation of Slovakia as an independent territory, demarcation of its borders and in the economic and cultural development after 1918. This concerned state employees who had lived in Slovakia for 10-20 years, and who in many cases lived in mixed families with Slovak partners, or they had children who were born and raised in Slovakia. Their right to live in Slovakia was unquestionable; therefore the expulsion was based on agreements with the government in Prague, but also on some judicial prevarications and personal pressures. After the annexation of the Czech lands by Nazi Germany, the fascist Slovak government utilized the legal system of the former Czechoslovakia, according to which Czech citizens in Slovakia did not have a domicile in Slovakia and, therefore, they were not eligible for Slovak citizenship. Czechs became citizens of the Reich and fell under its jurisdiction. The German government negotiated with the Slovak government, but did not accept the request for the total "solution of the Czech problem" and expulsions were stopped. Therefore, in Slovakia, about 30,000 people of various professions who lived in complicated social situations and encountered political pressures and derision stayed (Bystrický 2000: 29).

As a consequence of the war, most of the Germans and one part of the Hungarians were expelled after 1945. This political and social revenge led to speedy assimilation of the rest of the German and Hungarian residents with the Slovak majority. A consequence of the Holocaust was assimilation of some of the Jews and emigration of others to Israel (Salner, 2004). Czechs returned to the city in only small numbers[12]; they became an integral part of the mainstream population and they gradually assimilated linguistically. These were turning points that changed the multiethnic development of the city. It was also markedly impacted by the communist regime with its planned economy within the scheme of which mass population influx from other parts of Slovakia took place. This resulted in the social and cultural unification and domination of Slovak ethnicity – both in terms of numbers and culture. In the former Czechoslovakia, Czechs were in the majority and, in the Slovak part of the republic, they were not considered an ethnic minority and had no minority community life. In Bratislava there was only the Moravian Club (Slovácký krúžok), active since 1922.

The Czech Minority in the Independent Slovak Republic

In the recent social process after 1989, the multicultural character of the city has been gradually restored. But this multiculturalism is of a different quality from that known from the interwar times. Activities of minorities have been

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[11]   Daily newspaper Slovenský denník, 13 November 1937, p. 1

[12]   In 1950 in Bratislava there was 9 296 and in 1980 there was 12126 residents of the Czech nationality.

revived; they started to reformulate their relations with the majority and their activities have made them visible. The Czech minority[13] has also become part of this multiculturalism, although inadvertently.

In the process of the restructuring of post-communist society, attention started to be paid to themes that can be considered as occurring repeatedly in history. They are related to problems of coexistence in the ethnically and religiously multifaceted central-European space. It appears that, in times of great social changes, it is only a matter of time when they resurface. Currently we are also witnessing a gradual escalation of the Czech-Slovak conflict. It was progressing in accordance with the transformation process when economic and political interests and ideas about the further development of the country started to be justified on the basis of historical examples and experiences. On one hand, there was the myth about the "old golden age" of interwar Czechoslovakia when ethnic relations were successfully regulated by a democratic framework; on the other hand, there were reminiscences about the big conflict of the political struggle for Slovak autonomy, the formation of the Slovak State and the expulsion of Czech residents.

The Czechs in Slovakia also became a party to and victims of these conflicts. The division of the common state put many in a difficult situation. Therefore, according to estimates, several hundreds of families moved to the Czech Republic. Citizens with Czech citizenship living in Slovakia, expected – as politicians had promised – to get citizenship of both new states, but, according to Czech law of that time, they had to choose only one[14]: either Czech and the status of foreigner in their Slovak homeland or Slovak and foreigner status in the country of their origin. This was a serious dilemma in which an important role was played by the historical memory of the Czech community in Slovakia. Memories of the fascist Slovak State and the wartime expulsion of the Czechs were revived and worries about the "old-new" Slovak Republic emerged.

At that time, people of Czech nationality were an integral part of Slovak society. According to Miškufová there were generational differences in the degree of their assimilation. The oldest generation born in Slovakia of

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13 In the city the regional organization of the Czech Association in Slovakia and the Local Club of Czech Citizens are active. According to its bylaws, the mission of the Association is to "maintain the Czech identity as well as the identity of next generations of the Czechs, Moravians and Silesians in Slovakia."
14 Slovaks laws made possible for citizens of the Czech nationality to have dual citizenship. At present, they can also apply for dual citizenship in the Czech Republic.

Czech parents in the interwar period is aware of its Czech roots, but is to a large extent assimilated. The degree of assimilation of younger generations who came to Slovakia from the Czech lands between 1945 and 1992 is much lower. They mostly live in mixed marriages and only a small percentage of their children are of Czech nationality (Miškufová, 2000: 154). The survey among the Czech community indicates that the Czechs in the interwar period consciously maintained their mother tongue as a preferred ethno-cultural trait as a well as a sign of their declared Czechoslovak identity. In the critical period before the establishment of the Slovak State and during its existence, the majority Slovak society ascribed to them the position of an ethnic majority. The generation of grown-up children of the first generation living in Slovakia has a different attitude to their mother tongue and origin. Due to war events, in the setting of Bratislava (and the whole of Slovakia) the process of assimilation was faster.

To identify the pillars of collective identity, it was also important to know the perceived importance of the above-mentioned historical events and conflicts. The question related to the activities of the Czechs in Bratislava shows that the arrival of Czechs in Slovakia is mostly interpreted as generous aid to the Slovaks in their struggle against Hungarians (76%), less as a career opportunity (12%), and that the arrival of the Czech employees was important in the first years of the existence of the republic (65%) but also during its whole existence (31%). This is also how the opinions that the Slovaks have never shown adequate gratitude to Czech merits in building of the republic are interpreted. However, people are of the opinion that in Bratislava anti-Czech attitudes in interpersonal relations occurred only rarely (37%) or did not occur at all (27%) and a rather large group was of no opinion or not sure (30%). The expulsion of the Czechs is viewed as a necessary measure (62%) or as a forcible act (38%). None of the respondents viewed it as fair to the Slovaks.

In contrast to these, there was a question related to the political intervention from Prague that worsened anti-Czech feelings in Slovakia and precipitated the declaration of the Slovak State. The occupation of Bratislava by the Czech gendarmerie and military troops (on the night of 9 March 1919) and arrests of Slovak politicians induced numerous demonstrations, skirmishes with the military and street shooting. Nowadays, these events are almost unknown among the members of the Czech community (63%), and the rest leaned towards the view – in line with the Czech or Czechoslovak public opinion of that time – that it was a good decision.

Reflections on historical events show that positive sides of the Czech presence in the city are rather firmly anchored in memory; the negative ones are losing their accuracy or are left out of the collective memory. Only those events and memories that are meaningful for the formation of the collective identity and for the continuation of the community have been preserved. Ethnological analyses backed up by survey findings point to main factors that influence the process of the formation of the Czech minority in Bratislava after 1992. These were disagreement with the division of the common state, the previously unknown minority status, attitudes of Czech and Slovak politicians and state bodies toward the claims of the citizens of Czech nationality in Slovakia, reactions of the Slovak society to the declared Czech nationality, family tradition, cultural awareness and historical memory.

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