

Anna KOVÁČOVÁ
Po stopách slovenskej minulosti v Budapešti.
Výber zo štúdií a prednášok
[The footsteps of Slovak past in Budapest.
Selected studies and lectures]

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The book deals with the history of Slovak community in Budapest before 1918. Author of the publication is Anna Kováčová, which researches this topic for a long time. Anna Kováčová is currently director of the small research institute acting inside the structure of Slovak national minority self-government in Hungary. Main mission of this institute is the historical, confessional, sociological, demographical and ethnographical research of Slovak community living in Hungary. History of „Slovak face of capital Budapest“ is very important part of this profile. It has increasing importance especially in the last two decades. During this period was born many important publication about this topic, but the currently reviewed book is most complex publication among them.

Budapest, which was in this form officially established form from three separated town in 1873 (Buda, Óbuda, Pest), was very intensively developing city in this time. The capital of the Hungarian Kingdom, where lived with the exception the large Slovak diaspora in North America the all Slovak nation, had in early 20th century more than 900,000 inhabitants. The ethnical structure of Budapest was very various. In the first half of 19th century the main common language of the ethnically mixed city was German, but after 1848 Budapest was very quickly changed and the Hungarian cultural and mental profile grewed strong.

The Slovak peoples lived here before the revolution of 1848/1849 too, but in this time Budapest was middle size city. Majority of local Slovaks was small craftsman and civil servant. Real boom of Slovak community in Budapest was started in the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, when the city developed very intensively. Immigration from the every part of the kingdom to the capital was very high and the regions of historical Hungary were not exception. The typical Slovak inhabitant of Budapest during this period was poor worker in building industry and servant-girl. But it is only stereotype. The Slovak face of Budapest was more complicated. Here lived relatively high number of independent Slovak craftsmen and several private or public civil servants too. Samuel Czambel, the famous Slovak linguist was in this time the director of the translational department of the Hungarian Prime Minister Office. The Slovak intellectuals with higher social status had in Budapest special meeting place in one coffee-house.

The Slovak cultural life in Budapest was more or less organized on the religion base. Protestant community was more active and as its main cultural-spiritual center served the

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Slovak protestant church on the Kerepesi street. This church has Slovak-language school too. Leaders of this community (Daniel Bachát, Ľudovít Izák, Martin Morháč, etc.) played very important role in the Slovak life in Budapest. Majority of the Slovaks in Budapest was catholic. They have church in Józsefváros district too, where lived the highest number of the Slovak inhabitants of capital.

The reviewed book consists of many chapters, which creates three big thematical blocks. The topic of the first big block is the image of Budapest in the Slovak culture before 1918. These chapters present the Slovak cultural and social life in the capital. This block includes the presentation of the ethnical stereotypes about Slovaks. The second big block present the certain important Slovak intellectuals, writers and priests, whose lived this time in Budapest. The third big block deals with the relationship between the Slovaks living in Budapest and Slovaks from the southern part of old Hungary. The modern Slovak language knows this part as Lowland. Slovaks immigrated here from the 18th century, after the liberation from the Turkish rule. Slovaks live here at present days too. Main centers of Slovak Lowland in south Hungary are Békéscsaba, Szarvas and Tótkomlós.

The Lowland is problematical notion in the Slovak scientific and cultural discourse. For he Slovaks living in Slovakia every Slovak living in Hungary, Serbia and Romania is Slovak from Lowland. The members of Slovak ethnical community living in Hungary do not agree with this concept. From their point of view Lowland is only one part of the Slovak regions in Hungary. The Slovaks living in Budapest or in Northern Hungary and the Slovak villages in Transdanubia are not Slovaks from Lowland. Anna Kováčová as author of the reviewed publication represents this second position too.

From the scientific point of view is very interesting the question of the identity of Slovaks intellectuals living in Budapest in 19th century. Many intellectuals preserved their Slovak national identity in the capital too, but other personalities had mixed or dual identity. The big problem of this time was the divided loyalty between the state and ethnical identity. It was very real problem for many peoples with minority background in the time of increasing nationalism. This part of research needs the continuation and the more precise definitions. The majority of chapters were published in the different journals before the complex publishing in the reviewed book. Maybe it is the reason of the repeating of several topics in the book. Sometimes it is disturbing, but this fact does not spoil the impression of total publication. The reviewed book is very important stage in the processing the theme.

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