

University education and Hungarian minority in Slovakia 1918–1938

doc. PhDr. Soňa GABZDILOVÁ, CSc.

Abstract

The paper is devoted to education issues of young generation of Hungarian minority at universities in Czechoslovak Republic in their mother tongue. The situation in years 1918–1922 is analyzed, when students of Hungarian nationality were finishing university studies of law in Hungarian language in Bratislava and in Košice. Paper analyses with obstacles which they were encountering. Hungarian students, interested to acquire university education in their native language were attending universities in Hungary, namely in Budapest. Analyzed is also a measure of Ministry of Schools adopted in year 1928, which annulled validation of diplomas issued by Hungarian universities. Consequently, identical measure was adopted by Hungarian authorities. Paper is also pointing to a moderate increase of Hungarian university students in Czechland and Slovakia, which, however, was in monitored period not higher than 5% and to negative reaction of Hungarian students that there was no university in Czechoslovakia offering education in Hungarian language.

Keywords

university education, Hungarian minority, Czechoslovakia, minority policy, language politics

Introduction

Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) was established in year 1918 as a national state, despite the fact that population was composed of several ethnic minorities. Of them the most numerous were Germans inhabiting the border territories of Czech lands and Hungarians living in Southern Slovakia in region bordering with Hungary. Czechoslovak Republic was, considering ethnic structure, a state *sui generis*. Number of members of ethnic minorities was, in comparison to Czechs and Slovaks, greater than in any Central European state. Hungarians and Germans were refusing their inclusion to Czechoslovak Republic, which was in their opinion a state foreign to them and also as an obstacle to unification with their "mother countries". The members of Hungarian minority were perceiving Hungary as their "thousand years lasting mother country" and were gravely surprised by a new geopolitical situation. The demission of Hungary was for them a traumatic entry into a new reality – to life in Czechoslovak Republic.

Czechoslovak government committed itself, to fulfillment of international agreements which obliged CSR to award to minorities basic minority rights. It is possible to say, that CSR its obligation basically fulfilled. In case of Hungarian minority its political parties were legal,

educational institutions with Hungarian teaching language were established, Hungarian periodicals and books were allowed to be published. The official language in regions with 20% share of Hungarian population was Hungarian language. Various Hungarian associations were allowed to be active. However, a minority policy of Czechoslovak governments had many faults problems, namely in economic and social sphere. Many regions of the Southern Slovakia were characterized by season labor in agriculture and by high unemployment. Population suffered by low level of medical care. The dissatisfaction was growing as result of land reform adopted during twenties, which was characterized by national aims, that is preferring Czechs and Slovaks in receiving land allotments to detriment of Hungarians.¹ Members of Hungarian minority were also dissatisfied with government policy in public sphere. As injustice was perceived also official attitude of state toward Reformed Church and many conflicts resulted by reluctance of authorities to award to Hungarians Czechoslovak citizenship. Latent but also frequently open dissatisfaction was voiced by prohibition of display Hungarian national symbols.²

Hungarian minority in CSR lived in more democratic and progressive conditions as Hungarians in Horthy's Hungary. This fact, however, did not removed an intensive feelings of injustice which Hungarians in Czechoslovakia felt. The Treaty of Trianon, a traumatic event in view of Hungarian minority, was permanent source of resentment. It was also resented by government circles in Hungary, which with growing intensity proclaimed request of revision of state boundaries. This opinion was generally spread among public in Hungary. The members of Hungarian community in CSR found themselves in situation when they were in some ways in inferior position as a result of decision of European powers became minority.

After Austro-Hungarian settlement, for several decades was government in hands of Hungarian mobility which after October 1918 ceased to exist. After establishment of CSR, in Slovakia, authority of Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education in Budapest ended. To expect from Hungarian population in the Southern Slovakia a positive reaction to establishment of a new state – Czechoslovak Republic, of which they became unwilling part, was illogical. However, for stability of CSR, an integration of numerous Hungarian minority was important. To look for the most effective way of gradual build-up of positive relation of Hungarian population toward Czechoslovak Republic was a question of statesmanship and political wisdom from side of highest representatives of the Republic. One of the areas offering a broad space for integration were schools. Consequently, formation of educational system was one of primary tasks of government, parliament and the Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment (MSNE) of Czechoslovak Republic.³

1 SIMON, Attila: *Telepesek és telepesek falvak Dél-Szlovákiában a két világháború között*, Šamorín 2008.

2 MICHELA, Miroslav: K otázke historickej kultúry Maďarov na Slovensku, in: *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989 (Identita a politika II)*, ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana – ĎURKOVSKÁ, Mária (eds.), Prešov 2008, 191–197.

3 In regard to issue of university education of minorities see: KUKLÍK, Jan – PETRÁŠ, René: The legal status of minorities and universities in inter-war Czechoslovakia, in: *Central European Papers*, 5, 2017, 2, 27–36 (www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1122). KUKLÍK, Jan – PETRÁŠ, René: Právní postavení menšin a vysoké školy v meziválečném Československu, in: *Menšiny, vysoké školy a právo*, HALÁSZ, Ivan – PETRÁŠ, René (eds.), Praha 2018, 11–22.

Hungarian minority on Czechoslovak political scene was represented mainly by two political parties: the Land Christian Socialist Party (Országos Keresztény Szocialista Párt) and the Hungarian National Party (Magyar Nemzeti Párt), which in summer 1936 united and assumed name the United Land Christian Socialist and Hungarian National Party (Egyesült Országos Keresztény-socialista és Magyar Nemzeti Párt). Both parties struggled for political, economic and cultural rights of Hungarian population, including education. In the area of university education they strove for establishment of university with Hungarian teaching language. This way young Hungarians could be educated in their mother language from elementary to university level. However, this aim during existence of Czechoslovakian Republic was not achieved.

Hungarian schools were in time of establishment of Czechoslovak Republic perceived as a primary tool of Hungarianization. Czechoslovak government authorities since year 1918 supported construction of schools with Slovak teaching language, which should serve as a base of formation of Slovak national awareness and education of Slovak intelligentsia. After establishment of Czechoslovakia, parallel with implementation of Slovak teaching language, a radical decrease of schools with Hungarian teaching language of every level and type ensued. Schools with Hungarian teaching languages functioned on elementary and middle level.⁴ However, university education in Hungarian language during years 1918–1938 was not realized, which was perceived by Hungarian population as a grave injustice.

Before year 1918 university education was offered at one university: the Hungarian Regal University of Queen Elisabeth (Magyar Királyi Erzsébet Tudományegyetem) in Bratislava⁵ (established in year 1912) and six schools of lower type. Legal education was offered at the Law Academy in Košice and at the Law Academy in Prešov (church school). Also in city was active the Lutheran Theological Academy in Prešov. Another school of lower type was the Economic Academy in Košice. Well known was also the Mining and Forestry College in Banská Štiavnica. On all cited institutions was teaching language Hungarian. After year 1918 were Elizabeth University in Bratislava and Academy of Law in Košice abolished. Agricultural Academy in Košice was transformed to four years middle agricultural school. Education at Prešov academies provided by Lutheran Church was terminated. Also the Academy of Mining and Forestry in Banská Štiavnica was exposed to changes when it was transformed to the School of Forestry and the Industrial School. At all transformed schools teaching language became Slovak.⁶ In year 1925 was in city of Lučenec established The Hungarian Reformed Theological Seminary, which was active till end of January 1939. However, it was not qualified as full-valued educational institution.⁷

4 In regard to education at schools with Hungarian teaching language in Slovakia during CSR see: GABZDILOVÁ, Soňa: *Možnosti a obmedzenia. Vzdelávanie v jazyku maďarskom na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1938*, Košice 2017.

5 It was named also Elizabeth University.

6 In regard to issue of abrogation of university education in Hungarian language see: POPÉLY, Gyula: *Búcsú a főiskoláktól. A felsőoktatás és a felvidéky magyarság (1918–1945). A fiatal magyar értelmiség útkeresése*, Bratislava 2005, 11–126.

7 TÓTH, Andrej: *Menšinová vysokoškolská výuka jako politická otázka – maďarské požiadavky v Československu 1918–1938*, in: *Česko-maďarské ob(z)ory. Kapitoly z dejín česko-maďarských univerzitných vzťahů*, JANUŠKA, Jiří (ed.), Praha 2018, 69.

Pedagogues of Elizabeth University, after its cancellation, were transferred to Hungary. On the base of decision of Hungarian government, all Faculties with exception of Faculty of Law which remained in Bratislava, were reestablished in Budapest. This, however, was only a temporary solution, because in Budapest was situated the University of Peter Pázmány established in year 1777. The leadership of Elizabeth University was trying to situate institution in some other cities in Hungary. As a suitable localities were considered Debrecen, Pécs and Győr. Finally, based on decision of the Hungarian Parliament, from June 1921, city of Pécs was chosen to become seat of Elizabeth University in summer 1922. In Slovakia, at the beginning of academic year 1920/1921, teaching in Hungarian language was carried at the Faculty of Law of Elizabeth University in Bratislava and at the Academy of Law in Košice. Initially both institutions were intended to teach till 31 July 1922, to allow students who started their studies in academic year 1918/1919 to complete their studies. Czechoslovak Parliament on 11 August 1921 decided to establish the Faculty of Law at the Comenius University in Bratislava, which began to function on academic year 1921/1922, the Faculty of Law in Bratislava on 31 July 1921 was abolished.⁸ Students of Faculty of Law entering last year of studies could finalize study either at the Academy of Law in Košice, where the education was intended to end at the end of academic year 1921/1922, or on some other university of law in Czechoslovak Republic. On the beginning of academic year 1921/1922, a commission for state examinations of law was established. Graduates of both Hungarian schools were obliged to pass *“rigorous examination according to examination regulations valid previously in Slovakia with respect to Czechoslovak law.”*⁹

Professors who were teaching at the Faculty of Law in Bratislava and the Academy of Law in Košice could be transferred to some other university in Czechoslovakia according to Law no. 79/1919 Zb. z. a n. Professors teaching at the Bratislava Faculty in period of 60 days from adoption of cited legislative norm, could request MSNE to be “incorporated” and be retired in line with Law no. 269/1920 Zb. z. a n. In case that they did not submit the above mentioned request, MSNE classified their decision as voluntary resignation on their teaching position. Professors of cited universities were entitled to full pension for period of one year on condition that they remained on territory of Czechoslovakia. Employees of both teaching institutions were obliged to submit their requests to the Comenius University. On the basis of government regulation no. 276/1921 Zb. z. a n., in Slovakia education at the Faculty of Law in Bratislava and the Academy of Law in Košice in Hungarian language terminated on 31 July 1921.

A mentioned regulations were perceived by Hungarian population negatively. The Department of Schools of MSNE justified adopted measures by results of census from year 1921. According to MSNE abolishment of Hungarian University was not *“a heavy cultural injustice, because also during previous regime (University) was not exceptional and had no tradition.”*¹⁰ The Academy of Law in Košice was not considered by government as equal to level of university education, therefore *“its abolishment for reasons level and significance of studies was enacted is utterly justified and must be accepted.”*¹¹

8 *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého – ročník 1921*, Praha 1921, 1205.

9 *Ibidem*.

10 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (A MZV ČR) (Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic (A MFA CZ)), sekce MZV 1918–1938 (section MFA 1918–1938), fond (f.) II/4 Mírová konference v Paříži a reparace 1918–1938 (fund (f.) II/4 Peace Agreement in Paris and reparations 1918–1938).

11 *Ibidem*.

The government regulation no. 276/1921 evoked sharp negative reactions from Hungarian minority members. Dissatisfaction was voiced namely among persons directly affected – students in Bratislava. A memorandum, in which Hungarian minority students pointed to an agreement concluded among leadership of the Elizabeth University in Bratislava, MSNE and plenipotentiary of the Ministry with Full Powers for Management of Slovakia (MPS) was elaborated. In line with an agreement the Faculty of Law should be active another three years – till end of school year 1921/1922 so students were able to finish studies on Elizabeth University and obtained fully fledged diploma.¹² According to authors of memorandum, cited government regulation will prevent many students to accomplish their studies. Even though the Academy of Law in Košice will be active one more year and students from Bratislava could accomplish their education in Košice, authors of memorandum pointed to the fact that, that in Košice did not existed conditions for admission of students from Bratislava. It was argued that approximately 100–150 students could not finance expenses associated with transfer. President T. G. Masaryk met with delegation of students of the Hungarian Faculty Government and the Law Sciences in Prague on 14 September 1921 and was given cited memorandum. He declared that he will enquire about situation. In case that agreement exists, he himself, in extend of his authority will make sure that rights of students will be fulfilled. However, nothing came of it.

Before planned closure of Academy of the Law in Košice, students organized a protest meeting on 2 June 1922, on which participated also teachers led by dean Hugo Baitner.¹³ In declaration addressed to the Ministry they demanded to retain the Košice Academy at least for two years, so student will be able to accomplish their studies. Nevertheless, the Academy was closed on 31 July 1922, which was the end of university education in Hungarian language in Slovakia.

During academic year 1921/1922, 1,200 students of Hungarian nationality attended universities in Czechoslovak Republic. In academic year 1926/1927 number of Hungarian students decreased to 899, which was unquestionably caused by closure of Hungarian universities. A majority of Hungarian students attended German universities in Czechland – 584 in comparison to 315 Hungarian students attending Slovak universities.

Many of Hungarian students living in Slovakia attended universities in Hungary. During school year 1918/1919 their number was relatively low – only 47 and during following year decreased further to 35. However, during following period was increasing – in academic year 1920/1921 to 222 students and during period 1921/1922 to 924.¹⁴ A majority of students studying in Hungary attended educational institutions in Budapest, but many students attended also universities in Debrecen, Miskolc, Szeged and Pécs. According to the Ministry of Interior of CSR, a majority of them joined university associations, which allegedly inseminated *“Hungarian irredentistic propaganda using students from Slovakia.”*¹⁵ Czechoslovak government institution perceived these students to adherents to irredentism, who could eventually work against Czechoslovak Republic.

12 POPÉLY, 52–53.

13 Ibidem, 54.

14 Štátny archív (SA) Košice (State Archive (SA) Košice), f. Košická župa (KŽ) (f. Košice County (KC)), carton 221.

15 SA Trenčín, pracovisko Archív Bojnice (workplace (w.)) (Archive Bojnice), f. Okresný úrad (OÚ) Prievidza (f. District office (DO) Prievidza), carton 2, doc. No. 671/23.

Minister with the Full Administrative Powers in Slovakia Vavro Šrobár on July 1921 adopted a government regulation prohibiting issuance of passports to students who intended to study in Hungary. Students studying in Hungary could obtain passports only in cases when they could not continue and accomplish their education in given area in CSR, or if they must perform tests necessary to accomplish their studies in Hungary. According report of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest, from June 1923, validity of passports issued to Hungarian students was to be extended to the end of July 1923.¹⁶ However, Czechoslovak Embassy pointed to fact *“that a large number of students in Hungary are sons, respective daughters of state employs and teachers teaching on Slovak schools.”*¹⁷ They were most likely pedagogues of Hungarian nationality, who performed administrative oath and were teaching. They were preferred to secure for their children university education in Hungarian language and because in Czechoslovak Republic this was impossible, only option to acquire desired education was in Hungary.

Hungarian minority students were monitored by Czechoslovak security authorities in their homes in Slovakia during vacations and also in time of their study in Hungary. This is documented by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which noted that *“persons studying in Hungary are monitored by us in regard to their behavior at home. The Embassy obtained report elaborated by Košice County Office containing accurate number of all students from Košice County studying in Hungary, information about their passports, military obligations and their loyalty. It would be suitable for the Embassy to obtained similar lists from all regions of Slovakia and Ruthenia, elaborated for military and passport evidence and for political section.”*¹⁸ The lists of names of students and their families, prepared by local offices of Košice County contained name and address of attended schools in Hungary, names and profession of parents, and names of Czechoslovak government authorities which issued passports. In addition, characteristics of persons in regard to their *“moral and political profile”* and their attitudes to Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary, for example: *“Student and his father are reliable (...) Father and his son are fanatical Hungarians (...) obdurate Hungarians, politically unreliable (...) Family is morally and politically impeccable.”*¹⁹

Chairmen of county offices in Slovakia were obliged in extend of their authority to prepare a lists of all university and college students studying in Hungary.²⁰ Lists were to be continually updated and should contain information in regard to activities of students and their families in Slovakia.

In report of Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest from January 1927 is written: *“students not only studying, but also actively participating on irredenta in frame of university associations.”*

16 SA Trenčín, w. Archive Bojnice, f. DO Prievidza, carton 3. Evidence Czechoslovak students in Hungary – passports students studying in Hungary.

17 Ibidem.

18 SA Košice, f. KC, carton 221, doc. No. 15943/25 prez.

19 Ibidem.

20 SA Košice, f. KC, carton 221. List of names should contain following data: 1. Name of student, 2. Year of birth, 3. Name of school, year and locality where student is studying, 4. Name of father or other relative to whom student is attending, 5. Address and occupation of person named in section 4, 6. Name of office which issued passport and length of validity, 7. Information stated result of investigation in regard to moral and political loyalty of student, his parents or relatives reported in section 4.

According to the Czechoslovak Embassy *"each student from detached regions, if he had to be admitted to local universities, must be member of some of these associations."*²¹

Change in regard to status of study of students from Slovakia in Hungary occurred in year 1928. MSNE on 14 July issued government regulation stated that diplomas issued by Hungarian schools after 1 October 1928 will be not certified.²² Consequently, diplomas of students from Slovakia, eventually from Czechland awarded by Hungarian schools were not accepted in CSR. Same approach was adopted by Hungarian authorities – diplomas awarded by Czechoslovak schools were not accepted in Hungary. MSNE endeavored to limit number of students from Slovakia to study in Hungary.²³ Restrictive measures were applied also in regard to acceptance of diplomas before 1 October 1928. But acceptance of diplomas before 1 October 1928 was realized only *"if it will be proved their complete equality and if there will not be objections whatsoever."*²⁴ A different situation in process of acceptance of Hungarian graduates existed in case of diplomas issued before year 31 December 1918. On 18 March 1931, MSNE adopted a government regulation based on Law no. 276/1920 Zb. z. a n., which decreed that acceptance of Hungarian diplomas *"is necessary to solve individually with regard attitude of supplicants to question of loyalty toward state and their material conditions."*²⁵

When R. W. Seton-Watson evaluated situation of university education in Hungarian language in Czechoslovakia, he admitted that *"Hungarians in Slovakia barely can have acceptable claim to establishment of sole Hungarian university, but they should have separate Hungarian faculty in Bratislava including departments and lectorates with Hungarian teaching personnel. This became more acute after adoption of government edict which nullified validity of diplomas awarded by Hungarian universities. Shortly, it is important that Hungarian youth should have access to adequate schooling in its mother language, so it will be possible to educate a sufficient number of teachers and priests."*²⁶

The situation which existed in the area of university education of young people of Hungarian nationality during the first decade of existence of Czechoslovak Republic did not changed during thirties and they were deprived of possibility to be educated in their mother language. Graduates of high schools with Hungarian teaching language had two options – either continue studies on universities in CSR offering education in Czech, German and Slovak language, or to continue study in their mother language outside CSR, in Hungary. Later option, however, stripped them of possibility to utilize their university diplomas in CSR.

21 SA Košice, f. KC, carton 221. Student clubs were united in Country Union of Students – MEFHOS.

22 *Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty [Bulletin of Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment]*, Praha 1928, 317.

23 AMFA CZ, section MZV 1918–1939, f. VIII/1. Zastupitelský úřad v Budapešti 1918–1940 (f. VIII/1 Representative office in Budapešť 1918–1940), carton 18.

24 *Věstník Ministerstva školství...*, 317.

25 Slovenský národný archív (SNA) Bratislava (Slovak National Archive (SNA)), f. Referát Ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety (MŠaNO), (Department of Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment (DMSNE)), carton 2, inventárne číslo (inv. č.) (inventory number (i. n.)) 130.

26 SETON-WATSON, Robert William: Československo a slovenský problém, in: *Slovensko kedysi a teraz*, SETON-WATSON, Robert William, Praha 1931, 57.

Despite negative consequences, a number of young Hungarians opted to get university education at universities in Hungary. Czechoslovak authorities, however, viewed these students with suspicion, namely because their possible membership in university irredentistic associations. Ministry of Interior frequently notified district administrators and directors of police directorates in Bratislava and Košice to pay attention to these students and instructed these institutions to permit study in Hungary only in absolutely necessary cases. District offices were obliged to maintain exact evidence of students residing in their districts, who were studying in Hungary. The lists composed of such students should contain their names, age, schools where they were studying, names and addresses of parents and also information which authority was issuing passport.²⁷ The security authorities were paying attention also to organizational structure of associations established at Hungarian universities, because these were perceived by Czechoslovak authorities as associations inseminating irredentistic ideas via students from Slovakia in CSR. For this reason, they were monitored by Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest.²⁸

The university association, which was viewed by Czechoslovak authorities especially negatively was Magyar Egyetemi és Főiskolai hallgatók Országos Szövetsége – MEFHOS (the Land Union of Hungarian University and College students). MEFHOS was classified as association spreading pronouncedly hostile irredentistic ideology. According to Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest, primary position in management of associations active in universities in Hungary had former Prime Minister Pál Teleky, who as chairman of MEFHOS coordinated also activities of associations located abroad. For this reason he was appointed also to organize Hungarian students who lived outside Hungary, and who studied in Hungarian cities, namely in Budapest.²⁹

After adoption of cited government regulation by the MSNE which nullify validity of diplomas issued by Hungarian universities, number of Hungarian minority student attending universities in Czechoslovakia increased. At the beginning of year 1930 institutes of highest type of education in CSR attended 1,127 students of Hungarian nationality. Of this number, in Prague attended universities 494, in Brno 213 and in Slovakia 420 students. In regard to professional orientation, 488 students attended universities, 204 attended technical schools and 204 schools of other orientation.³⁰

Government authorities devoted an extraordinary attention also to transfer of text books from Hungary, carrying by students coming to Slovakia during time of vacation. Ministry of Interior issued an edict on 7 March 1931 allowed to transfer of text books, but students must get a special permit issued by Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest, containing exact list of text books. District authorities were obliged to require subordinated offices and border stations to pay attention to transfer of text books *“to Czechoslovakia as well as its export from CSR and compare its actual numbers with lists issued by the Czechoslovak Embassy*

27 SA Košice, w. Archive Rožňava, f. DO Rožňava, carton 27, prez.

28 SA Košice, f. KC, carton 221.

29 See: OLEJNÍK, Milan: *Politické a spoločenské aktivity maďarskej minority v prizme štátnych orgánov a dobovej slovenskej tlače (1918–1929)*, Košice 2011, 56–62.

30 LÁSZLÓ, Béla: *Maďarské národnostné školstvo*, in: *Maďari na Slovensku (1989–2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, FAZEKAS, József – HUNČÍK, Péter (eds.), Šamorín 2008, 199–242.

in Budapest.”³¹ That this procedure was rigidly controlled, is documented by a circular issued by the Presidium of Land Office in Bratislava dated to June 1931 and addressed to district chairmen and police directorates, containing document named *Confirmation of transfer of books*, which was issued by Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest to students. Czechoslovak authorities have this way exact picture in regard to process of permission of study materials, which was allowed to transfer to Czechoslovakia.³²

Representatives of Hungarian minority political subjects, namely The Land Christian Socialist Party and The Hungarian National Party frequently pointed to fact that young members of Hungarian minority had no possibility to acquire university education in their mother tongue in Czechoslovakia. Hungarian minority politicians speaking during deliberations of the Chamber of Deputies of National Assembly, voiced these complains. For example, during session of the Chamber of Deputies on 5 December 1935, which was devoted to government budget proposal of Czechoslovak Republic for year 1936, deputy János Esterházy stated that *“situation of Hungarian is truly catastrophic because from 137 million crowns allocated to universities, Hungarians according their numerical share, would be entitled 6.5 million crowns, in reality they do not have any faculty and there is no will to establish an Hungarian faculty. Already, this single injustice should led to protest voiced by cultural representatives of the Republic.”*³³

MSNE argued in 1935 that to secure university education for barely 700,000 (691,923) members of Hungarian minority living in CSR is from economic and financial point view not realistic.³⁴ It was also argued that there is no available sufficient number of Hungarian pedagogues. The MSNE argued that there is active Teleological Lutheran Faculty in Bratislava, where Hungarian students could gain a sizeable part of their education in Hungarian language. Also, according to the MSNE, also at other educational institutions tests could be realized in Hungarian language with aid of Hungarian translator.³⁵

In this context, it is necessary to point to situation in education of German minority at the universities in their mother tongue. In Czechoslovakia during census in year 1921 reported German nationality 3,123,568 persons which was 23.35% of total number of Czechoslovak citizens, 745,431 persons reported Hungarian nationality, which was 5.57% and 8,760,937 persons reported Czechoslovak³⁶ nationality, which was 66.50% of the total number.³⁷ During the second census in year 1930, significant changes did not occurred:

31 SA Košice, w. Archive Rožňava, f. CO Rožňava, carton 18, doc. No. 306, prez.

32 Ibidem.

33 Poslanecká sněmovna N.S.R.Č. 1935. IV. volební období, 2. zasedání. Těsnopisecké zprávy 1–24. Těsnopisecká zpráva o 16. schůzi poslanecké sněmovny Národního shromáždění republiky Československé. 5. prosince 1935. Vystoupení poslance Jánose Esterházyho [Chamber of Deputies N.S.R.Č. 1935. IV election period, 2. Stenography session, Report 1–24. Stenography report about 16 session Chamber of Deputies, National Assembly of Czechoslovak Republic. 5 December 1935. Speech of Janos Esterházy].

34 Národní archiv (NA) (National Archive (NA) Praha, f. Ministerstvo školství (MŠ) (Ministry of Schools (MS)), carton 376.

35 Ibidem.

36 The declaration of so called Czechoslovak nationality was a political construct of Czech political representation. A stated nationality in reality did not existed. Only Czech and Slovak nations were real.

37 *Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 15. února 1921. I. díl*, Praha 1924, 60*. Československá statistika; svazek 9. Řada VI., Sčítání lidu; sešit 1.

the German minority accounted to 3,231,688 persons – 22.31%, Hungarian minority to 691,923 – 4.77% and Czechoslovak to 9,688,770 persons – 66.90% of the total.³⁸ The most numerous minority in the Republic were Germans, who constituted almost quarter of total population. Hungarians constituted the second numerous minority (in Slovakia they were most numerous). Germans during years 1918–1938 could be educated in their native language at one university and two colleges, which were the German University in Prague, the German Technical College in Prague and the German Technical College in Brno. A college with Hungarian teaching language in Czechoslovak Republic did not exist. Insufficient situation existed also in sphere of university education in Slovak language. Little more than two millions Slovaks³⁹ had only one school – The University of Komenský in Bratislava.

An important role in education of Hungarian intelligentsia played seminaries (catedres) of Hungarian language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy of Comenius University in Bratislava and at the Faculty of the Philosophy of Charles university in Prague. The Hungarian opposition politicians criticized mainly fact that lectures at the both universities were realized in Czech or Slovak language. The chairman of both seminaries was Prof. Pavol Bujňák, who was Slovak, similarly as further members of seminaries. P. Bujňák was active at his post till his sudden death in year 1933. Because government was not willing to ask rectors of Prague and Bratislava universities to appoint to vacant posts an expert of Hungarian nationality either from Czechoslovakia or from abroad, Hungarian opposition politicians were critical of government indecision. After death P. Bujňák, both seminaries of Hungarian language and literature were provisory substituted. In Prague grammar was lectured by associate professor of Czech language and literature Vladimír Šmilauer and Hungarian literature lectured by director of Hungarian František Jankovič gymnasium, who was retired. The board of pedagogues as a suitable candidate to be chaired seminary of Hungarian language and literature chose dr. Vladimír Skalička who was about to become an associate professor of Hungarian language and literature. At the Comenius University in Bratislava, the seminary of Hungarian language and literature was teaching by professor Ján Bakoš, who lectured grammar. Literature was lectured, similarly as in Prague, by František Jankovič, but for this chair professor Alžbeta Göllner, a teacher at gymnasium in Bratislava was to be habilitated.⁴⁰

Situation was broadly commented by Hungarian opposition press and had also a political dimension. Periodicals *Prágay Magyar Hírlap*, *Magyar Ujság*, *Napló* and others argued that appointment of pedagogical personnel to teaching positions is less an issue of professional competence than political problem.

In regard to future of both seminaries, an intensive discussion was carried on not only among professionals but also in government circles, among opposition politicians, among Hungarians and non-Hungarians. After year 1933 the issue became pronouncedly political. Students of Hungarian nationality in Prague, who were already in year 1921 motivated

38 *Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 1. prosince 1930. Díl I*, Praha 1934, 81. Československá statistika; svazek 98. Řada VI, Sčítání lidu; sešit 7.

39 Exact number of members of Slovaks nationality, because officially stated Czechoslovak nationality, is impossible to ascertain.

40 TÓTH, 73–74.

by periodical *Prágay Magyar Hírlap* established a preparatory committee of student association. Later an association was founded and named Magyar akademikus keresztény köre Prágaban – MAKK (Christian Circle of Hungarian Academicians in Prague). According of its charter the aim of the MAKK was to grow Christian spirit, spreading of Hungarian culture and economic support of Hungarian university students, eventually also of colleges. MAKK had branches also in Bratislava and Brno and was supported by student association in Budapest. Since its inception MAKK was perceived by Czechoslovak authorities as association allowing a space for irredenta. The activities of MAKK and students in general were monitored by Czechoslovak authorities. In January 1933 the Ministry of Interior in Prague notified the Presidency of Board of Ministers that in community of Hungarian students Hungarian opposition political parties are losing influence and consequently *"lately for understandable reasons also Hungarian Embassy (...) is increasingly interesting about conditions existing in community of Hungarian youth."*⁴¹ Political program of social democrats was allegedly gaining influence among students. According to The Police Directory in Prague, which was author of the cited report sent to the Ministry of Interior, this was consequence of rift between older and younger Hungarian generations and eventually *"another result of this new international and socialistic thinking young people could be end of irredentistic movement in Slovakia."*⁴²

Despite alleged loss of adherence toward Hungarian political representation, MAKK enjoyed respect and support of Hungarian politicians. This was documented by presence of Hungarian Ambassador Szilárd Masirevich, Hungarian deputies Géza Szüllő, József Törkly, Károly Hokky and others.⁴³ In year 1934 MAKK had 400 members. Data in regard to numbers of students of Hungarian nationality attending educational institution of highest level of education are shown in Table 1.

41 NA, f. Prezídium ministerské rady (PMR) (Presidium of Board of Ministers (PBM)), carton 575, doc. No. 6145

42 Ibidem.

43 Archiv Ústavu T. G. Masaryka (A Ú TGM) (Archive of T. G. Masaryk Institute (A TGM)), f. TGM – Republika 1918–1937, menšiny (f. TGM – Republic 1918–1937, minorities), carton 393.

Table 1 Students of Hungarian nationality attending educational institutions in Czechoslovakia

Academic year	Students		
	Total	of Hungarian nationality	
		Number	Share in %
1921/1922	28,570	1,200	4.20
1923/1924	26,226	833	3.17
1925/1926	27,725	779	2.80
1927/1928	28,899	982	3.39
1929/1930	31,164	1,127	3.61
1932/1933	33,332	1,157	3.47
1934/1935	31,640	953	3.01
1937/1938	27,878	878	3.14

Data is showing that number of students of Hungarian nationality was lower in comparison to the total number of students in Czechoslovakia than the total number of Hungarian minority members to the whole population.⁴⁴

Conclusion

In Czechoslovak Republic, the system of education was more democratic and content and form of education more advanced than in pre-war Hungary. Illiteracy was lowered and all levels of schools became more accessible to a broader circle of young people. The school infrastructure was modernized, new schools were built, libraries were established, schools were equipped with radio etc. All of this however could not eliminate a feelings of injustice in ranks of Hungarian population, which only with difficulties coped with policy and measures of school administration of Czechoslovak state.

During years 1918–1938 it was impossible to study on the highest level of educational structure, on universities teaching in Hungarian language. Czechoslovak governments explained this fact by low number of members of Hungarian minority, which was insufficient to justify establishment of Hungarian university. This facts, however, created space for numerous discrepancies among Czechoslovak educational authorities on one side and government and Hungarian community.

⁴⁴ Elaborated according to: *Statistická příručka Republiky československé*, Praha 1932, 351. *Statistická ročenka Republiky československé*, Praha 1935, 218–219. *Zprávy Státního úřadu statistického Republiky československé*, roč. 19, č. 57–58, Praha 1938, 442–443. *Statistická ročenka Republiky československé*, Praha 1937, 236–237.

References

Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic)

- fond II/4 Mírová konference v Paříži a reparace 1918–1938 (fund II/4 Peace Agreement in Paris and reparations 1918–1938), sekce MZV 1918–1938 (section MFA 1918–1938)
- fond VIII/1 Zastupitelský úřad v Budapešti 1918–1940 (fund VIII/1 Representative office in Budapest 1918–1940)

Archiv Ústavu T. G. Masaryka (Archive of T. G. Masaryk Institute), fond TGM – Republika 1918–1937, menšiny (fund TGM – Republic 1918–1937, minorities)

Národní archiv Praha (National Archive Praha)

- fond Ministerstvo školství (fund Ministry of Schools)
- fond Prezídium ministerské rady (fund Presidium of Board of Ministers)

Slovenský národný archív Bratislava (Slovak National Archive Bratislava), fond Referát Ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety (fund Department of Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment)

Štátny archív Košice (State Archive Košice), fond Košická župa (fund Košice County)

Štátny archív Košice, pracovisko Archív Rožňava (State Archive Košice, workplace Archive Rožňava), fond Okresný úrad Rožňava (fund District office Rožňava)

Štátny archív Trenčín, pracovisko Archív Bojnice (State Archive Trenčín, workplace Archive Bojnice), fond Okresný úrad Prievidza (fund District office Prievidza)

GABZDILOVÁ, Soňa: *Možnosti a obmedzenia. Vzdelávanie v jazyku maďarskom na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1938*, Košice 2017.

KUKLÍK, Jan – PETRÁŠ, René: The legal status of minorities and universities in inter-war Czechoslovakia, in: *Central European Papers*, 5, 2017, 2, 27–36.

KUKLÍK, Jan – PETRÁŠ, René: Právní postavení menšin a vysoké školy v meziválečném Československu, in: *Menšiny, vysoké školy a právo*, HALÁSZ, Ivan – PETRÁŠ, René (eds.), Praha 2018, 11–22.

LÁSZLÓ, Béla: Maďarské národnostné školstvo, in: *Maďari na Slovensku (1989–2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*, FAZEKAS, József – HUNČÍK, Péter (eds.), Šamorín 2008, 199–242.

MICHELA, Miroslav: K otázke historickej kultúry Maďarov na Slovensku, in: *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989 (Identita a politika II)*, ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana – ĐURKOVSKÁ, Mária (eds.), Prešov 2008, 191–197.

OLEJNÍK, Milan: *Politické a spoločenské aktivity maďarskej minority v prizme štátnych orgánov a dobovej slovenskej tlače (1918–1929)*, Košice 2011.

POPÉLY, Gyula: *Búcsú a főiskoláktól. A felsőoktatás és a felvidéky magyarság (1918–1945). A fiatal magyar értelmiség útkeresése*, Bratislava 2005.

Poslanecká sněmovna N.S.R.Č. 1935. IV. volební období, 2. zasedání. Těsnopisecké zprávy 1–24. Těsnopisecká zpráva o 16. schůzi poslanecké sněmovny Národního shromáždění republiky Československé. 5. prosince 1935. Vystoupení poslance Jánose Esterházyho [Chamber of Deputies N.S.R.Č. 1935. IV election period, 2. Stenography session, Report 1–24. Stenography report about 16 session Chamber of Deputies, National Assembly of Czechoslovak Republic. 5 December 1935. Speech of Janos Esterházy].

- Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého – ročník 1921*, Praha 1921.
- Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 15. února 1921. I. díl*, Praha 1924.
- Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 1. prosince 1930. Díl I*, Praha 1934.
- SETON-WATSON, Robert William: Československo a slovenský problém, in: *Slovensko kedysi a teraz*, SETON-WATSON, Robert William, Praha 1931, 57.
- SIMON, Attila: *Telepesek és telepesek falvak Dél-Szlovákiában a két világháború között*, Šamorín 2008.
- Statistická příručka Republiky československé*, Praha 1932.
- Statistická ročenka Republiky československé*, Praha 1935.
- Statistická ročenka Republiky československé*, Praha 1937.
- TÓTH, Andrej: Menšinová vysokoškolská výuka jako politická otázka – maďarské požadavky v Československu 1918–1938, in: *Česko-maďarské ob(z)ory. Kapitoly z dějin česko-maďarských univerzitních vztahů*, JANUŠKA, Jiří (ed.), Praha 2018, 69, 73–74.
- Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty [Bulletin of Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment]*, Praha 1928.
- Zprávy Státního úřadu statistického Republiky československé*, Praha 1938.

Author

doc. PhDr. Soňa Gabzdilová, CSc.

Ústav středoevropských studií, Fakulta veřejných politik v Opavě, Slezská univerzita v Opavě
Institute of Central European Studies, Faculty of Public Policies in Opava, Silesian University
in Opava

Bezručovo náměstí 885/14, 746 01 Opava, Czech Republic

Centrum spoločenských a psychologických vied SAV, Spoločenskovedný ústav
Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, SAS, The Institute of Social Sciences
Karpatská 5, 040 01 Košice, Slovak Republic
sona.gabzdilova@gmail.com

AUTHORS

György Képes

Eötvös Loránd University
Budapest, Hungary

Soňa Gabzdilová

Silesian University in Opava
Opava, Czech Republic
Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, SAS
Košice, Slovak Republic

Gábor Hollósi

VERITAS Research Institute and Archives
Budapest, Hungary

Gabriella Kakuk

National University of Public Service
Budapest, Hungary

David Mareček

University of Hradec Králové
Hradec Králové, Czech Republic