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Serbian-Slovak relations through centuries: social, cultural and spiritual dimension



Vanja Glišin, Kristijan Obšust, Miroslav Kmeć (eds.): *Serbian-Slovak Cultural Ties and National Identities*. Institute for Political Studies / Archives of Vojvodina / Faculty of Philosophy, University Matej Bel, Belgrade - Novi Sad - Banská Bystrica, 2024, 314 pages

The thematic collection of papers *Serbian-Slovak Cultural Ties and National Identities* is the result of the scientific conference held in the conference room of the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade on 29th November 2024. The organization of the scientific gathering and the preparation of the thematic collection of papers are the first step in the joint scientific cooperation of three eminent institutions from the Republic of Serbia and the Slovak Republic: the Institute for Political Studies

from Belgrade, the Archives of Vojvodina from Novi Sad, and the Faculty of Philosophy of the University Matej Bel from Banská Bystrica, which give it special institutional and scientific weight.

The collection contains sixteen papers in Serbian, Slovak and English, which contributes further to its international visibility and scientific relevance. The publication of this collection is a pioneering enterprise having in mind that it gives a thorough overview of the ties between the two nations and that it establishes stable foundations for further comprehensive cooperation. Namely, the main value is reflected in the interdisciplinary character as a condition for understanding Serbian-Slovak relations which have long and rich history, intertwined by a multidimensional political, diplomatic, economic, trade, cultural-artistic and scientific-educational cooperation. The editorial concept consistently follows the idea that cultural ties and national identities are perceived in a long historical period, primarily since the 19th century to date, taking into account a broader Central European and Balkan context. Although the thematic framework may seem too broad, it is conceptually clear because the focus is on cultural interactions, political relations, religious ties and the formation of national identities in complex historical circumstances.

A special place in the collection is taken by the papers dealing with the 19th-century events. The text by Nebojša Kuzmanović, PhD, about Serbian romantic writers and Slovaks offers a detailed analysis of intellectual and educational ties of Serbian and Slovak national tribunes in the romanticism period who studied at the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava. Similarly, the paper by Professor Miro-

slav Kmeč highlights Slovak-Serbian cultural and political relations in the election processes in the territory of today's Vojvodina at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Professor Mihal Babjank analyzes Jozef Podhradsky, one of the most important Slovak romantic figures, who contributed to the strengthening of social and cultural ties between Serbs and Slovaks in the 19th century. Zdenka Valent Belić, PhD, also writes about Jozef Podhradsky as a person who belonged equally to Slovak and Serbian culture. Podhradsky spent larger part of his life in Serbia, wrote about the rulers from the Obrenović dynasty, about Svetozar Miletić, and built close ties with Serbs until his death. Therefore, the overview of the events and processes during the 19th century is a scientifically and socially significant segment of the collection because it familiarizes readers with numerous not so well-known facts that shaped Serbian-Slovak ties.

The papers in the collection are mainly focused on the events and processes in the 20th century. The paper by Peter Mičko, PhD, and Anton Hrubaň, PhD, is dedicated to the position of Slovaks in the territory of Yugoslavia from 1918 to 1941. The authors focus on the cultural interactions of Yugoslav Slovaks with the "other homeland", i.e., with the Slovak state. Professor Marek Sirni focuses on the period 1939-1941, striving to show the relations between Slovakia and Yugoslavia, i.e., between the Slovak state and the community of Slovak emigrees in Yugoslavia. The emphasis on the Slovak-Serbian cultural relations in the period from 1931 to 1934 is placed by Frantisek Jakab in an attempt to show the activities of cultural societies and artists and to analyze the importance of the relations between

the First Czechoslovak Republic and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The original contribution to the thematic collection has been provided by historian Nemanja Dević, PhD, who, based on the analysis of the press and propaganda of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the journal *Proletarian (Proleter)*, shows the manner in which the picture about Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia was created in the press and propaganda between 1919 and 1939. The period after the Second World War was addressed by Professor Nebojša Petrović, who analyzes the position of Slovaks in Vojvodina from 1945 to 1952. This is the period of extraordinary social changes which were also reflected among the Slovak population in these territories. Kristijan Obšust provides a general overview of the matters of collective identities of the members of the Slovak national minority in the Republic of Serbia, which is indispensable in further understanding of phenomena and processes. This gives a substantial and argument-based overview of the cooperation between the two countries in complex political and social circumstances of the 20th century.

The spiritual and religious dimension of Serbian-Slovak relations is analyzed in several papers. Saša Antonijević gives a centuries-long historical overview of the operations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Slovakia and emphasizes spiritual ties between the two nations. A temporally narrower overview of spiritual ties is presented in the paper by Radovan Pilipović and Ivana Luknar, pointing to the religious ties between Serbs and Transcarpathia, i.e., the importance of the Serbian Orthodox Church in interwar Czechoslovakia, from 1918 to 1940. Professor Vladimir Kocvar analyzes the activi-

ties of venerable Justin Popović in East Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia with the aim of presenting the accomplishments and problems during the revival of Orthodox Christianity. The current context of religious relations between the Republic of Serbia, Republic Srpska and the Slovak Republic is presented in the work by Slobodan Prodić, emphasizing the spiritual aspect as a manner of strengthening cooperation. The above-listed papers indicate that spiritual and religious dimensions constitute an important factor of cooperation and closer relations of the two nations both throughout history and today.

The events and processes at the beginning of the 21st century are analyzed in the papers by Ana Jevtić, PhD, and Vanja Glišin, PhD. Our colleague Jevtović wrote the paper about political communication and media unitarianism in crisis situations, with a focus on the media picture created after the attempted assassination of Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. In an analytical, argument-based and scientifically founded manner, our colleague Jevtović analyzes a rather complex and current topic, which is a contribution to the collection of papers in the context of modern Serbian-Slovak relations. The last paper in the collection is written by Glišin, PhD, who analyzes the geopolitical position of Serbia and Slovakia in the context of German Central-European continentalism, which opens a broader perspective and places Serbian-Slovak ties into the frameworks of modern international relations and geopolitics. This paper confirms that cultural and identity ties are not isolated from geopolitical processes.

The collection of works *Serbian-Slovak Cultural Ties and National Identities* unifies the content of the papers that in a scientifically founded

and argument-based manner analyze the events and processes in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The value of the collection is not solely in collecting the existing knowledge, but also in laying the foundations for further research and deepening the cooperation between Serbian and Slovak scientific and social communities. We witness the continu-

ity of good relations between Serbs and Slovaks over two centuries, which is a specific social and political-science phenomenon that, it can be said, is rare in the territory of Southeast Europe. Hence the need to prepare this collection and to continue the strengthening of Serbian-Slovak cultural, educational, scientific, spiritual and international ties.

References

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