

MARTIN HOMZA AND ŽELJKO HOLJEVAC (Eds.)
(2020)

**SLOVÁCI A CHORVÁTI NA CESTE
K SAMOSTATNOSTI:
HISTÓRIA A PERSPEKTÍVY**

[Slovaci i Hrvati na putu u neovisnost:
Povijest i perspektive]

[Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence:
History and Perspectives]

Bratislava: Slovensko-chorvátska komisia humanitných vied

Studia Carpathico-Adriatica Vol. I., 206 p.

The first edited book of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series, entitled *Slováci a Chorváti na ceste k samostatnosti: História a perspektívy/Slovaci i Hrvati na putu u neovisnost: Povijest i perspektive* [Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence: History and Perspectives], contains eleven separate chapters and eight other contributions in the reports and reviews section. The book is based on presentations from a conference that was held on 18 and 19 June 2019. The conference was organised by the Slovak-Croatian Commission of Humanities, which had been established under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia. The organisers included Professor Martin Homza from the Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University and Professor Željko Holjevac from the University of Zagreb. The scholarly output of the commission is this peer-reviewed edited book, which was published in 2020 as the first volumes of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series. The book's title evokes a feeling of connection between two historical regions of Europe. As Homza said in his introduc-

tory speech, two international conferences that had previously been held on the topic of Slovak – Croatian historical relations were forerunners for the long-term academic cooperation between these two countries, and two edited books were published on that occasion.

This book comprises chapters as well as reports and reviews. The introduction was written by the leading figures of the commission: Homza, who focused on earlier history and medieval connections, and Holjevac, who discussed recent history and modern connections. The commission features six Slovak and six Croatian members and was formed to cover different fields in the most important areas of the humanities, notably general history, literary history, the history of art, neo-Latin studies, archaeology, and ethnology.

The activities of the commission and the publication of this book, in the authors' own words, aim to establish connections and find historical parallels between Slovaks and Croats which have been overlooked since the end of the Second World War.

The first conference organised by the commission took place on 18 June 2019 at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University. The title of this book was chosen to highlight the historical parallels between Slovaks and Croats in recent history in their long struggle for independence and indicates that the chapters within it will largely revolve around historical themes. The chapters focus mainly on recent periods in both countries and the emancipation of the two nations at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, also dealing with the emergence of the two independent states. There are certain parallels present in the book that attempt to highlight Slovak – Croatian relations in the twentieth century, which is something that has long been overlooked within the academic community. Ondrej Podolec's chapter *Štátoprávne milníky Slovenska v 20. storočí (paralely s Chorvátskom)* [Milestones in the development of the constitutional legal status of Slovakia (parallels with Croatia)] raises the topic of similarities in the search for the new and independent existence of the Slovak and Croatian nations in the new realities that resulted from the collapse of the multinational state of Austria-Hungary. Emília Hrabovec described the initial political position of the Slovak exile community following the end of the Second World War in *Slovenský exil a cesta k nezávislosti Slovenska* [Slovak exiles and the road to Slovakia's independence]. This chapter focuses on the exiled figures Karol Sidor and Ferdinand Ďurčanský and their struggles with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as well as the intrigues of foreign intelligence agencies. Slovak exiles had a more difficult starting position in the international community as there was no geopolitical interest in their part of the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic. In addition to these problems, the Slovak exiles led a long-lasting struggle with Czech ones. In *Kontakty slovenského a chorvátskeho politického exilu v 70. a 80. rokoch* [Contacts between Slovak and Croatian political exiles in the 1970s and 1980s], Peter Jašek also

examines Slovak political exiles, elaborating on the establishment of the Slovak World Congress and the history of the exile community, which has thus far received little scholarly attention. As Slovaks were unable to stand on their own two feet within the geopolitical situation of that time, they had to seek support from non-national and international organisations, particularly those focusing on Central and Eastern European countries. In this regard, Jašek draws attention to the Slovak World Congress in Toronto in 1971, where the idea of cooperation between exiled Slovaks and Croats began to take shape.

A crucial period of liberation in Czechoslovakia, which preceded the Prague Spring and had far-reaching consequences for society, is highlighted in *Slovensko v predjarí* (1963 – 1967) [Slovakia's early spring (1963 – 1967)]. This is written by Miroslav Londák and Elena Londáková.

The difficult path to Croatian independence is documented by Nikica Barić in *Hrvatski put u samostalnost* [Croatia's road to independence], which focuses on the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when nationalist movements were on the rise and political unrest escalated in Yugoslavia. The Catholic Church played a major role in the creation of the independent states of Croatia and Slovakia, because both countries, alongside some other Central European ones, are strongly Christian and have a predominantly Catholic population. This issue was highlighted in Julija Barunčić Pletikosić's chapter *Uloga Katoličke crkve u stvaranju suvremene Republike Hrvatske* [The role of the Catholic Church in creating the modern republic of Croatia]. Additional parallels can be found in Tomáš Černák's *Politická situácia a prejavy násilia na futbalových štadiónoch na začiatku 90. rokov v Chorvátsku a na Slovensku* [The political situation and acts of violence at football stadiums in the early 1990s in Croatia and Slovakia]. Football stadiums were major sites of unrest for both countries during that period, as tense relations between different ethnicities came to the surface in sport. These situations sometimes led to very bad outcomes, and in Croatia they reflected the difficult relations that were present in society. Beáta Katrebová Blehová attempts to depict the issue of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of separate sovereign states in *Rozdelenie Česko-Slovenska v medzinárodnom kontexte: náčrt problematiky* [The dissolution of Czechoslovakia in the international context: an outline of the issue]. Possibly the most sensitive topic in the history of Croatia was raised by Ana Holjevac Tuković in *Završetak Domovinskog rata u Hrvatskoj: Vojne operacije i mirna reintegracija* [The end of the Croatian homeland war: military operations and peaceful reintegration]. The fact that Croatian foreign policy had started to shift more towards the West is highlighted by Albert Bing in *Put Hrvatske u Europsku uniju* [Croatia's journey to the European Union]. Both Slovakia and Croatia went to great efforts to integrate themselves into the European community. Bing explains the countries' motives and efforts to converge with the West during the early 1990s. The issues of coping with the past and interpretations of national history are common themes for both Slovaks

and Croats. These issues are raised by Aleksandar Jakir in *Izazov bavljenja problematicnom prošlošću u Hrvatskoj* [The challenge of dealing with a difficult past in Croatia].

The reports and reviews section includes Ján Botík's review of the ethnographic monograph *Barvy chorvatské Moravy* [The colours of Croatian Moravia], examining a community about which very little has been written in recent decades, and Ondřej Větchovský's review of Boris Moskovič's historical monograph *Mezi Titem a Tudjmanem: Chorvatsko v letech 1989 – 1990* [Between Tito and Tudjman: Croatia in 1989 – 1990]. Zvonko Taneski has a review of Dubravka Ugrešić's literary work *Baba Jaga zniesla vajce* [Baba Yaga laid an egg]. Martin Homza provides a report entitled *Slovenská historička v chorvátskej encyklopédii Kvetoslava Kučerová* [The Slovak historian Kvetoslava Kučerová in the Croatian Encyclopaedia], which examines the life and work of that prominent Slovak historian, who passed away at the end of 2019 after a life devoted to research and publications on Croats and Serbs in Slovakia. Andrej Solár presents a report on the activities of the Museum of Croatian Culture in Slovakia, which is one of eight national museums within the Slovak National Museum. This work is related to his article *Tamo daleko, daleko od mora / Ferdinand Takáč* [There, far away, far from the sea: Ferdinand Takáč], which discusses the life and work of one of the most prominent figures among Slovak Croats in the twentieth century. The book concludes with an essay presenting the final theses of students of Croatian Studies at the Department of Slavic Philology and a summary of important Slovak events in Croatia in 2019 written by Zuzana Chudá. This section also provides space for informative contributions for readers in both countries. The book includes a collection of photographs taken at conferences held in Slovakia and Croatia and the launches of relevant publications.

Although the founding members of the commission are historians and the first issue of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series focuses on historical works, the very composition of the commission is also a signal that future conference topics and publications will include scholarly works focusing on different fields in the humanities. The first conference and the book reviewed here have certainly sought to highlight what Croats and Slovaks have in common and what unites them. The individual chapters overlap to some extent in terms of the historical milestones of these two nations in the turbulent years of the twentieth century.

Andrej Solár