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Recodifications of the history of post-war migration schemes in post-1989 Slovak and Hungarian policy (Traumas – Manipulations – Propaganda)

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Abstract | Objectives: The aim of the article is to uniquely summarize the findings of long-term research to point out that the instrumentalization of the history of post-war migration is influenced by the effort to recodify historical events in the interest of new political goals and the needs of political practice. In the article were used several methodological approaches. Long-term archival research findings were compared with monitoring of Slovak and Hungarian daily press after 1989. Based on the documents obtained, by comparing them and by generalizing the knowledge gained in previous periods, which has been presented in several works, the author tries to take a look at the instrumentalization of post-war national policy and migratory population movements in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In particular, he looks at the migratory movements of the Slovak and Hungarian populations in the post-war period, e.g. the population exchange agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the forced displacement of Slovak Hungarians to Bohemia, and other segments of the post-war Czechoslovak anti-minority policy, which is referred to under the collective, albeit incorrect, term the Beneš Decrees in political and propaganda practice. It is this term that symbolises the influence of politics and propaganda in explaining historical events. Background: In the context of the issues raised, the study provides a brief characterisation of the post-war situation in Slovak-Hungarian relations, a look at Czechoslovak post-war legislation and the stabilisation of the borders at the Paris Conference of 1946. It highlights the differences in the strategies of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in relation to the confirmation of the borders after the WWII and the strategy of both states at the Paris Peace Conference. Furthermore, it discuss the process of establishing stable borders to the peace treaties adopted in the 20th century. He observes the assimilationist patterns of the unification of Slovakia's post-war ethnic structure and the interpretation of post-war national and resettlement policies as a process of instrumentalizing post-war history in political and propaganda practice. The paper pays special attention to the issue of post-war legislation, under which politics, journalism and public opinion classified all post-war measures against minorities, labelled the "Beneš Decrees". Conclusion: The author concludes that the instrumentalization of the history of post-war migrations is influenced by the desire to recodify historical events in the interest of new political aims and the needs of political practice. This endeavour makes abundant use of purposefully selected linguistic devices that are used to emotionally affect the recipient of the resulting product. These include both the demonization and glorification of historical actors, as well as the purposeful adjustment of historical facts to the contemporary political needs of political actors. This is closely related to the construction of commemorative mechanisms and schemes by which political propagandists seek to dominate public space in areas inhabited jointly by Hungarians and Slovaks.

Keywords | historical memory, commemoration, instrumentalization of history, propaganda, population exchange, migration, national policy in Slovakia, post-war legislation

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Background

The aim of the article is to uniquely summarize the findings of long-term research to point out that the instrumentalization of the history of post-war migration is influenced by the effort to recodify historical events in the interest of new political goals and the needs of political practice. The paper is paper based on two methodological research lines. One is the concentrated long-term research of Czechoslovak post-war policy towards the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, in archives in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The second line is the long-term monitoring of documents of Slovak and Hungarian policy and the daily press after 1989 in Slovakia and Hungary. Considering the aim of the submitted article, it is necessary to state at the outset three basic starting points of the researched issue.

The tendency to reduce the number of the other-ethnic population in the nation-states of Central Europe was dominant in the years 1918-2020. This is evidenced by the development of the population and their ethnic structure in Europe.[1] This tendency is a permanent characteristic of the 20th and early 21st centuries and could only be affected by an unusual and unexpected change in "ethnic" behaviour, triggered by an external impulse (e.g. in the form of the population being manipulated by a nationalist leader in a regime with authoritarian elements) or by other power-political changes.

The measures taken against the population of Hungarian nationality in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War were partly of an area nature, similar to the measures taken against the population of Slovak nationality in Hungary after the Vienna Arbitration. They caused senseless trauma and persecution to the population in both countries and are regrettable from today's point of view. The measures taken against Hungarians in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War can be justified by the post-war situation. However, just because something was done in the spirit of the legislation in force at the time does not mean that it was also just and humane. The post-war legislation in Slovakia created the conditions for persecution, deportation and confiscation of property of persons of Hungarian (and German) nationality. The post-war legislation can be explained and justified, but it cannot be excused, defended or used as a basis for the relationship of the state to the Hungarian minority today, nor for the loyalty of the Hungarian minority to contemporary Slovakia.[2]

Discussions of post-war history in the Central European region are marked by attempts to define fixed borders of "nation" states. To consolidate them, political elites used a wide range of assimilation models (forced, coerced, voluntary assimilation and their combinations). The consolidation of national boundaries included tearing down of those schemes that spoiled the image of national unity: models creating an ethnically homogeneous environment were preferred, the possibilities of applying ethnically "foreign" ethnic units in the administrative organization of the state were eliminated. When they had the possibility, the states created administrative units in a way that reduced the share of the other-ethnic population in the administrative unit.

Models and mechanisms for the unification of the ethnic structure of "nation" states

In addition to the natural processes of reducing the percentage of the other-language population (mixed marriages, migration for work abroad, to industrial centres, migration from rural settlements to larger cities...), different patterns of migratory movements promoted by the state regimes were applied, depending on the nature of the regimes. The post-war period was characterised by the use of unification schemes based on population movement. Although they were dominated by internal migration stereotypes (rural-urban type of migration, labour migration, migration waves...),[3]

activities based on coercive principles of population resettlement (transfer, forced resettlement, population exchange...) played an important role. These had their own specificities for individual European countries.[4]

The combination of several resettlement models (forced, coerced, voluntary), in material terms (labour, ethnic, political-ethnic), in geographical terms of (interstate, national) were part of the acculturation of the ethnic spectrum in favour of the uniethnic environment.

The consequences of the Yalta-Potsdam division of Central Europe were important for the status and future of national minorities in Central Europe and especially in Czechoslovakia. These also enabled the rise of communism. The inspiration by the Soviet and German wartime models of forced migration, but especially the accepted theses of European political leaders about the potential threat of ethnically diverse states, led, in contrast to the situation after World War I, to the rejection of the concept of international protection of national minorities.[5] This was also manifested in the construct of the "nation state of Czechs and Slovaks" presented by President Edvard Beneš and accepted by the entire political spectrum of post-war Czechoslovakia.

In Czechoslovakia after the war, a combination of limited border changes, forced migration and the restoration of formal acceptance of the return of borders to the status quo ante bellum was applied as a form of resolving border and ethnic disputes. The return of borders before the events leading up to the war, the Munich Agreement and the Vienna Arbitration were the starting line of post-war Czechoslovak society (with exceptions: Carpathian Ruthenia and the Bratislava bridgehead). In both Slovakia and Hungary, and at the negotiations of the 1946 Paris Peace Conference, the problems of the status of ethnic minorities in Czechoslovakia, and especially the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border, were seen as central and important to the post-war organisation of the Central European "world".

However, it was expected that these changes would be definitively confirmed by the Peace Conference through peace treaties, as was the case after the end of the First World War. All of the border changes, including those negotiated at the 1946 Paris Conference, unleashed one of the largest migratory waves of the 20th century, completing the migrations begun during and just after the Second World War. European and especially Central European border problems and population movements can be seen as a consequence of the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, as a continuation of the peace process (the adoption of peace treaties) after the First World War. One of the basic premises of the great powers when they entered the peace negotiations after the Second World War was all the more paradoxical. The commitments of the pre-war period, including the peace treaties and the system of protection of national minorities, were not mentioned. Even Czechoslovak diplomatic circles pointed out that it was not desirable to mention the peace treaties adopted after the First World War even in proposals and justifications of demands.[6]

A return to the original pre-war borders had already been made based on the armistice agreements with Romania on 12 September 1944, with Bulgaria on 28 October 1944, with Finland on 19 September 1944 and, in relation to Czechoslovakia, on the basis of the Armistice Agreement with Hungary on 20 January 1945. The peace treaties decided at the 1946 Paris Conference concerned only Germany's allies (Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Finland) [7] and did not address border disputes between Germany itself and Austria, nor the countries that were allies of the victorious Powers or of the Powers themselves, except for the parts that concerned former enemy countries that were allies of Germany. The borders between the Allies, the borders of Poland on all sides, the French-German borders, or the issue of Carpathian Ruthenia and other global problems related to the Jews or the consequences of the colonial past of the world powers were therefore not

included in the "peace" debate.

The post-war aims and plans of Czechoslovakia and Hungary differed in their divergent views of the past and, in particular, of the obligations arising from the Treaty of Trianon. The two approaches to a "just solution" of the Slovak-Hungarian relationship (borders) can be reduced to a symbolic conflict scheme: transfer versus correction of borders. The adjustment of borders in their favour was part of the goals of both Hungarian and Czechoslovak policy after the war, and both countries created the necessary background for this. Ideas about the extent and manner of the correction were different. The fact that Czechoslovakia was part of the "Allied and Associated Powers", the victorious states that could determine what would be discussed of the post-war system of Europe and to what extent, was crucial for Czechoslovak ambitions. The views on borders in general, the preparation of the documents for the peace conference were based on the assumption that Czechoslovak demands on Hungary would be much more extensive and that there was a possibility to extend Czechoslovak (Slovak) territory to all areas where Slovaks lived in Hungary. At the same time, the possible border compensation in favour of Hungary as a bonus for agreeing to a population exchange between the two states was not considered at all. The Czechoslovak representations considered the thesis that the victorious country could not allow a change of borders to its disadvantage to be a fundamental principle of the post-war settlement. Hungary stressed on every occasion its willingness to accept population transfers if Hungarians came to Hungary together with the land on which they lived. However, they did not find the support of the Great Powers for such changes.[8]

Post-war Measures against the Hungarian Minority and their Instrumentalisation as the Subject of Recodification Schemes in Political and Propaganda Practice

After the war, it was generally expected that there would be a movement of the population in various directions, and politicians considered how to channel or exploit this movement in favour of their goals and ambitions. People deployed for work, prisoners, prisoners of war, soldiers, refugees, emigrants, and resettlers were returning to their homes. These population movements also affected Slovakia.

However, the "hot" topic of post-war Slovak-Hungarian relations was forced migration and the subsequent manipulation of migration schemes that formed one of the significant lines of Czechoslovak anti-minority policy. The Hungarian minority was not forcibly displaced from Slovakia in the same way as the German minority (expulsion, unilateral transfer). After the signing of the armistice between the Allies and Hungary on 20 January 1945, those Hungarian civil servants who had moved to the territory of southern Slovakia after its occupation on the basis of the Vienna Arbitration in November 1938 (Anyás people – those from the motherland) were displaced or they left the territory of Slovakia on their own. Internal measures were taken against the population of Hungarian nationality on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic (e.g. resettlement of Hungarians to the Czech Republic, reslovakisation, confiscation of property, confiscation of land ownership, deprivation of citizenship...).[9] The partial population exchange between the Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary took place on the basis of an interstate treaty signed by the relevant representatives of both states and ratified by the legislatures on 27 February 1946.[10] The involuntary nature of the exchange is represented here by the selection of the Hungarian nationality population from Czechoslovakia by the state authorities, independently of their will, in contrast to the Slovaks in Hungary, who voluntarily applied for the exchange. Violence accompanied the situation of both ethnic groups on both sides of the border. Both Hungarians in Slovakia and Slovaks in Hungary were persecuted and threatened in various ways by the state authorities because they did not want (in Slovakia) or wanted (in Hungary) to participate in the

population exchange.[11]

The historical trauma of the post-war anti-Hungarian measures has been transferred through intergenerational memory to the present day. The topic of political instrumentalisation shows considerable timelessness and potential for chronological and ideological (national) continuity. The topic has not lost its political and national edge, despite the fact that the communist regime in Czechoslovakia sealed it for many years and only "opened" it in 1963. At that time, the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia condemned the implementation of anti-Hungarian measures after the Second World War, including the population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary.[12] In the discussions of the Czechoslovak "pre-spring", the topic became the subject of a national dialogue between the Slovak and Hungarian elites, but the condemnation of the post-war measures did not cross the internal boundaries of the Communist Party authorities. In fact, the communist representations respected the thesis of non-interference in the affairs of another communist-controlled state.

Following the freezing of the issue by the normalising communist regime after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Czechoslovak anti-Hungarian post-war policy continued to plague Slovak-Hungarian relations after 1989. However, its domestic dimension changed and it became the subject of confrontations primarily between the Slovak and Hungarian state elites. In this interstate dialogue, in which elites with nation-state rhetoric entered, the absence of empathy was a serious problem on both sides of the border. The national debate already played a marginal role. Attempts to open up post-war anti-minority legislation (i.e., the consequences of some Decrees of President E. Beneš and Slovak National Council regulations) are often presented as the problem of "Beneš Decrees" in the political sphere and media. The issue has become part of the propaganda mobilisation of the population, according to the acute political need, to mobilise the electorate, to defend statehood, the integrity of the nation, Slovak or Hungarian, and to strengthen ethnic identity.

In the public consciousness, the decrees of President E. Beneš - the "Beneš Decrees" stand as a symbol of post-war measures against Germans and Hungarians, although most of them did not concern minorities. All post-war measures against minorities have been subsumed under the "Beneš Decrees" by politics, journalism and public opinion, even though they were in fact carried out on the basis of other regulations (e.g. the resettlement of Germans on the basis of the decisions of the Potsdam Conference, the resettlement of Hungarians as part of the population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary on the basis of an interstate agreement, or the resettlement of civil servants who arrived in southern Slovakia after the Vienna Arbitration and who were evicted on the basis of the Armistice Agreement with Hungary of 20 January 1945). The demonisation of Beneš and the decrees he issued was accompanied by calls for their derogation.[13] The population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary was also subject to political speculation (on both sides of the border), but also to false interpretations and subsequent attempts to recodify historical contexts and facts, precisely because of this internal contradiction.

Propagandistic recodifications (distortions) of the history of post-war migrations in Slovak and Hungarian politics

Slovak political recodification: knowledge deficits or recodification models?

Historical stereotypes (hungarisation of Slovaks in the Hungarian Kingdom the fear of attempts to abolish the Trianon borders and autonomism) that resonate (have been long-term encoded) in Slovak historical and political memory are a mobilising element of Slovak national consciousness

and work with the principle of threat from neighbouring Hungary. In current politics, they are replaced by the fear of the Hungarian vision of cross-border integration of Hungarians, presented by Hungarian governments after 1989, but especially after 2010.[14]

Slovak nationality policy - a policy without a vision of its own,[15] cannot positively compensate. The persistence of Slovak nationality policy on the use of historical stereotypes that no longer work causes complications in the formulation of a healthy relationship with minorities and their home countries based on modern principles.

The aforementioned statement also applies to the relationship of Slovak political authorities to post-war history and the relationship to post-war anti-minority measures and migration movements. The following are typical: 1 political-historical substitution, which is based on the substitution of contemporary political goals and interpretations for historical facts; 2 confusion of historical facts and their consequences in post-war developments; 3 placing the legal relevance of post-war measures above human rights and ethical norms; 4 failure to distinguish between the effectiveness and validity of the decrees issued by President Beneš and the regulations of the Slovak National Council; 6 attempting to transfer responsibility to the decisions of the post-war powers or to E. Beneš. The procedures and mechanisms used by Slovak and Hungarian politics in interpreting post-war events are similar, and some differences will be pointed out in the following text.

Given that the examples of these practices of Slovak policy since 1989 to the present would take up many pages, I will give only a few of the most prominent examples.

The official document on the issue of the decrees of President E. Beneš was the information “Beneš Decrees and Slovakia”, prepared by the Ministry of Justice in May 2002. The document was submitted to the Government of the Slovak Republic on 5 June 2002, which took note of it.[16] The material stated that the decrees are also part of the Slovak legal order, noting the historical background of the adoption of the decrees and their international context. It contained a number of factual errors (I will mention only a few related to the subject of the study), which mislead the reader interested in the issue of the Decrees E. Beneš, and therefore also the government of the Slovak Republic, to which they were addressed and contributed to the reinforcement of stereotypes and myths. The material stated that President Beneš’s decrees were issued in agreement with the Committee of Nominees (correctly with the Slovak National Council). It stated that this was done on the basis of the Košice Government Programme. However, this was only the programme of the first post-war government in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the relations between the decrees and the SNR regulations were implemented on the basis of Decree No. 30/1945 Coll. SNR of 21 April 1945 on the Legislative power in Slovakia. Facts about German political parties and the number of persons of Hungarian nationality resettled in Bohemia and their nationality were incorrectly stated. [17]

The material mentioned the Agreement of 27 February 1946 between Czechoslovakia and Hungary on the exchange of population, but did not mention that this agreement was not part of the decrees of President E. Beneš and did not state, why is this document mentioned in the text at all. On 10 February 1947, a peace agreement was not concluded between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, as stated in the Ministry of Justice’s information material. The peace agreements were prepared for the peace conference by the Council of Foreign Ministers, signed with Hungary by the representatives of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA, and on 10 February 1947 by the representatives of the nine Allied countries, including Czechoslovakia,[18] not by the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Nor have the interpretations of post-war history and population exchanges by leaders who presented themselves as national leaders escaped deliberate or purposeful misinterpretations. The statement by the Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar: *"The displacement of Hungarians from Slovakia after the Second World War is a national problem. No one denies that the rights of individuals were violated, but these were citizens of the Slovak Republic of Hungarian nationality."*[19] contained "minor" historical inconsistencies. The Slovak Republic did not exist at that time. Hungarians in Czechoslovakia did not have Czechoslovak citizenship because they had lost it by Presidential Decree No. 33/1945 Coll. and it could not have been a national problem at all if it had been implemented on the basis of an international treaty. The obligation to compensate those affected by the "Beneš Decrees", according to SNS chairman J. Slota, was assumed by Hungary "*by the interstate treaty of 1948 ... The Slovak Republic has no obligation to fulfil its obligations on behalf of the Republic of Hungary. ... Horthy's fascist Hungary seized Slovak land ... The SNS considers these efforts to be part of plans to ultimately confirm the Vienna Arbitration and to challenge the Treaty of Trianon.*"[20] This statement also confirmed that part of the problems in relations are caused by politicians' misinterpretation of history and historical facts. In 1946, Hungary undertook the obligation to compensate those who had been resettled in Hungary as part of the Population Exchange Agreement of 27 February 1946. The *"Protocol between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary on the Final Settlement of Certain Unresolved Financial and Economic Issues"*, referred to as the Štrbsky Protocol of 25 July 1949) regulated property issues in the relationship between the Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary". It confirmed that the states had no claims against each other for the events of previous years, dealt with the compensation of properties in the border area and the consequences of the population exchange. In this case, however, it was a matter of the internal relationship of the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality in relation to their state of the CSSR (confiscation of land, property, the consequences of forced resettlement to Bohemia, trials before the people's courts...), which was not the subject of the interstate (inter-party) agreement of July 1949.

The 2007 resolution of the National Assembly on the inviolability of post-war legislation provoked passionate discussions in Slovakia and later abroad. After the end of the SMK's eight-year tenure in the ruling coalition, the issue of post-war legislation, referred to as the "Beneš Decrees", reappeared in politics. One of the leaders of the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), Pál Csáky, described it as his moral duty to put forward a proposal to compensate Hungarians for the consequences of the decrees.[21] The reaction of the ruling Slovak political parties to the SMK's activities was typically rash, irritated and ill-considered. The Slovak National Party (SNS) announced that it wanted to prepare a law for the protection of the republic, according to which whoever questions the "Beneš Decrees" or the Trianon Treaty "*will go to prison to think about it*."[22]

A resolution of the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic of 20 September 2007 entitled "*On the inviolability of post-war documents on the post-World War II settlement of the situation in Slovakia*" was adopted.[23] The resolution was signed by representatives of all Slovak parliamentary political parties. Only 20 SMK MPs voted against the resolution. Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány regretted the adoption of the resolution and President László Sólyom spoke of a slap in the face of Budapest. [24] Anti-Slovak demonstrations took place in front of the Slovak embassy in Budapest and the Slovak consulate in Békéscsaba, where stones were thrown in addition to eggs. The demonstration was organised by the World Union of Hungarians and was gradually joined by 14, mostly far-right, associations (the Youth Movement of 64 Counties, the Trianon Union and the M. Horthy Society) and the then extra-parliamentary Jobbik party.[25] However, in protest, members of the Hungarian parliament cancelled a scheduled meeting of the foreign affairs committees of both parliaments.

Paradoxically, the Slovak National Council resolution ignored the fact that some of the decrees and regulations on the status of Hungarians were no longer valid, having been repealed or replaced by more recent legislation. As a document prepared by the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "Some may be formally valid and effective, but since they applied only to a certain period of time after World War II, they were consumed and do not establish new legal relations today, they are not constitutive."[26]

The absurdity of the resolution is best documented by the fate of the most famous presidential constitutional decree No. 33/1945 Coll. on Czechoslovak citizenship. It was revised by Government Decree No 76/1948 Coll. of 13 April 1948 on the return of Czechoslovak citizenship to persons of German and Hungarian nationality, and was followed by Ministry of the Interior Decree No 77/1948 of 16 April 1948. These regulations made it possible for persons of Hungarian nationality who had been deported to Bohemia to obtain Czechoslovak citizenship if they were willing to remain there permanently. By Act No. 245/1948 Coll. of October 1948, residents of Hungarian nationality acquired Czechoslovak citizenship if they fulfilled the given conditions. The articles of the Decree were also modified by the adoption of the Government Decree of 29 November 1949 on the return of Czechoslovak citizenship to persons of German nationality. The last in the series of laws that modified the presidential decree was Act No. 34/1953 Coll. of 24 April 1953, which created the conditions for the acquisition of Czechoslovak citizenship by all persons of German nationality living on the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. No stone was left unturned on the "inviolable" decree of the President of the Republic No. 33/1945 Coll.; Germans and Hungarians (with the exception of the "enemies of socialism") were granted Czechoslovak citizenship.[27] In this respect, each decree or regulation of the SNR from the post-war period would require its own separate "anamnesis". Thus, the resolution on the inviolability of the post-war legislation, which was totally shattered by the Czechoslovak legislation, had only a symbolic meaning.

Hungarian political recodification of post-war history and its segments

Similarly to Slovak policy, Hungarian policy has its limits, schemes and stereotypes in relation to post-war legislation and migration movements in Slovakia. Typical factors influencing it from the point of view of the present can be identified as: 1 the transborder vision of the future of the Hungarian nation; 2 the patrimonial protective shield of the Hungarian state for Hungarian minorities abroad; 3 injustice as a principle of anti-Hungarian policy in the 20th century on the part of the neighbours (and world powers), of which the post-war Czechoslovak policy and the decrees of E. Beneš, associated with the ascribed status of "victim"; 4 the link between historical migrations and the "Beneš Decrees" and contemporary migration movements[28] and the Hungarian trans-border policy of unification of the Hungarian nation.

The creation of commemorative mechanisms with a propaganda focus

Already at the time of the implementation of the 1946-1948 population exchange, the issue was part of the propaganda machine on both sides involved.[29] The historical event bears this feature even to the present day. The traditional schemes used by Hungarian policy in relation to events perceived negatively in Hungarian historical memory include the accumulation of memory migration segments. On 5 December 2012, the members of the Hungarian Parliament decided that 12 April, when the reciprocal population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary began in 1947, would be the commemorative day for Hungarians evicted from Czechoslovakia. The decision stated that "*the Hungarian Parliament considers it important to commemorate with dignity the almost 100 000 Hungarians who were expelled from the Czechoslovak Republic as a result of the Beneš Decrees and supports the organisation of commemorative events and the preparation of*

educational material relating to the eviction of the Hungarians from Felvidék". [30] The commemorative day of the population exchange combines different types of migration schemes (the issue of the so-called anyás people, population exchange, displacement to Bohemia), but it does not bypass other related historical events of the 20th century history, e.g. Trianon or retributive justice in Slovakia. The unification of different events, actions and processes operating in a negative emotional spectrum is accompanied by the creation of commemorative mechanisms (memory segments), "places of memory", which fill the public space of Hungarian-occupied settlements with selectively chosen events and memorials commemorating post-war events (memorial plaques, monuments, stones) and rituals (wreaths, songs, speeches, banners...). It is reinforced by state policy as part of the building of unified historical consciousness, based on the traumas and misfortunes, the common suffering that befell Hungarians. At the same time, they create the idea of a common destiny and a common future. It is a typical feature of the statements of many Hungarian politicians that even events such as the population exchange are placed in a broader framework under the umbrella of the "Beneš Decrees", even though they do not belong there. This is no different from Slovak politicians, but unlike them, we do not attribute this to educational deficits.

The "Beneš Decrees" have traditionally been associated in the Hungarian narrative with the population exchange and the confiscation of the property of the Hungarian community. It is resonated especially at the time of its anniversary, when commemorative gatherings were held and articles, also prepared by politically active personalities, appeared.[31] At the commemorative day for the population exchange in Komárom, Hungary, in 2015, László Kövér, President of the Hungarian Parliament, demanded that Slovakia apologise to the displaced Hungarians for the suffering they had experienced under the agreement signed by Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1946.[32] On the Slovak side, a similar mechanism of commemorating the suffering is absent, although they too have been subjected to repression by the Hungarian authorities, and it appears only sporadically. Nor is the fact that many Slovak families were disappointed after the resettlement and felt betrayed significantly reflected in the commemorative practice. The principle of collective guilt could be absent from any speech by a Hungarian politician, regardless of which part of the border they came from, on the other hand, Slovak politicians, even more than 70 years after the war, pretend as if deportations and displacement and repressive actions against Hungarians had never existed.

In 2018, the anniversary of the population exchange was commemorated again in Budapest, and the main speaker was Zsolt Németh, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Parliament. He reminded both the post-war ethnic cleansing in Czechoslovakia and the fact that the resettlement of population affected the whole of Europe and that the task of today is to create the conditions so that such events cannot occur. He called for the improvement of Slovak-Hungarian relations with the help of churches and non-governmental organisations. His final appeal was: *"The struggle for the abolition of the principle of collective guilt cannot be given up. The Beneš Decrees cannot remain in force. János Esterházy cannot remain a war criminal, and the right to use one's mother tongue cannot be abandoned."*[33] Similarly, in the statement from the meeting of the SMK Republic Council in Zemno, there was an interesting accumulation of historical events, when the SMK Council *"paid tribute to the memory of the politician János Esterházy on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his death"* and at the same time *"remembering the 70th anniversary of the population exchange based on the Beneš Decrees"* condemned the principle of collective guilt. [34] The fact that none of the decrees of President E. Beneš dealt with the population exchange, and Estreházy was condemned on the basis of SNR Decree No. 33/1945 Coll. SNR, is just a detail that does not play a significant role in political propaganda after the 1970s. The "Beneš Decrees" is

a concept in propaganda that is sufficient in itself as an argument. The "historical abbreviation", resettlement - population exchange = Beneš decrees, is also used extensively in Slovak journalism. If something took place in the framework of post-war legislation, whether it was an international treaty on population exchange, SNR decrees on the confiscation of agricultural property or people's courts, the formulation that is used says that it was on the basis of the "Beneš decrees".[35]

After 2010, the common practices in European politics and the strengthening of the status of the Visegrad Four were much more important for the Hungarian and Slovak political representations. The speeches of Hungarian politicians were rather platonic in nature and were important for self-satisfaction and to remind voters at home and Hungarians abroad that they had not forgotten. This was also the spirit in which the statements of Hungarian politicians were perceived by Slovak diplomacy. The diplomatic rituals in which Hungary, (and after them the SMK representatives) regularly remind of the inhumanity of the post-war legislation and demand the repeal of the decrees, and Czech and Slovak diplomacy invites Hungarian ambassadors for "coffee" at the foreign ministries and vice versa, have long been observed.

The image of the Hungarian as an enemy and war criminal in post-war politics and in the contemporary Slovak and Hungarian narrative

This concept is an interesting phenomenon in Slovak-Hungarian interpretations of post-war policy. The principle of the Hungarian as an enemy was cultivated for different reasons on both sides of the border. In Slovak post-revolutionary "national" policy, the image of the Hungarian as an enemy and traitor was nurtured by political journalism and politicians' statements. It was part of the preserving of a historical anachronism, the thesis of the validity of the war legislation, which had already been largely abolished by its creators in the post-war years. It was intended to prove that the anti-Hungarian measures were legitimate, justified and necessary. At first sight, the Hungarian interpretation was not in conflict with this interpretation. The post-war image of the Hungarian enemy is in line with the principle of protectionism, which Hungarian policy uses to justify the necessity to supervise the protection of the rights of Hungarians outside Hungary. It is consistent with the image of the Hungarian as a ruthlessly persecuted victim of the post-war era. This is also why in Hungarian politics and journalism (and even in historical works) the term "war criminal" is used more often than "war offender".

Even in Slovak journalism, although we do not attribute it with an a priori malicious intent, but rather a superficial evaluation of historical events and phenomena, this historical stereotype finds application. For example, one of the authors of the article in the newspaper, looking for memorials of the years of the exchange and their fates and memories, wrote: *"...the Czechoslovak government started to come to terms with the post-war situation and wanted to banish war offenders from the country. Together with them, as many Slovak Hungarians were to move from Czechoslovakia to Hungary as there were Hungarian Slovaks willing to come from Hungary to Czechoslovakia, more precisely to the south of Slovakia..."*.[36] In this very case, the population exchange is an example of an event in which there was primarily displacement of population that did not appear before the post-war people's courts. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the Czechoslovak resettlement authorities were also interested in the resettlement of war offenders, but the vaguely worded article of the agreement on the population exchange (Article VIII) meant that most of the persons of Hungarian nationality who were convicted by the people's courts remained in Slovakia. [37]

Language of the actors, emotional sequences in propaganda schemes

There are common elements in the political and informational areas we have studied, typical for the propaganda agenda. We observe a purposeful use of words that seek to appeal to the emotional side of the receiver (voter, reader) in the linguistic equipment and terminology used by political and propaganda actors. The predominant focus was on the negative side of consciousness, emotions, horror (of what happened after the war on the one hand, and of what could happen if Slovakia were to name the post-war reality in some form). On both sides, the words patriot, patriotism, nation, united nation, human rights were used in the "positive" emotional spectrum. The authors also used European realities to prove the legitimacy of their opinion, especially terms such as the European Union and international organizations (OSCE, UN...). These worked not only as a "higher power" with the right of infallibility (Venice Commission, OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities), but also as an informal appeal authority. Although not in line with the historical theme, in the subtext it was possible to register the agenda of internationally accepted documents (Framework Convention for the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities, Charter of Languages...), which are the product of recent international politics. In the negative emotional spectrum, word games were played with the words criminal - offender on the Hungarian side, on the Slovak side the words revisionism, irredentism were frequent. On both sides the word traitor, was popular to describe opponents from another political or ethnic "camp". The word "abolish" as the only alternative to the agenda of presidential decrees of E. Beneš was used on both sides of the border, also among the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. It is as if the actors did not realise that this word can be used in different meanings and can even be replaced by another word. On the contrary, the word "apologise" has either disappeared from the historical-political discourse or has been demanded primarily from the other side. However, life teaches us that it is always possible to find something to apologise for.

Condemnation of the principle of collective guilt could not be absent from any speech by a Hungarian politician, no matter which part of the border they came from, and, on the contrary, Slovak politicians, even after more than 70 years since the war, pretend as if forced population transfers and repressive actions against Hungarians did not exist or were a natural response to the years of war. In the psychological, emotional impact, the search for euphemisms for certain events is a best practice if the protagonists are moving towards consensus. Often it also has its justification, as there are different forms for many activities and events, even though at first glance there would seem to be no difference between them. Thus we can notice the difference between the exercise of collective guilt and collective responsibility, and the difference between deportation and displacement. Given the mechanism of the implementation of the population exchange, the people who experienced this historical event, who were its subject, consider the term "exchange" a euphemism, obscuring the essence of the historical event. They replace it with the term expulsion, displacement, eviction. Similarly, the forced displacement of Slovak Hungarians to Bohemia, hiding under the term "labour recruitment", is called "deportation" by Hungarian historians, and not only by them. Similarly, the labels war criminals or war offenders have different meanings and historians consider their use. In the political and propaganda practice and instrumentalization of post-war history, their use has a significant role. "Politics" always chooses the emotional colouring that better suits the political goal of the author. It can emphasize the sense of injustice, the status of victim, the glorification of violence against one's own ethnicity, and mobilizes the listener, the reader (the future voter) to unite against the common enemy. This is what both Slovak and Hungarian politicians and many journalists have done.

Conclusion

Historical themes in Slovak-Hungarian relations are a serious problem in contemporary political and propaganda writing. Slovak and Hungarian historians (certainly not all of them) have proved that they can discuss various serious topics of our history at a high professional level.[38] It is worse in the political interpretation of history, which is marked by an absence of empathy, and often by aggressiveness, incorrectness and the prioritisation of national interests at the expense of facts and objectivity. They are often combined with political adventurism, the search for temporary advantages and the use of propaganda phrases. The instrumentalisation of the history of post-war migration is negatively influenced by the desire to recodify historical events in the interests of new political objectives and the needs of political practice. In this endeavour, linguistic means, emotional impact on the recipient of the final product, demonisation and glorification of historical actors, as well as the purposeful adaptation of historical facts to the current political needs of political actors are abundantly used. This is closely related to the construction of commemorative mechanisms and schemes by which political propagandists seek to dominate public space in areas inhabited jointly by Hungarians and Slovaks.

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[1] GLATZ, Ferenc. *Minorities in East-Central Europe: Historical Analysis and a Policy Proposal.* Budapest : Europa Institut, 1993.

[2] During the last 30 years this “motif” has been mentioned in many of my works, (e.g ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana – ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Nationality Policy in Slovakia 2004 – 2018 (Selected Aspects of Hungarian Minority Policy).* Prešov : Universum, 2020; ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Transfer of Hungarians from Slovakia in Czechoslovak Politcs before Paris Peace Conference 1946. In *Central European Papers*, 2015, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 63-88, therefore I will not pay special attention to it.

[3] On migratory movements in Europe in a broader context, see e.g. HRUBOŇ, Anton – ŠMIGEĽ, Michal – RISTEVEYOVÁ, Katarína. Stredná Európa v pohybe: Migrácie a etnické transfery v priestore krajín V4 počas druhej svetovej vojny a po roku 1945 ako determinanty ich súčasnej podoby. In HRUBOŇ, Anton a kol. *Migračné pohyby z krajín a medzi krajinami V4 v historickej perspektíve (vybrané problémy).* Banská Bystrica : Belainum – vydavateľstvo UMB, 2017, pp. 53-99.

[4] ŠMIGEĽ, Michal – KMEŤ, Miroslav. Výmeny obyvateľstva v strednej a východnej Európe v kontexte druhej svetovej vojny (na pozadí percepcie a názorov) In SÁPOSOVÁ, Zlatica – ŠUTAJ, Štefan (eds.). Povojnové migrácie a výmena obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom. Prešov : Universum, 2010, pp. 50-66.

[5] KUKLÍK, Jan – PETRÁŠ, René. *Minorities and Law in Czechoslovakia, 1918 – 1992.* Praha : Karolinum, 2018.

[6] For a more detailed discussion of the international aspects of post-war border security: ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Parížska konferencia 1946 a mierová zmluva s Maďarskom*. Prešov : Universum, 2014.

[7] Podrobnejšie napr. TEICHMAN, Miroslav. *Balkán ve 20. století.* Praha : Karolinum Press, 2017, pp. 191-206; ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Paris Conference 1946 – organizational principles of the Peace Conference. In *Central European Papers.* 2015, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 45-61.

[8] Even in the current political discourse on borders, the dominant view in parts of the Slovak political spectrum is that borders in this geographical space can only change after a victorious (lost) war.

[9] More detail: Šutaj, Štefan. Magyar minority in Slovakia before and after the Second world war. In TEICH, Mikuláš – KOVÁČ, Dušan – BROWN, Martin D. (eds.). *Slovakia in History.* Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 269-284.

[10] The issue of population exchange elaborated e.g. in.: ČIERNA-LANTAYOVÁ, Dagmar. *Podoby česko-slovensko-maďarského vzťahu 1938 – 1949.* Bratislava : Veda, 1992; Bobák, Ján. *Maďarská otázka v Česko-Slovensku 1944 – 1948.* Martin : Matica slovenská, 1996; VADKERTY, Katalin. *Maďarská otázka v Československu 1945 – 1948.* Bratislava : Kalligram, 2002; ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Slovakia in Czechoslovakia and Hungary – Slovak-Hungarian Relations Between the Two World Wars. In ŠUTAJ, Štefan. et al. *Key Issues of Slovak and Hungarian History (A View of Slovak Historians).* Prešov : Universum, 2011, pp. 198-213.

[11] HELDÁKOVÁ, Lucia. *Mať volá! Propaganda výmeny obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom – teoretické a historické aspekty.* Košice : Šafárikpress, 2020; SÁPOSOVÁ, Zlatica – GALLOVÁ, Miroslava. Sťažnosti presídlených Slovákov z Maďarska (vo vybranom regióne južného Slovenska). In ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Zmeny hraníc a pohyb obyvateľstva v Európe po druhej svetovej vojne.* Košice : Šafárikpress, 2020, pp. 255-272.

[12] SIKORA, Stanislav: *Rok 1968 a politický vývoj na Slovensku.* Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2008, p. 24.

[13] ČIERNA-LANTAYOVÁ, Dagmar – ŠTEFANOVIČ, Milan – ŠUTAJ, Štefan – ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal – ZAVACKÁ, Katarína*. Slovakia and Decrees of President of the Czechoslovak Republic Edvard Beneš in the Context of Regulation of the Slovak National Council.* Bratislava : Veda, 2006; ŠUTAJ Štefan. History and National Identity. In SWOBODA, Hannes – VIERSMA, Jan Marinus (eds.). *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse opf History.* Brusselles : The Socialist Group in the European Parlament, 2009, pp. 193-204.

[14] ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Variace stop Trianonu v politické paměti. In Dejmek Jindřich – Loužek Marek (eds.). *Trianonská smlouva. Devadesát let poté.* Praha : Centrum pro ekonomiku a politiku, 2010, pp. 69-97.

[15] ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana – ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Nationality Policy in Slovakia 2004 – 2018 (Selected Aspects of Hungarian Minority Policy).* Prešov : Universum, 2020, pp. 31-85;198-203.

[16] Slovak Government Office. "Beneš Decrees and Slovakia". Available at: http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/53701E3BBD23267FC1256BCD00425E1F?OpenDocument; [cit. 1.8.2004] Ján Čarnogurský was the Justice Minister at that time.

[17] See e.g. Šutaj, Štefan. *Akcia Juh. Odsun Maďarov zo Slovenska do Čiech v roku 1949.* Praha : Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1993.

[18] More detail e.g. ŠUTAJ, Š. *Paris Conference 1946...*, pp. 45-61.

[19] *Sme,* October, 16. 2007, Vysídlenie Maďarov je naša záležitosť.

[20] *Sme*, August, 7. 2007. Slota: Benešove dekréty malo odškodniť Maďarsko.

[21] *Sme,* August, 6. 2007. Csáky ide riešiť Benešove dekréty.

[22] *Pravda,* August, 9. 2007, SNS chce trestať tých, čo spochybnia Trianon; *Hospodárske noviny,* August, 9. 2007. Duray: Schválenie zákona zakazujúceho otvárať Benešove dekréty by bolo úbohé

[23] The resolution can be found at: http://www.nrsr.sk/exeIT.NRSR.Web.SSLP/Download.aspx?DocID=267236 [cit. 1.8.2012].

[24] *Pravda*, September, 25. 2007, Smer sa snaží vyhnúť kritike za uznesenie o Benešových dekrétoch.

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[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available at: http://www.foreign.gov.sk/. MZV SR k problematike dekrétov prezidenta ČSR. [cit. 15.10.2011]

[27] See e.g. GABZDILOVÁ, Soňa – OLEJNÍK, Mila – ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Nemci a Maďari na Slovensku v rokoch 1945 – 1953 v dokumentoch I.* Prešov : Universum, 2005.

[28] E.g. the Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament G. Gulyás said that *"as long as there is a country in Europe where the provisions of the Beneš Decrees, which contradict the basic provisions of international law and are based on the principle of collective guilt, can be found in the legal order, this day is not just a day of commemoration." Aktuality,* April, 12. 2016, Maďarsko si pripomenulo pamätný deň Maďarov vysťahovaných z Československa. Available at: https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/329498/madarsko-si-pripomenulo-pamatny-den-madarov-vystahovanych-z-ceskoslovenska/ [cit. 11.11.2020]

[29] HELDÁKOVÁ, Lucia. Propaganda vo výmene obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom (Analýza propagandy výmeny obyvateľstva). In ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Zmeny hraníc a pohyb obyvateľstva v Európe po druhej svetovej vojne.* Košice : Šafárikpress, 2020, pp. 221-242.

[30] *Sme,* April, 12. 2015, Šéf maďarského parlamentu: Pomohlo by ospravedlnenie Slovenska vysťahovaným Maďarom. Available at: https://svet.sme.sk/c/7747195/sef-madarskeho-parlamentu-pomohlo-by-ospravedlnenie-slovenska-vystahovanym-madarom.html#ixzz3XAHygKDR [cit. 11.11.2020]

[31] In 2012, László Bukovszky wrote an article about the population exchange, (*Sme,* April, 23. 2012, Vagóny išli obidvoma smermi), in 2013 Kálmán Petőcz (*Sme,* April, 16. 2013, Pod rúškom kolektívnej viny).

[32] *Sme,* April, 12. 2015, Pomohlo by ospravedlnenie Slovenska vysťahovaným Maďarom. http://www.sme.sk/c/7747195/sef-madarskeho-parlamentu-pomohlo-by-ospravedlnenie-slovenska-vystahovanym-madarom.html#ixzz3XAHygKDR [cit. 11.11.2020]

[33] *Teraz,* February, 12. 2018, V Budapešti si pripomenuli krajanov odsunutých z Československa. Available at: https://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/v-budapesti-si-pripomenuli-krajanov-ods/319175-clanok.html

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[35] More detail: ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Benešove dekréty ako nástroj politickej propagandy. In ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Prezidentské dekréty Edvarda Beneša v povojnovom období.* Prešov : Universum, 2004, pp. 90-111.

[36] *Sme,* October, 25. 2014. Cukor spoznali až na Slovensku. Available at: https://kultura.sme.sk/c/7456773/cukor-spoznali-az-na-slovensku.html [cit. 11.11.2020].

[37] More detail: Šutaj Štefan. Ethnic Development in Košice after 1945. In *Studia historycze,* 2013, vol. LVI, no. 4 (224), pp. 31-44.

[38] More detail: Šutaj, Štefan. Slovensko-maďarské historické paralely a konflikty (národné dejiny v stredoeurópskom kontexte) alebo o písaní spoločných slovensko–maďarských textov. In *Kor/ridor,* 2014. vol.1, iss. 2, pp. 9-19.

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