

Exploring the Slovak history in the „long 19th century“.

Summary.

The book presents the results of new research in Slovak history in the field or period called “the long 19th century”, i.e. dating from the rule of Joseph II. in the late 18th century until the First World War. The focus of research was on the themes and domains which were either neglected in the past or needed reconsidering. The book centres on five fields and is composed of five chapters.

The first chapter is called “The Nation and the national issue”. It presents new aspects by exploring one of the most principal themes of 19th century. In his study, László Vörös reflects about the modern concept of the nation, which won recognition by the most contemporary historians, ethnologists and sociologists: the nation as an imagined community and an imagined tradition which is connected with the modernisation epoch. Nationalism is specifically an urban phenomenon. In the Slovak historiography, the national movement had been explored mostly in the rural area, in the peasant milieu, because the majority of the Slovak ethnic population was composed of peasants. Eva Kowalská aimed to change this perspective and concentrated on explaining urban aspects of Slovak nationalism. In case of Slovakia, these aspects are more interesting since the Slovaks in the 19th century had no important central city, and only small towns in the countryside (like Turčiansky Sv. Martin), had tried to compensate this lack. In his contribution, Peter Macho summarises how the symbol of the Tatra mountains as well as other Slovak geographic-territorial symbols were present in the Slovak nationalist discourse. Peter Šoltés elaborates on the theme and the activities of the Slovak Evangelical intelligentsia in the first half of the 19th century.

The second chapter “The National movement in foreign and domestic politics” deals with the important connection of nationalism and politics. Slovak foreign political thought was traditionally orientated toward the Russian Empire. In his contribution, Dušan Kováč shows the other side of the Slovak foreign orientation: their attitude to the Western powers England and France. Dušan Škvarna attempts at a reconsideration of the role and inspiring function of the Slovak National Council, established during the 1848 revolution. The Swiss political scientist Josette Baer, a specialist in the field of Slavonic and lately mainly of Slovak political thought, presents her analysis of the early political activities of Vavro Šrobár (an important personality of Slovak politics in the 20th century), especially his leading role in the so-called “Hlasist movement”.

The third chapter is dedicated to the juridical system and economic issues. Tomáš Gábriš presents a very useful survey of the juridical system in Hungary and its changes in the era of modernization during the 19th century. His paper shows that in Hungary the tendency to modernize was clashing with very difficult obstacles, mainly ideological and political ones. The attempt to create the centralised “nation state” in Hungary restrained the most important liberal-democratic reforms of the juridical system. In her contribution, Eva Ondrušová deals with the traditional studies of economic cameralism and its influence on the economic theory and practise in the 19th century. Ludovít Hallon and Miroslav Sabol follow the history of the Pittel and Brausewetter architectural company, which was much closely connected with and active in the very broad Pressburg (Bratislava) area.

Very new themes are presented in the fourth chapter named “Society, social life and environment”. Gabriela Dudeková outlines the system of poor relief in the Habsburg monarchy; her focus is on the mechanisms how the authorities denied social care to specific groups in Hungary. Slovak emigration to America is a very traditional issue in Slovak historiography. Igor Harušťák tries to consider this problem in the broader Central- and East-European context. Prior to 1989, research about the nobility as a social strata was neglected in Slovak historiography. Even after 1989, this theme was intensively researched mainly in the period of middle ages and the early modern times. However, from the social point of view, important and interesting issues are e. g. the nobility’s life style as well as the attempts of these “high society” members to preserve their status in the modern 19th century. Daniel Hupko deals with these issues focussing on the example of Lucia Wilczek. Roman Holec presents a completely new approach in his contribution about the changes in the relationship ‘man – animal’ as manifestation of a new attitude to nature during the 19th century.

The last chapter of this volume is dedicated to “The Churches in the social – modernizing processes”. Ingrid Kušniráková analyses the controversial interferences of Joseph II. into the life of the Roman Catholic Church, especially the closing-down of some cloisters. Tomáš Králik focuses on the relations of the Vienna court to the St. Elisabeth convent in Pressburg (Bratislava).

The chapters of this collective monograph will serve as a basis for the draft of a new synthesis on Slovak history in the “long 19th century”.