

Slovak Society and World War I

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Slovakia on the threshold of World War I was a part of the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Hungarian part in particular. From Austro-Hungarian compromise 1867 in which a German-Austrian and Hungarian ruling classes shared power in the monarchy, Slovaks and other nationalities in the Hungarian Kingdom were exposed to systematic Magyarization pressure, which declared objective was redevelopment of this multinational state where ethnic Hungarians were just over 40% of the population, into one-nation, linguistically homogeneous Magyar (it means ethnic Hungarian)* nation state. In this environment Slovak schools gradually disappeared, Slovak cultural institutions were banned, political action in favor of the Slovak nation was viewed as Pan-Slavism, a subversive anti-state activity, while association with the enemies of the monarchy was often persecuted by court. In the first years after the compromise, all Slovak secondary schools (1874) and nationwide cultural institution Matica Slovenská (1875) were closed, the pressure on the active Slovak policymakers graduated into switching from protests against existing conditions to political passivity. Ethnic oppression was associated with social impoverishment of broad peasant classes, resulting in massive emigration to the USA where, in-between 1880 – 1910, over 600.000 Slovaks emigrated¹, which at that time was about one quarter of the whole nation population.

At the end of the 19th century, however, the Slovaks left the political passivity and passed into political activity both at home and overseas. They again competed for political positions in the Hungarian Kingdom, participated in the elections and although in modest scale - due to the undemocratic electoral law, which required a public vote and included only about 6% of the total population - were received as members into the Hungarian Parliament. In the U.S., numerous national organizations have developed, under the auspices of the Slovak League of America since 1907, which also strongly influenced the political activities in the home country as well as the world public. Despite efforts of the Hungarian government

* In all languages of the former Hungarian Kingdom except Magyar one a difference exists between the word Hungarian and Magyar. The Hungarians were all inhabitants of Hungarian Kingdom (Magyars, Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Germans, Ruthenians, Slovaks...) and the Magyars were/are the ethnic Hungarians only.

¹ Mrva, Ivan: Slovensko a Slováci v 2. polovici 19. storočia. Perfekt. Bratislava 2010, p. 158.

circles, despite the absence of any Slovak secondary schools and universities, even despite the de facto disposal of Slovak public education², the violent Magyarization failed to achieve its objectives. The basic mass of Slovak people withstood and the only influenced groups were the ones employed by the state. Even in those cases, the affair was more formal, enforced by the circumstances, rather than conviction of the people. Therefore, on the threshold of 1914, Slovak *Národné noviny* could boldly write: "As the year 1867, so fateful to us, was only possible for the Magyars under foreign situation, but now even in the other half of the monarchy, even beyond the borders of all circumstances, new battles around the world will help us irresistibly. The time for the Magyar expansion has passed. Our thing is now so securely built that we could possibly say: We can wait."³ Slovak politics were closely following the development of international relations, particularly with regard to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and indigenous liberation of the not only Slavic nations. The analysis of the situation concluded that the issue of self-determination of nations, as it was applied there, would hit the Danube dual monarchy sooner or later. And since the basic mass of the Slovak nation remained intact, it was almost certain that the future will hold the self-determination for the Slovak nation.

I thought it necessary to start with the brief mention of these existential questions of Slovak nation, so the auditorium would have a better understanding of the issue of my paper, which wants to introduce the relationship of the Slovak nation to the start and development of the First World War. In doing so, I will not present an in-depth immersion into the issue, but note the particular manifestations of committed groups whose views, presented by the press, were influencing wider social groups and their actions. Slovak society in that period wasn't a solid whole. It was significantly differentiated and each group had its specific position to the on-going events. This position was expressed by their active members mainly in press, thus re-shaping and preserving the national consciousness. The basic dividing criterion of the Slovak society was the individual activists' stance towards the government policies of Budapest, which had the goal of creating the united linguistically homogenous Magyar nation from all the population of the multi-ethnic Hungarian Kingdom. On one hand there were those who identified themselves with this policy and supported it in every way. In the Slovak

² From previous approx. 3000 Slovak elementary schools from the year 1860 remained in the year 1914 hardly 365 elementary school in which the command language was Slovak. Closer look in Lettrich, Jozef: *History of Modern Slovakia*. Atlantic Press London 1956, p. 37.

³ *Národné noviny*, 8. 1. 1914.

people they had earned the unflattering name "Magyarones", not real Magyars, but renegades. On the other hand, there were those who opposed this policy in every way, criticizing it and asking a shift in favor of a just solution of the national question, where every nationality in the state could take the same rights as the others. They called themselves "patriots", but in the pro-government parties they were branded as "ethnic activists", but often recriminated as "Pan-Slavs", which was almost identical to the label of "an agent of Czarist Russia". Of course, not even "the patriots" were a solid-group, but they were divided in different ideological directions (conservative, liberal, Christian-People's and socialist ones). However in cases of national equality, in matters of foreign policy and war and peace, they held more or less the same opinion, which differed greatly from pro-government activists.

Slovak political representation of the conservative orientation, whose ideological roots laid in the Revolution in the years 1848 - 1849, was strongly inspired by the movements in the Balkans during the liberation war years 1876 – 1878 and even though noting their own weakness, they created an illusion that even Slovakia could be freed from the domination of Budapest in similar manner, hiding within a greater confrontations of European powers, notably with the help of Russia.⁴ The opponents of the liberal part of the Slovak society, whose influence rose particularly in the first decade of the 20th century, criticized the conception of Conservatives as messianic, discouraging any particular actions and too reliant on Russian politics against which the Liberals naturally had reservations. They favored the orientation towards cooperation with Czechs, on the value of Western civilization and certain hopes were placed with the successor to the Austro - Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand d' Este, who had reserved attitude towards dualism and in particular the official policy of Budapest. A young agile lawyer and journalist Milan Hodža worked in his narrow circle that dealt with the future of the Habsburg Monarchy after the succession to the throne.⁵ Political group with the widest social base among the Slovak population was Christian-People's camp, which was also looking to collaborate with Czech politics, but their representatives mostly relied on a particular political work among the people.⁶ This stream in which the future leader of autonomist movement during the interwar Czecho-Slovak Republic Andrej Hlinka gained

⁴ Kováč, Dušan: Zahraničnopolitické koncepcie a alternatívy riešenia slovenskej otázky na prelome storočí. In Podrimavský Milan – Kováč Dušan (edit.): Slovensko na začiatku 20. storočia (Spoločnosť, štát, národ v súradniciach doby). Historický ústav SAV. Bratislava 1999, p. 18.

⁵ Podrimavský, Milan: Slováci a uhorský štát na prelome 19. a 20. storočia. Tamže, p. 31.

⁶ Letz, Róbert: Hlinková slovenská ľudová strana (pokus o syntetický pohľad). In Letz, Róbert – Mulík, Peter – Bartlová, Alena: Slovenská ľudová strana v dejinách 1905 – 1945. Matica slovenská. Martin 2006, s. 20.

ground step by step didn't reject finding a compromise with government circles in Budapest, but found no partners there.⁷ Similarly, the Slovak socialists were focused on the Czechs, mostly because the Czech Social Democrats directly supported their movement.⁸

The beginning of year 1914 was welcomed in perplexity by the Slovak activists. Slovak government newspapers stated that thanks to "the rule of high wisdom and statesmanship providence of our highly beloved elderly anointed king France Joseph I."⁹, a peace for the monarchy was kept even with the troubled times of the Balkan wars, but feelings that the Balkan "boiler" may explode at any time drag the rest of Europe with it, was felt from each then-new edition of the newspapers. Whether it were governmental or Slovak nationally oriented newspapers, whether conservative or liberal, Christian-People's or worker class newspapers, all focused their utmost attention to foreign reports on Balkans. Balkan wars exposed a fundamental unsustainability of regimes with disrespect for national rights. It was clear from the ideas written in nationally oriented Slovak newspapers during the wars, that they are fighting on the side of the Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Greeks and Montenegrins and also positively assessing Russia's role in resolving the crisis.¹⁰ The Second Balkan War and the disastrous defeat of Bulgaria in it were particularly shocking for them. Slovak government newspaper (*Slovenské noviny*) was in the clear. The ones responsible for the defeat of Bulgaria were Pan-Slavism and pro-Russian groups among the Bulgarian political elite that tried to "break feelings of autonomy and independence of Bulgarian nation subjected to Russian power"¹¹. *Národné noviny*, which were grandstanding for the Slovak conservative circles, saw the defeat of Bulgaria entirely differently. In a series of fictional reportages from Bulgaria, which were published in the January issues of the newspapers, the reason for the defeat of Bulgaria was in insufficient awareness Slavic-wide responsibility. These vastly different views of events on the international scene accompanied Slovak journalism throughout the following period.

⁷ E.g. when the government in Budapest wanted to achieve a compromise with the Transylvanian Romanians the Slovak M. P. in the Hungarian Diet Ferdinand Juriga pronouncedly supported the government in its effort but he asked the same admissions for the Slovaks too. From the side of government, however, no answer came. Look at the speeches of Juriga in the Diet. *Slovenské ľudové noviny* No. 5, 6, 7 from 1914.

⁸ Hapák, Pavel: *Vznik a činnosť Slovenskej sociálnej demokracie (1905 – 1918)*. In *Prehľad dejín KSC na Slovensku*. Pravda. Bratislava 1971, s. 63.

⁹ *Slovenské noviny*, 31. 12. 1914.

¹⁰ Kováč, Dušan: *Slovensko v 20. storočí. Na začiatku storočia 1901 – 1914*. Veda. Bratislava 2004, s. 29.

¹¹ *Slovenské noviny*, 4. 1. 1914.

Developments in the Balkans deepened the crisis of Austro-Hungarian Empire. Foreign policy of the monarchy was trying to calm down the situation there, in which the active role was played by the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Leopold Berchtold. His activities strongly irritated Slovak nationally oriented politicians, mainly because they were led under the slogan of self-determination and independence of the Balkan nations. "Slovak nation has always excelled in loyalty to the king. Nation that is peaceful, hardworking, with the oldest culture in the country - and yet we were viewed in Vienna not for as much as those few thousand.... bashibazouks in Albania. They are cared for more than us, though we are as many as tenfold"¹² - a commentator of Slovak newspaper *Národný hlásnik* wrote angrily in reaction to Vienna efforts to create a stable, independent Albania under the control of Central Powers.

But not only concrete activities on Balkan irritated the Slovak activists. Vienna at the turn of the years 1913 - 1914 sought to win over Romania and therefore put pressure on Budapest to soften its brutal nationalities policy and to create for the Hungary's peoples little bit better conditions. Especially Romanians which number of about 2.5 million souls represented a significant domestic and foreign-policy problem. Hungarian Prime Minister Istvan Tisza ventured with representatives of nationalities in complex negotiations on concessions for the nationalities that were against his inner conviction.¹³ Although primary talks were with the leaders of the Romanian national movement, by the end of autumn 1913, he also met with representatives of the Slovak National Party. Requirements of the Slovak delegation were not grand, asking only to follow the valid nationality law of 1868 and that the governmental authorities allow the establishment of one private Slovak gymnasium. The result of talks was commented by the newspaper *Národný hlásnik* quite sarcastically: "Tisza took the petition and said just as much that he will think about it. Since then Mr. Tisza is still just thinking, perhaps they say about him that has a very bright mind."¹⁴ Long negotiations between Prime Minister Istvan Tisza and Romanians showed very clearly that the chauvinistic nature of power in the Hungarian Kingdom, particularly in relation to the Slovaks, was deeply ingrained in all layers of the Hungarian political elite and that actually Slovaks have no future as a nation in this country. Even for direct inquiry of one of the Magyarization Associations (FEMKE) from Slovakia if indeed the Prime Minister intends to guarantee the Slovaks some

¹² *Národný hlásnik*, 9. 1. 1914.

¹³ *Národné noviny*, 8. 1. 1914.

¹⁴ *Národný hlásnik*, 9. 1. 1914.

linguistic concessions, which would undermine their successful work in promoting the Magyar language, Tisza said that in any case no.¹⁵ Therefore a representative of the liberal wing commenting on the negotiations could conclude that "these methods must be the ultimate fall of the empire that Tisza supporters are carrying it into the Turkish dead end, that's for sure."¹⁶ What the author meant by using the term "Turkish dead end" had to be clear to everyone - the fall and the split of the monarchy. A month later the same author did not hesitate to even up the ante, when in his article he stressed that "Balkan brothers, hundreds and hundreds years they cried under terrible oppression of the Turkish enemies, and we witness the beautiful fact that God gave them a good day and again broke the yoke... And we will work; but without falling asleep; and we must look alive and draw reassurance and support, cultural and economic, and yes indeed even with our brothers the Russians"¹⁷. When the Russian magazine *Novoe Vremya* posted an article that Austria-Hungary is to be divided like Turkey to preserve peace in Europe, commentator in the newspapers *Slovenský týždenník* was not so surprised by the very idea, but more about how the Slovaks should remain the only ones with the Magyars in one state.¹⁸

It can be stated that as a result of over fifty-year policy of magyarization of the government circles of the Hungarian Kingdom and official indifference of Vienna towards national oppression in the second part of the dual monarchy, Slovak national political elites were already before the outbreak of war spiritually alienated with the existing dual state organization. They lost almost all of the loyalty to it. Some hope was still put in the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, but with the assassination in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 all such hopes were buried. In *Národné noviny* after the unfortunate assassination commentator wrote about the love of heir to the peoples of the Monarchy and his will to change their life conditions but "hope extinguished"¹⁹. Leadership of the Slovak National Party expressed this feeling of many engaged Slovaks very succinctly, when they commissioned to write on the wreath sent to the last farewell to the heir to the throne in Vienna: "To our lost hope - deeply heartbroken Slovaks"²⁰.

¹⁵ *Slovenský denník*, 28. 3. 1914.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Národné noviny*, 30. 4. 1914.

¹⁸ *Slovenský týždenník*, 20. 3. 1914.

¹⁹ *Národné noviny*, 2. 7. 1914.

²⁰ *Národné noviny*, 9. 7. 1914.

I already have mentioned that there was an idea in the Slovak politics from the late 1870th about the possibility of liberation of Slovaks through their oppressors in a framework of general European war on the end of which Austria-Hungary would be on the side of the defeated. This idea was strengthening during the Balkan Wars and therefore it would seem that the Slovak national activists could have a positive approach to the possible war. But the Slovak press had strongly reserved attitude from the assassination to the outbreak of war and it opposed the official Austro-Hungarian war euphoria. While the governmental and pro-governmental press were in the clear about who was behind the assassination only after a few hours and immediately showed a finger at great-Serbian conspiracy and while demonstrations spread through the monarchy under slogan “Nieder mit den Serben!”²¹ the Slovak national oriented newspapers doubted this trail: „No investigation has been finished yet who is responsible for this disgusting Sarajevo murder and Magyars would already like to attack the Southern Slavs... As it is visible the Magyar chauvinism is growing up, this chauvinism to which immortalized Franz Ferdinand was about to give halter... Good manners would tell to be calm at least on his dead body.”²² Throwing blame on the Serbs as a nation for the acts of individuals was slashed in the Slovak press too. “The Serbs in Bosnia were not able to understand how big tragedy fell on them. Why this disaster? Why all Serbs are pronounced guilty for the crime? When Luccheni reportedly killed the Empress and Queen Elisabeth nobody said that it was a crime of the Italian nation”²³. In growing war hysteria during which it was suddenly invented that great-Serbian ideology is reason for disruption of European order,²⁴ the Slovak activists focused in the press predominantly on the pacification of the situation and praying for the peace. Even in the day when the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia began, the Slovak newspapers solaced themselves that the disruption of diplomatic relations from two day ago and leaving of the Austrian minister from Belgrade did not mean a war²⁵.

Mobilization and declaration of war put the Slovak political activists into unenviable situation. The governmental circles started a strong anti-Slavic campaign which threatened any doubt about justification of the war against Serbia and Russia with punishment. Any

²¹ Pressburger Zeitung, 30. 6. 1914.

²² Národné noviny, 2. 7. 1914.

²³ Národné noviny, 11. 7. 1914.

²⁴ Pressburger Zeitung, 1. 7. 1914 – European press against great-Serbian crime; Ibid, 11. 7. 1914 – Against great-Serbian propaganda.

²⁵ Národné noviny, 28. 7. 1914.

Slovak national oriented activity was looked at with suspicion. Especially in the first phase of the war any antiwar activity was punished, especially among the members of Slavic nationalities. The prisons were filled with young men that did not give enough enthusiasm for the war goals of Vienna and Budapest and these doubts were classified seditious and traitorous crimes²⁶. This was the reason why Slovak political representatives while trying to avoid persecution and also to be forced to publish declarations which were not agreeable decided to declare political passivity in the beginning of August 1914. It was motivated with blood relationship with the Slavic peoples and impossibility to change anything on this fact and with duty to fulfill the obligation to the “fatherland”²⁷. Since then the *Národné noviny* published “dry” reports about military situation only which were issued by Austro-Hungarian authorities without any comments. *Slovenský denník* turned away from this stream and started to write about Slovak and Czech cooperation what was usual business of the newspapers before the war banned them in the year 1915.²⁸

In general is possible to say, that Slovaks conscripts entered the Austro-Hungarian Forces restrainedly. The rank and file of Slovak nationality was concentrated especially in Košice and Bratislava corps of Austro-Hungarian Army which were embattled as early as in the first days to the fights on front in Galicia. In the frame of these corps the Slovaks had the largest representation in 71st (Trenčín), 67th (Prešov), 72nd (Bratislava) infantry regiments. Markedly they were represented in 12th (Komárno), 25th (Lučenec) and 66th (Užhorod) infantry regiments. In the separate Hungarian Army (Honvédség) the Slovaks served in 14th (Nitra), 15th (Trenčín), and 13th (Bratislava) infantry regiments, less in 16th (Banská Bytrica), 11th (Mukačevo) infantry regiments. In both mentioned corpses the Slovaks were significantly represented by artillery.²⁹

The Slovak regiments belonged in the first years of the war to the worthier units of the Austro-Hungarian Army. These regiments excelled in the winter fighting in Carpathians and Galicia in the years 1914 – 1915. For bravery in combat by Krasnik, Rudnik, Komarow, but also by defending the fortress Przemysl the Slovak soldiers were very high appreciated not by

²⁶ Hronský, Marián: Slovensko za prvej svetovej vojny a vznik Československého štátu. In *Historický časopis*, roč. 27/1970, č. 2, s. 229.

²⁷ *Národné noviny*, 9. 8. 1914.

²⁸ Hronský, Marián: K slovenskej politike..., c.w., s 475.

²⁹ Hronský, Marián – Krivá, Anna – Čaplovič, Miloslav: *Vojenské dejiny Slovenska IV. 1914 – 1918*. MO SR, Bratislava 1996, s. 27.

the General Staff only, but by politicians too.³⁰ Even a part of the Slovak political representatives (Christian-People's one) wanted to honor the bravery of Slovak soldiers on the fronts in the year 1915 by political concessions in the Slovak question from the government in Budapest.³¹ The possible negotiations failed on resistance of the Slovak liberal politicians who in that time had capitulated on the future of Slovaks in the Hungarian Kingdom and worked on the creation of a common state with Czechs.³² The battle value of the Slovak regiment gradually decreased. When for ex. bug out of the Slovak soldiers on the Russian side in the first years of the war was rare exception and among the deserters were some national activists from the time before war this phenomenon step by step grew up. On the East Front the Slovak soldiers were becoming unreliable and so they were transferred on the Italian Front in the year 1917 where they participated in all offensives on the river Isonzo³³. Finally, they became the most unreliable component of Austro-Hungarian Army in which they created approx. 4% of file and rank (in all 400 – 440 000 men) but they participated in 20% of military mutinies in the final phase of the war³⁴. The biggest such an event was a mutiny in the replacement battalion of 71st infantry regiment in Kragujevac on the beginning of June 1914. After suppression of mutiny the Austro-Hungarian military authorities let execute 44 Slovak Soldiers.³⁵

For the political passive Slovak politicians at home the Slovak countrymen abroad, especially in USA, began to speak. They intuitively felt that the war would decide about the future of all European peoples, and Slovaks should be prepared for this decision. They knew that a positive decision about Slovak can be reached only in situation, when the Central Powers would lose the war. This was the reason, why all Slovak compatriotic organizations beyond reach of Austro-Hungarian repressive authorities declared a support for the Entente Powers. Simultaneously, they were aware of Slovak weakness to reach their political goals without an external support. A long-lasting national oppression led to an extreme destruction of Slovak social structures. This was the reason why the Slovaks needed a support from other nations during an initial period after liberation. Discussion about the potential ally was led

³⁰ Ibid, s. 29 – 32.

³¹ Ibid, s 33.

³² Hronský, Marián: K slovenskej politike v období prvej svetovej vojny (1914 – 1918). Historický časopis, roč. 17/1969, č. 4, s. 477 – 478.

³³ Hronský, Marián – Krivá, Anna – Čaplovič, Miloslav: Vojenské dejiny..., c.d., s. 48 – 50.

³⁴ Hronský, Marián: Slovensko za prvej..., c.w., s. 262.

³⁵ Bližšie pozri: Hronský, Marián: Vzbura slovenských vojakov v Kragujevaci. Martin 1988.

particularly by the Slovak compatriots in the United States, the community which was most numerous and best organized. Finally, this community agreed on the position of Matuš Jankola, who was the leading personality of *the Slovak League in America*, from December 1914. Jankola gradually excluded the possible coexistence with Russians, Poles, and Magyars in one state, and he recommended the Czechs as the best allies. “With the regard of Czechs. Their supremacy can be temporary, till we will raise one generation in our way of life.”³⁶ After this decision, American Slovaks started a broad campaign for creation of joint state with Czechs based on a principle of national federation. This campaign was finalized by the Cleveland Agreement signature in October 22, 1915.³⁷

The outbreak of the war activated a young Slovak astronomer Milan Rastislav Štefánik, who was mobilized into the French army as a new French citizen. As a military pilot, he was deployed to the Serbian front in the late 1915. He experienced a hardship of war and met a lot of prisoners of war. At this place, he developed an idea to create from the Slovak prisoners of war of the Austro-Hungarian army the Slovak Legion, the unit, which would fight on the side of the Entente³⁸. In this period he began to cooperate with the Czech emigration in the West around Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. With them, he participated in 1916 in the creation of *Czecho-Slovak National Council* as the principal organ of international Czecho-Slovak resistance against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the creation of a common state of Slovaks and Czechs. He didn't abandon his original idea of establishing an independent Czech - Slovak troops abroad (Legion) as a symbol of sovereignty, which he successfully implemented³⁹. Till the end of the war Czech - Slovak troops abroad consisted of about 90,000 men and participated in military operations on the Russian, French, and Italian fronts. After the Russian revolution of 1917, they belonged to a few operational Entente troops in the Eastern Front. Their combat operations significantly

³⁶ Dokumenty slovenskej identity a štátnosti I. Národné literárne centrum. Bratislava 1998, s. 440.

³⁷ Ibid, s. 445 – 447.

³⁸ Guelton, Frédéric – Braud, Emmanuel – Kšiňan, Michal: Generál Milan Rastislav Štefánik v archívnych dokumentoch Historickej služby francúzskeho ministerstva obrany. Service historique de la Defenca 2008 – Mo SR 2009, s. 41.

³⁹ Ferenčuhová, Bohumila: M. R. Štefánik a česko-slovenské hnutie v zahraničí v zrkadle francúzskych diplomatických dokumentov. In Čaplovič, Miloslav – Ferenčuhová, Bohumila – Stanová, Mária: Milan Rastislav Štefánik v zrkadle prameňov a najnovších poznatkov historiografie. Bratislava 2010, s. 140 a ďalej.

contributed to the international recognition of Czecho-Slovak State by the Entente Powers already before the end of the First World War.

The acceptance of the ceasefire terms by the Austro-Hungarian government on October 26, 1918 launched several processes which the chauvinist circles in Vienna and Budapest could not imagine even in their darkest dreams, when they enthusiastically entered into war in 1914. On October 28, 1918, the Czech National Committee declared a Czecho-Slovak State in Prague⁴⁰. Two days later, the Slovak National Council, composed of representatives of all Slovak political streams, signed on behalf of the Slovak nation the Declaration of the Slovak Nation, in which it expressed consent with this state⁴¹. It could say that what many Slovak politicians had hoped for since the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was fulfilled. After the great European war the conditions were created for Slovaks to get rid of foreign oppression and to start building their independent national life. But this development was not in line with positions of Slovak conservatives who hoped for the help of Russia. The Russia itself fell into a deep state of disruption after the revolutionary events of 1917, and it retired from active politics in continental Europe for a long time. The common state with Czechs was build based on a liberal variant, even in the light of a potential danger of Czechs effort to dominate in the State. Slovaks had to wait another 75 years until their desire for self-determination included in all program documents and agreements with the Czech political representation in the years of World War I, was finally completed in the form of an independent state. But price for such kind of liberation from oppression was extremely extensive one. As result of the war, around 69.700 men were killed, 68.680 men remained permanently disabled, 42.714 women lost husbands, and 86.462 children lost fathers⁴². When we realize that Slovakia at the time had about 3 million inhabitants, losses were enormous.

⁴⁰ Dokumenty moderní doby. Svoboda. Praha 1978, s. 74 – 75.

⁴¹ Dokumenty slovenskej identity a štátnosti I... c.w., s. 513 – 514.

⁴² Hronský, Marián: Slovensko za prvej..., c.w., s – 230.