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Slovaks in the Czech Lands after 1945 – between the State Nation, Minority and Assimilation

The study examines migration of Slovaks to the Czech Lands since 1945 till present days. It focuses on migration waves in post-war decades according to results of population censuses, it also describes the numbers and territorial placement of Slovaks in Czechia and it characterizes their social, demographic and educational structure, as well as their activities and change of legal status after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Slovaks are not original, autochthonous inhabitants of the Czech Lands, but they came there long time before the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Their migration had mainly social and economic motives. Since the early 1990s qualitative changes in character of migration started to emerge, when social reasons were often replaced by familial ones. After the division of Czechoslovakia political motives appeared as well. In 1945–1992 Slovaks lived in the Czech Lands as members of the second state-forming nation of the Czechoslovak Republic. After the creation of the Czech Republic on January 1, 1993, their legal status changed and they became the most numerous minority starting to create a new identity. Thanks to activities of nationally-committed Slovak intelligentsia Slovaks in the Czech Republic started to reflect the benefits of their status of an ethnic minority in democratic society with guaranteed laws for development of their national life.

Key words: Slovaks, migrations, Czech Lands, national minority

Словаци у чешким земљама после 1945. године – између државотворне нације, мањине и асимилације

У раду се разматрају миграције Словака у чешке земље у периоду од 1945. године до данашњих дана. Рад је усмерен на миграционе таласе у послератним деценијама, а према резултатима пописа становништва; он такође описује број и територијалну заступљеност Словака у Чешкој, њихову социјалну, демографску и образовну структуру, као и активности и промене правног статуса после поделе Чехословачке 1993. године. Словаци у чешким земљама не представљају аутохтоно становништво, али су се овде доселили давно пре формирања прве Чехословачке Републике 1918. године. Њихова миграција је била углавном социјално и економски мотивисана. Од почетка деведесетих година XX века долази до квалитативних промена у карактеру миграција, када социјалне разлоге почињу учестало да замењују породични. Након поделе Чехословачке, такође се појављују и политички мотиви. У периоду од 1945. до 1992. године Словаци су у чешким земљама били припадници друге државотворне нације у Чехословачкој Републици. Након формирања Републике Чешке 1. јануара

1993. године, дошло је до промене њиховог правног статуса и они су постали најбројнија мањина, која је почела да гради нови идентитет. Захваљујући активностима словачке интелигенције, која је радила на изградњи националног идентитета, Словаци у Републици Чешкој почели су да прихватају предности свог статуса етничке мањине у демократском друштву, које им омогућава законске гаранције за национални развој.

Кључне речи: Словаци, миграције, чешке земље, национална мањина

The paper focuses on the migration of Slovaks to the Czech lands from 1945 to the present.¹ It shows how the status and identity of Slovak immigrants in the Czech lands has changed, depending on the change of state arrangement. In a retrospective view, it first describes course Slovak migrations from the period of the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic, then it covers the migration waves of the Slovaks to the Czech lands in the individual post-war decades, based on the results of the census. It depicts the number and territorial distribution of the Slovaks living in the Czech Republic, characterizes their social demographic and educational structure, cultural and social activities as well as the change in their legal status after 1993 and their gradual reconciliation with the new national identity.

1. The course of migration of the Slovaks to the Czech lands, their number and territorial distribution

Slovaks are not original inhabitants of the Czech lands, but migrated there long before the establishment of the first common state. Already in the Middle Ages, there were not only intensive cultural and scientific relations between Slovak and Czech scholars, but Slovak workers, tinkers, carters or peasants also came to work in the Czech lands. In these times, seasonal migration prevailed. It was motivated mainly by work in agriculture and door-to-door sale. The situation in the Moravian-Slovak border region was specific – Slovak laborers came to the industrial centers of Břeclav, Hodonín and Uherské Hradiště to work daily or weekly (Rychlík & Rychlíková 1988). A significant group of Slovaks in the Czech lands until 1918 was represented by Slovak students. The center of their activities was Prague, where, in 1882, was established a group of Slovak academics called Detvan. The aim of the group was to learn Slovak students and to inform the Czech public about the life of Slovaks in Hungary (Kováč 1989). Under the influence of Prague's political and cultural environment, a group of young Slovak intellectuals was formed. It played an important role in the development of Czech-Slovak cooperation and in the emergence of the idea of Czechoslovak statehood. Several Slovak students from Prague (Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Fedor Houdek, Vavro Šrobár) stood at the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic.

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By connecting the Czech lands and Slovakia into one political unit in 1918 and introducing a unified Czechoslovak nationality, favourable conditions for the two-way movement of the citizens between these territorial units were created, as well as for the free settlement of the Slovaks in the Czech lands and the Czechs in Slovakia. Although migration movement from Bohemia to Slovakia prevailed, Slovak migration to the Czech lands also occurred. The predominantly agrarian character of the Slovak economy, overcrowded land and very low yields caused migration of the Slovaks to nearby as well as more distant countries. While primarily the Czech intelligentsia, thousands of Czech officials, experts, teachers, gendarmes, railwaymen and officers, without whom it would not be possible to consolidate the public, political and economic life came to Slovakia (Měchýř 1991; Jakešová 1984), it was particularly Slovak workers who mostly migrated to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. They were chiefly agricultural workers (both men and women) who came for seasonal farm work, spring beet hoeing, autumn harvesting, grain, beet or hops harvesting. Domestic servants, Slovak craftsmen, wage labourers in sugar factories, sawmills, distilleries as well as industrial workers working in the heavy industry in industrial agglomerations of the Czech lands also came to work there. These workers, in addition to the wage labourers, also included skilled workers who worked, for example, in the Vítkovice Ironworks, in the Ostrava – Karvinná (since 1945 Karviná) Mining District and also in the Bata factories in Zlín and in the engineering factories in Brno.

It should be mentioned that, in the Czech lands, there was also a small group of Slovak officials in central state authorities and Slovak university students attending Czech universities, especially in Prague. In 1919, Comenius University was founded in Bratislava. However, some, mainly technical fields, were still absent in Slovakia. There were no substantial changes in the social structure of Slovak migrants, but their number increased considerably. Slovaks settled in the Czech lands for a longer time, got married with Czechs and gradually adopted Czech culture.

To find out the actual numbers of the Slovaks living in the Czech lands between 1918 and 1938 is not quite possible due to the character of the then population statistics; demographers' estimates range from 15 to 60 thousand.² The numbers of the Slovaks also varied, both according to the economic conditions and according to the political situation. For instance the great depression at the turn of the 20s and 30s greatly reduced the migration of Slovaks to Bohemia. Many of them were returning to Slovakia. As low-income citizens, Slovaks did not have home law in the Czech lands and so they were released from work as the first.

Some demographers tried to reconstruct the numbers of the Slovaks in the Czech lands based on the data from the Slovak Labour Office and on the basis of the results of the census containing information on persons of the Slovak branch of

² Only the “Czechoslovak nationality” was cited in the 1918–1939 censuses. To find out the number of Slovaks is therefore possible only on the basis of stated language (Rychlík 1990, 683).

the Czechoslovak nation living in the Czech lands and the data on persons born in Slovakia and living in the western part of the country (Horváth 1938). However, statistics from that period only provide a state on a certain date and do not record the population mobility process in its entirety and diversity. For example, we learn from the data from the Slovak Labour Office that 269,460 seasonal agricultural workers worked in the Czech lands in the given period. According to the census, 15,630 Slovaks were permanently settled in the Czech lands in 1921, and, in 1930, it was already 44,451 Slovaks of the Czechoslovak nationality (Srb 1998, 132–133). Nevertheless, the actual migration of the Slovaks to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was greater as evidenced by the data on persons born in Slovakia and living in the Czech lands at the time of the census – in 1930 there were up to 69,163 of these persons (See Table 1 in the appendix, Svetoň 1969, 224–225).

In terms of territorial distribution in the period of the First Republic, Slovak migration headed towards Prague and its surroundings, where there were more than 7,000 Slovaks towards Brno and towards the North Moravian industrial region, where almost 4,000 Slovaks lived in the Frýdek, Fryštát, Moravská Ostrava and Český Těšín districts. As for other regions, the Plzeň Region attracted Slovak migration, and Slovaks working in agriculture were mainly present in the districts of Central and South Bohemia (Horváth 1938, 225).

Despite the difficult political conditions after the break-up of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Slovaks lived and worked in the Czech lands in the following period of 1938 to 1945, during the so called “Second Republic” (1938–1939), during the existence of the Slovak State and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. According to the German-Slovak Treaty of 1939, 5,000 Slovak workers were to be assigned to work for agricultural and partly also for industrial enterprises in the Protectorate. In fact, their number was higher and ranged from 7,000 to 20,000. The vast majority of them were unskilled and lived scattered throughout the Czech lands. More skilled workers were located mainly in the Ostrava region, in the Bata factories in Zlín and in Brno. The population of Slovak districts at the Moravian border was commuting to work in Moravia daily. In addition to Slovak workers, representatives of Slovak intelligentsia were present in the Czech lands in this period too. It was a small group of Slovak lawyers and politicians who refused to return to Slovakia and also a larger group of Slovak students studying at Czech universities. When they were closed in 1939, most of the students decided to return to Slovakia (Konečný & Mainuš 1969, 565–590; Rychlík 1990, 699–700).

The number of the Slovaks in the Czech lands increased significantly after the end of World War II. The first major migration wave of the Slovak population (more than 100,000 people) was related to the settlement of the Czech and Moravian-Silesian border areas depopulated after the Sudeten Germans were expelled. Most Slovaks settled in the north-western part of Bohemia (30,252), in the northern and north-eastern part of Bohemia (22,978), and in the eastern part of Bohemia, northern Moravia and Silesia (21,950). The least Slovak immigrants were reported from the areas of southern Bohemia (3,907) and southern Moravia (3,707) (Materiály k problematice novo osídlenického pohraničí 1984). At that time, not only

Slovaks from Slovakia, but also Slovak re-emigrants from Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and France came to the Czech lands (Nosková 2014).

Intensive migration of the Slovaks to the Czech lands continued in the 1950s and 1960s. In connection with the so-called steel conception of the economy and the development of the heavy industry sectors, demands for labour increased in the Czech lands, since the Czech population resources were not able to provide it. The Slovaks coming to work in the preferred sectors of the economy in the Ostrava region, northern Bohemia and the Most region played an important role. In the 1950s, almost 90,000 inhabitants were in motion between the Czech lands and Slovakia and the average annual migration accrual in the Czech lands was more than 9,000. The Prešov Region was the biggest contributor to the migration to the Czech lands, followed by the Žilina, Nitra, Košice, Banská Bystrica and Bratislava regions. According to the 1961 census, 275,997 Slovaks lived in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (ŠrajeroVá 1995, 306–332).

Especially young, mostly single men of working age, or young families with the intention of improving their social situation arrived in the Czech lands. Slovaks from other regions also migrated to industrial regions; a specific group was formed by Slovak inhabitants coming to work daily or weekly from areas immediately adjacent to the Czech lands, mainly from Orava and Kysuce. Short-term workers stayed initially in hostels. After the transition to permanent employment, they got a flat relatively quickly and many of them settled in the area permanently. As industry was the predominant sector of their activity, the Slovak inhabitants were more concentrated in urban-type municipalities, where, also, better living conditions were offered.

Mainly Ostrava, after Prague, was the area with a high concentration of the Slovaks. At the end of 1945, the first large groups of Slovak workers appeared there. The attractiveness of work in large industrial plants, better income opportunities than at home, acceptable working conditions and the possibility of obtaining a flat were the main factors often determining the massive, and sometimes even illegal, arrival of workers from Slovakia to Ostrava (ŠrajeroVá 1994, 238–242). Not only were skilled workers and craftsmen coming, but also landless workers, agricultural workers, or metalworkers and small-scale farmers, who became industrial and construction auxiliaries. They came from different parts of Slovakia, most often from those areas that were most affected by war events – from the east, south-west and north Slovakia. A large number of Slovak re-emigrants from abroad have also been mentioned. The migration of Slovak workers to the Ostrava region was really massive after the approval of a long-term concept for the construction of new housing estates and towns, and the year 1953 could be considered as a turning point. The culmination of Slovak immigration to the Ostrava region lasted until the end of the 1960s, and it had the biggest effect on population in the new housing areas of Havířov, Ostrava-Poruba and Karviná (Kovář & Prokop 1991).

Migration impulses from Slovakia itself also played a role in this “industrialization migration” of the Slovaks to the Czech lands. The departure of workers to the Czech Republic was meant to reduce the overcrowding of the Slovak country-

side and the labour migration of the Slovaks to the western part of the country was also supposed to contribute positively to the industrialization of Slovakia itself. Indeed, a large group of Slovak workers consisted of those who came to Czech companies for training, to obtain qualifications and the necessary habits to work in large industrial facilities and, after having been trained, returned to Slovakia to start, together with Czech experts, production in the newly built Slovak industrial enterprises. It was for example a group of Slovaks who trained in *Třinecké železářny* (Třinec Ironworks) for the needs of the East Slovakian Ironworks in Košice, that started production in 1965 (Bobková, 2016).

In the 1950s, the migration of the Slovaks to Bohemia was also related to the military strategy – most of the military garrisons were concentrated at the western Czechoslovak border, which meant mass presence of Slovak soldiers and officers in the Czech lands, where many of them settled permanently.

While the industry construction process in Slovakia progressed during the 1960s, the extent of migration of the Slovaks to the Czech lands was decreasing, but their migration balance with Slovakia was still active (Prokop et al., 1998, 96–131). The Slovaks, who came to the Czech lands, migrated within one state, lived here as members of the other state-forming nation.

From the end of the 1960s, the new federal arrangement of the Czechoslovak state had a significant influence on the migration activity and the formation of the Slovak community in the Czech lands. In connection with this, a large number of social and employment opportunities were created for qualified and managing staff in governmental, parliamentary and administrative bodies, in federal strategic enterprises, media, foreign service, security forces, etc. Many Slovaks helped in the construction of the capital (the underground, cultural facilities, motorways, hotels, etc.). In 1970, there were 16,256 Slovaks living in Prague and, in 1980, their number increased to 20,931. Many Slovak artists became an important part of the Czech cultural life. Members of the Slovak intelligentsia, who played an important role in organizing the cultural and social life of the Slovaks in the Czech Republic, prevailed among the Slovaks living in the capital.

The migration of the Slovaks to the Czech lands continued also in the 1970s and 1980s, though with less intensity. In 1980, according to the census results, 359,370 Slovaks lived in the Czech lands, which was the highest number during the entire post-war period. There were no considerable changes in their territorial distribution; the Slovaks were still dispersed throughout the entire territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, with the highest concentration in north-western Bohemia and northern Moravia. Most Slovaks lived in the districts of Karviná, Ostrava, Karlovy Vary, Sokolov, Bruntál, Chomutov, Most, Cheb and in the capital city of Prague (ŠrajEROVÁ 1995, 306–332).

In the following period, the numbers of Slovaks living in the Czech lands gradually decreased. In 1991, a total of 314,877 inhabitants professed themselves to the Slovak nationality, in 2001 it was 193,190 inhabitants and, in the last census in 2011, there were 149,140 inhabitants professed themselves to the Slovak nationality (see Table 2 in the appendix), thus the decline is no longer as sharp as in the previ-

ous decade, when a part of the Slovaks returned to Slovakia after the division of the common state in 1993, another part professed themselves to another nationality, some did not state any nationality in the census sheet, opted to state two nationalities. Many of them unintentionally or unknowingly confused nationality with citizenship and understood the change of citizenship as a change in nationality. It should also be mentioned that, of course, there was also a natural decrease in the population of the Slovaks; fewer children were born, the demographic structure of the Slovak population deteriorated, it aged and died out inexorably. Mixed Czech-Slovak marriages had also an impact on the decline in the number of Slovak nationals, in 1991 almost 70% of Slovaks lived in mixed Czech-Slovak families and more than 60% of children from these families had the Czech nationality.

Over the years, the causes of the Slovak migration to the Czech lands changed; apart from the socio-economic reasons of the migration – better jobs, higher earnings, good housing, there were also family related reasons – wedding, accompanying the spouse to their place of residence, family reunification and later also political reasons – disagreement with the political development in the homeland. The composition of the Slovak migrants also changed. Alongside workers, qualified groups of Slovak officials, cultural workers, soldiers and politicians moved to the Czech lands over the years.

2. The demographic and social structure of the Slovaks in the Czech lands

Regarding the demographic and social structure of the Slovaks living in the Czech lands during the post-war period, the available statistical data showed that the Slovak ethnic group differed from the majority Czech population by almost all demographic features, as well as the social and educational structure. Until the early 1980s, the Slovaks in the Czech lands were characterized by a favourable age structure, had a high proportion of the working-age population, high natality, a relatively large number of children, a small group of people in the retirement age and low mortality. However, the age structure of the Slovaks gradually deteriorated. In the period from 1980 to 2011, the proportion of the child component decreased (from 14.5% to 3.1%), which was caused not only by the natural aging of the population, but also by the decline in the influx of young people from Slovakia and by above mentioned the ethnic change children from mixed Czech-Slovak families to the Czech nationality. Between 1950 and 1991, the Slovak ethnic group lost about 262,000 members by assimilation or the ethnic change (Srb 1998, 140; Národnostní struktura obyvatel 2014).

The low proportion of children in the Slovak nationality group does not offer too optimistic prospects for the future. In the 1970s, it was true that the Slovak population accelerated the population development in the Czech Republic, but it is now strangling it and, with its advancing age, the current situation will further aggravate. Regional differences also deepened in the age structure of the Slovaks, when young people settle mostly in cities and the rural population in the border regions is aging.

The causes of migration with a specific migrant pattern were reflected in the educational and social structure of the Slovaks. First of all, people with primary education and a certificate of apprenticeship dominated the education pattern; the structure of Slovak immigrants gradually changed in favour of educated and more qualified groups (the number of secondary school students increased from 13.6% in 1991 to 29.0% in 2011 and the number of university students increased from 5.8% to 17.2% in those years) (See Table 3 in the appendix).

In this context, however, it is worth mentioning the great regional differences between the various regions of the Czech Republic. From the point of view of further development of the national cultural life of the Slovak minority, the most favourable was the educational structure of the Slovak population in Prague, where cultural activities were concentrated in favour of the ethnic group.

The educational structure of Slovaks in the Czech Republic was also related to their social sector structure. The Slovaks in the Czech Republic showed a high degree of economic activity. Blue-collar workers (55.8%), mainly concentrated in industrial areas, prevailed in the social structure, while, of course, in larger cities and especially in Prague, the situation was different. Another group consisted of employees (34.7%) and a small share of other professions. Humanitarian intelligentsia was more prominent among Slovaks in Prague, while, in industrial agglomerations, it was smaller (Šrajerová 2005, 154–157).

The process of natural integration into the majority Czech society and the process of assimilation of the Slovak ethnic group also continued. Despite all these facts, the Slovaks in the Czech Republic today are still the largest national minority living dispersed throughout its territory (See Table 4 in the appendix). The Slovaks have the largest representation in the capital city of Prague and in the border regions of the Moravian-Silesian and Ústí regions. The Slovaks are a heavily urbanized minority living predominantly in cities; in the last census in 2011, the largest numbers were reported in Prague (23,336), Ostrava (7,250), Brno (6,427), Karviná (3,427), Plzeň (3,185) and Havířov (3,029) (Český statistický úřad – Czech Statistical Office 2011).

The migration of the Slovaks to the Czech lands undoubtedly meant an increase in their social and professional positions. The cultural and economically more advanced environment of the Czech lands had a favourable impact. Unskilled manual workers, who came from Slovakia to the Czech Republic, represented an active and adaptable class with the desire to move up the social ladder and to adopt a more complicated pattern of lifestyle presented by the Czech ethnic group. This effort probably became a matter of prestige (Machonin 1969, 536–540; Šrajerová 1999a, 52–61).

When migrating to the Czech lands, the Slovaks moved within one state unit and, due to the great linguistic and cultural proximity and common historical development with the Czechs, they often did not even register a change of the ethnic environment. They were still citizens of the same state, not separated from their nation by the state border, and lived here until 1993 as members of the other state-forming nation.

Shortly after the break-up of the common state, most of the Slovaks in the Czech Republic did not realize the change in their position, did not identify themselves with a minority position, resisted this integration, understanding it as something negative. This was also confirmed by the results of the extensive sociological research conducted by our department of the Silesian Museum in Opava, which was carried out in a nationally mixed area in the Těšín region in autumn 1994 (Sokolová, Hernová & Šrajerová 1997).

3. The cultural and social life of the Slovaks in the Czech lands

In those areas of the Czech lands where the Slovaks settled in a greater concentration and were interested in maintaining and developing the Slovak national awareness, in 1946–47 their cultural and social life began to be organized. The Slovaks founded cultural clubs and amateur theatre associations in the Czech border regions. It was, for example, *Spoločnosť priateľov Slovenska* [The Society of Friends of Slovakia] in Moravská Ostrava with the aim of cultivating and promoting the Czech-Slovak reciprocity, *Baník* [The Miner], a circle of Slovak mining academics in Ostrava, which brought together Slovak students to “preserve and strengthen the national and cultural relations to their homeland of Slovakia, to represent Slovakia in an appropriate and respectable manner and to promote the good name of the Slovaks in the fraternal Czech lands”. There was also *Slovenský ochotnícky krúžok* [The Slovak amateur theatre company] in Aš, an amateur theatre association called *Slovan* in Nový Bor, *Ochotnícky divadelný krúžok* [Amateur theatre association] in Hranice u Aše and in other Czech towns and cities (Šrajerová 1998).

The activities of the well-known association of Slovak university students in Prague called *Detvan*, which was originally founded in 1882, were also renewed. In autumn 1945, *Štefánikova kolaj* (dormitory), providing accommodation for Slovak students and the Slovak Student Committee, resumed its activities in Prague (Kováč 1990). Branches of *Československá spoločnosť* [The Czechoslovak Society], with the main goal of developing the Czech-Slovak reciprocity, were also established in a number of Czech and Moravian towns. However, the activities of the individual Slovak associations in the Czech lands were not only at different levels, but also widely scattered and uncoordinated, which the Slovaks themselves considered to be very negative. Therefore, many of them asked Slovak authorities and cultural institutions for material and mainly methodological assistance in organizing cultural life. The activities of *Matica slovenská*³ brought certain unification into the cultural activities of the Slovaks.

Based on the initiative undertaken by the headquarters of *Matica slovenská*, the Slovaks established local branches of *Matica slovenská* in the Czech lands. Between 1946 and 1948, 76 local branches of *Matica slovenská* were established, most

³ *Matica slovenská* is a nationwide Slovak social and cultural institution with the headquarter in Martin established in 1863. Its goals are to develop and consolidate Slovak patriotism, to protect the Slovak cultural heritage as well as to strengthen the national awareness of Slovaks and compatriots abroad.

in the area of western, north-western and northern Bohemia. Other local branches of *Matica slovenská* were established in Moravia and Silesia. The individual branches differed not only in their size but also in the different quality of their activities. They were the main centres of cultural self-realization of the Slovaks. They tried to maintain connection with their mother tongue and Slovak culture, organized various cultural events, such as theatrical performances, concerts, exhibitions, memorial evenings, they supported broadcasting in Slovak language from Czech radio stations, as well as Slovak language courses for the Slovaks returning from abroad. They organized performances of Slovak professional artists and spread the Slovak press among the Slovak settlers. *Slovenské hlasy* [The Slovak Voices], a weekly, which was published in 1947 and 1948, also played an important role in spreading culture among the Slovaks in the western part of the country. The magazine informed about current political and economic events at home and abroad, brought answers to the questions about the legislative position of the Slovak labourers, articles and reports about the Slovaks in the individual Czech areas, information about the work of the local branches of the *Matica slovenská* as well as short stories, humour, sports news, etc. (Prokop et al., 1998, 151–182). The activities of the local branches of *Matica slovenská* found support with the central Slovak authorities as well as with the local state administration authorities. From the beginning of the 1950s, activities of the local branches of the *Matica slovenská* slowly declined and, following the change in the organizational status of the *Matica slovenská* in 1953, the individual local branches of the *Matica slovenská* in Czech lands gradually disappeared.

Karviná, where a large group of the Slovak population lived, became an important centre of the Slovak cultural life. The first Slovak elementary school was founded there in 1956. The interest in being taught in the national language gradually increased; in the school year of 1960/61, the school was attended by 408 pupils and had 13 classes. In the school year of 1969/70, the second complete Slovak elementary school was established in Karviná. At the time of the greatest boom in the early 1970s, a total of 1,297 Slovak children attended both schools. This was a culmination point and, from then, the interest in being taught in Slovak language gradually declined. Firstly, one Slovak school ceased to exist and then, in 2000, the second Slovak school closed down due to a lack of interest by the Slovak parents (Šrajerová 2002, 217–229).

Until the beginning of the early 1960s, there were also attempts to establish Slovak branches of Czech schools in other North-Moravian towns, which, however, only existed for a short time and gradually disappeared. In Karviná, there were two years of Slovak classes at the grammar school. Between 1959 and 1961, there was a Slovak elementary school in Ostrava and, in the 1970s, the possibility of establishing a Slovak school in Prague was also examined. Efforts to establish Slovak schools were also made in Havířov and Třinec. However, they encountered a lack of interest on the part of the Slovak parents and the fact that Czech language was not taught in Slovak schools also played a negative role (Šrajerová 1996, 142–157).

The *Matica slovenská* was re-established in Karviná in 1968, and her the local branches were established in Prague, Třinec, Havířov, Kroměříž, Nymburk,

Prostějov, Brno and other Czech and Moravian towns and cities in the late 1960s. These branches of the *Matica slovenská* were actively involved in creating favourable conditions for cultural and public life of all Slovak citizens in the Czech lands as well as in expanding the possibilities for self-education and educational activities as well as entertainment and recreational activities. However, their activities ended in the early 1970s when they were transformed into club-type organizations at the National Committee's educational facilities. Thus, in 1974, the *Kultúrne združenie Slovákov* [Cultural Association of the Slovaks] was established in Karviná, with about 600 Slovaks in Karviná being its members. This association created and coordinated the cultural life of the Slovak nationality, organized rich social, leisure-art and cultural-educational activities. Its intention was to increase the level of cultural life, to enable further education in the mother tongue, to develop cooperation with the inhabitants of all the nationalities living in the town.

In the 1960s, the cultural life of the Slovak population also developed in Prague. *Klub slovenskej kultúry* [The Club of Slovak Culture], which, within its organizational, school, youth, university and cultural-educational sections, organized events of a cultural-social nature aimed at promoting Slovak culture and deepening the Czech-Slovak reciprocity, originated from the Prague Foundation branch. In 1985, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech socialist republic in Prague established *Dom slovenskej kultúry* [The House of Slovak Culture] and the Club became its interest association (V bratskej dôvere 1994).

The development of the Slovak minority in Bohemia was influenced decisively by a qualitatively new political situation, which was created in 1989 after the fall of the communist regime and after the division of the common state and the emergence of two new states the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in 1993. Until then, Slovaks in the Czech Republic were not perceived as a national minority, had no nationality status, were considered members of one of the two state-forming nations living in the territory of the other nation. Their legal status was not dealt with in any legal documents in the period of 1945 to 1992 and the Slovaks themselves did not request minority rights. Their needs in the area of national life were taken into account. They were understood as a group with a specific status and a number of minority rights were formally implemented, but they were not legally anchored. The Slovaks used Slovak in their official contacts, had their own education, maintained Slovak culture and established their own cultural and social organizations. On January 1, 1993, the Slovaks were separated from the Slovak Republic by the state border and became members of the largest national minority in the Czech Republic.

The Government of the Czech Republic guarantees members of national minorities the right to preserve and develop their national identity in accordance with the rule of law of the Czech Republic. The status of members of national minorities is governed by two constitutional acts, namely the Constitution of the Czech Republic and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, and Act no. 273/2001 Coll. on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities adopted in 2001. Members of national minorities have the right to develop their own culture, to disseminate and receive information in their mother tongue, to associate in their

own national associations and political parties, to learn in their mother tongue, to use their mother tongue in official contacts, and to participate in matters concerning national minority affairs. Of course, all rights of national minorities concern only citizens of the Czech Republic (Šrajerová 2009; Petráš 2007).

The most significant manifestation of the development of the minority identification of the Slovaks was the formation of their own Slovak national activities, which took place at the turn of 1992/93, when several Slovak national organizations were gradually established. These reflected the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Federation and formed their own program with the main goal of maintaining and developing Slovak national awareness. The Slovak minority is now represented by a diverse spectrum of civic initiatives, which has gradually transferred into three main streams represented by the *Klub slovenskej kultúry* [The Club of Slovak Culture], *Obec Slovákov* [The Slovak Community] and *Slovensko-český klub* [The Slovak-Czech Club]. In addition, there are a number of other, narrowly focused or smaller associations in the Czech Republic, such as *M. R. Štefánik Foundation*, *Historická skupina priamych účastníkov SNP* [Historical group of the participants of the Slovak National Uprising], a folklore association called *Limborá*, and an association of Slovak university students called *Detvan* (Rychlíková 2011).

Especially the media activities of Slovak organizations, publishing their own magazines, internet presentation and publishing activities, can be considered very significant.

With the financial support of the Czech government, Slovak organizations publish their journals: *Listy*, *Korene*, *Dotyky*, which are intended for the wider, not only Slovak, public (Šrajerová 1999b, 6–13).

The abundant publishing activities of individual Slovak organizations are represented by, for example, the following publications: *Slovenské rozprávky* [Slovak fairy tales], *Praha mesto veží* [Prague, the city of towers], *V duchu kontinuity* [In the spirit of continuity], *Čítanka slovenskej literatúry pro strední školy* [A reader of Slovak literature for secondary schools], *Slovenská literatúra v Prahe* [Slovak literature in Prague], *Quo vadis slovenská menšina?* [Quo vadis Slovak minority?], *Slovenskosť v multikultúrnom svete* [Slovak nature in a multicultural world], etc. Since 1993, there has also been broadcasting for Slovak fellow citizens on the Czech Radio.

The most significant contemporary cultural and social events of the Slovaks in the Czech Republic include Days of Slovak Culture, which take place in individual cities and towns of the Czech Republic (Prague, České Budějovice, Moravská Třebová and Brno), folklore festivals: Prague – The Heart of Nations, Janošík's Ducat and other, theatre shows: Slovak Theatre in Prague, The Best of Humour on the Slovak Stage. Activities for the benefit of the Slovak minority are being developed mainly in the Czech towns and cities where the above-mentioned Slovak Communities or the regional Clubs of the Slovak Touch or the Slovak-Czech Club operate regionally (Zpráva o situaci národnostních menšin 2017 – Report on the Situation of National Minorities 2017, 229–231).

As for the current position of the Slovaks in the Czech Republic, they are gradually identified with their minority status. They represent an active and adaptable component of the society, living dispersed among the Czech population. Despite the fact that the influence of the cultural and linguistically very close Czech environment on the Slovaks is increasing and the process of their integration into the majority Czech society is progressing faster, the Slovaks living in the Czech Republic still have strong emotional as well as cultural ties to Slovakia, to their homeland or their ancestors' homeland. They still maintain their family, friendly, working and professional relationships with their nation, preserving their cultural and spiritual values and the consciousness of their origin, as well as the pride in the past of the Slovak nation. The Slovaks consider the Slovak language to be their mother tongue which they use well, spoken and written, although they often use Czech in their communication with their children, their partner and the public. They are therefore bilingual to a large extent and use both languages to read newspapers, magazines, books and to watch cultural events. They consider not only Slovak culture to be their own, but they also have a positive relationship to the culture of the majority.

Slovak ethnic consciousness, based on common historical memory and common values, mostly remains in their minds. In general, they have a very positive relationship not only to their homeland of Slovakia, but also to the common Czech-Slovak past. They appreciate the Czech Republic which has become their new home. They consider the existence of the common Czech-Slovak state as the most significant period of their history and, as for the most important historical figures, they appreciate Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Milan Rastislav Štefánik, some modern politicians (Alexander Dubček, Václav Havel, Václav Klaus) as well as the personalities who played a significant role in the national emancipation of the Slovaks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that the Slovaks, who now live in the Czech Republic, are dispersed in all its regions, are an immigration, highly urbanized national minority living mainly in towns and cities. They have gradually identified themselves with a national-minority position that they stopped perceiving negatively. They show a high degree of ethnic openness, enter into nationally heterogeneous, mainly Czech-Slovak marriages, and the process of their integration into the Czech majority society continues. Although the number of children professing themselves to the Slovak nationality is declining, the Slovaks still represent the largest national minority in the Czech Republic, which, on the one hand, fully identifies itself with its nation and, on the other hand, forms its civic identity in accordance with the valid legal norms of the Czech Republic. When monitoring the individual ethno-identification features, we can see that the Slovaks in the Czech Republic retain their Slovak identity, and their national-cultural orientation remains Slovak. They still consider Slovak as their mother tongue, they are interested in and develop the traditions of Slovak culture and their national consciousness remains Slovak. The Slovaks living in the Czech Republic have formed an active, viable,

national minority that enriches not only the economic, but also the political and cultural life of the Czech majority society.

Appendix

Year of census	1921	1930
Prague	3 708	8 979
Bohemia	11 229	36 727
in Morava and Silesia	17 028	23 457
together	31 965	69 163

Table 1: The development of the population of the Slovak nationality in the Czech lands in the period of 1921–1930 (Svetoň 1969, 225).

Year of census	Population of Slovak nationality	Share in% of the Czech population	Increment / Decrease since 1950	
			absolute	relative
1950	258 025	2,9		100,0
1961	275 997	2,9	17 972	107,0
1970	320 998	3,3	45 001	124,4
1980	359 370	3,5	38 372	139,3
1991	314 877	3,1	-44 493	122,0
2001	193 190	1,9	-121 687	74,9
2011	149 140	1,4	-44 050	57,8

Table 2: The development of the population of the Slovak nationality in the Czech lands in the period of 1950–2011 (from the materials of Czech Statistical Office – www.czso.cz and from individual censuses held from 1950 to 2011).

Degree of education	Czechs			Slovaks in the entire Czech Republic			Slovaks in Prague
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	
Primary	33,1	22,7	16,7	51,0	35,6	23,9	31,1
Certificate of apprenticeship	35,4	38,6	33,1	26,9	31,4	29,0	19,3
Complete secondary	22,9	27,5	34,3	13,6	19,5	28,3	25,6
University	7,2	8,8	14,8	5,8	9,4	17,2	22,0
No education and not included	1,4	1,2	1,0	2,7	2,9	1,5	2,0

Table 3: Educational structure of the population of the Czech Republic according to the census results from 1991 to 2011 (in %) (Czech Statistical Office – www.czso.cz).

	2001	%	2011	%
The entire Czech Republic	193 190	1,9	149 140	1,4
Prague	19 275	1,6	23 336	1,8
Moravian-Silesian Region	43 632	3,4	26 590	2,2
Ústí nad Labem Region	22 214	2,7	12 238	1,5
South Moravian Region	16 029	1,4	14 588	1,2
Central Bohemian Region	16 287	1,4	17 298	1,4
Karlovy Vary Region	14 079	4,6	7 351	2,4
Olomouc Region	11 233	1,8	7 451	1,2
South Bohemian Region	9 025	1,4	6 672	1,1
Liberec Region	8 743	2,0	6 156	1,4
Hradec Králové Region	8 518	1,5	5 664	1,0
Plzeň Region	7 773	1,4	8 052	1,4
Zlín Region	7 713	1,3	5 911	1,0
Pardubice Region	5 932	1,2	4 832	0,9
Vysočina Region	3 732	0,7	3 001	0,6

Table 4: Territorial distribution of the Slovak nationality inhabitants in the individual regions of the Czech Republic in 2001 and 2011 (Czech Statistical Office – www.czso.cz).

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