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Linguistic Minorities in Slovakia

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1.a Origin of contact

Slovakia is a Central European primer of linguistic and ethnic groups, and of the multidirectional processes moulding their development. This paper will discuss the linguistic situation in Slovakia, but not the situation of Slovak and other minorities outside this country. To simplify the text, *Slovakia* will refer to the area currently covered by the Slovak Republic at any point in history. Before 1918 it was the core part of the loosely defined region referred to as the *Upper Country* in the Kingdom of Hungary.

Slovak linguists and archeologists agree that West Slavic tribes began settling the territory in the 5th to 6th centuries AD (Krajčovič, 1988; Marsina, 1991). It has been suggested that at about the same time East Slavic tribes arrived in the easternmost parts of Slovakia (Pekar, 1992). Some South Slavic tribes migrated north to Central Slovakia after the arrival of Ugric tribes in the Danubian basin in the 9th and 10th centuries. This was the beginning of the contact between the Slovaks formed from the Western Slavs with South

Slavic traces, and the Magyars formed from the Ugric tribes. In this paper, *Magyar* will refer to language and ethnicity, and *Hungarian* to country and citizenship. Thus, the Magyars – i.e., *Hungarians* in English, living in contemporary Slovakia and Hungary – are the same linguistic and ethnic group.

German colonists started arriving in the 13th century. Most of them were gradually Slovakized, with two larger and several isolated areas surviving through the deportations of Germans after WW II following the Potsdam Treaty. The 1930 census listed a 4.6% German minority (Zprávy Štátneho úradu štatistického, 1933). They had German publications and schools. Another minority group, the old Goral settlers, has kept its essentially Polish dialects in two areas close to the Polish border, but the Goral speakers in Slovakia registered Slovak ethnicity in the past and do so today. The 0.06% self-registered Poles in Slovakia in 1991 were recent immigrants.

The earliest record of the Roma (Gypsies) in Slovakia dates from 1322 (Jurová, 1993). The most difficult minority to trace, it formed settlements close to other ethnic villages (especially in East Slovakia), a large portion was nomadic, and their language, Indic in origin, existed only in a spoken version. Most of them were not deported during WW II. In the case of the Roma, there is a large gap between their self-registered ethnicity in a census or personal documents, and their exogenously labeled ethnicity, i.e., the perception of a person's ethnicity by other people, whether from the same or from another ethnic group. The important distinction between self-registered ethnicity and exogenous ethnic labeling will become clearer with the relevant groups later in the text.

The Jews immigrated to Slovakia in larger numbers from the north-east mostly in the 19th century. They spoke Yiddish, German, and later Magyar, and their journals were published in all three languages. Their language of education was Hebrew. The authorities in the Kingdom of Hungary registered the Jewish religion, but not ethnicity: in the 1910 census, 3.5% of the Jews in Slovakia registered Slovak or Czech as their mother tongue, 54.5% Magyar, 41.5% German or Yiddish, and 0.2% Ruthenian (Rothkirchen, 1968). In the 1930 census, 2% of the population in Slovakia registered Jewish ethnicity and 4.1% registered Jewish religion (Zprávy štátneho úradu štatistického, 1933). These two groups overlap. Only some people whose religion was Jewish, especially Zionists, also accepted it as their ethnicity. The majority of Jews as defined exogenously in 1939 were deported to German extermination camps during WW II. In Slovakia this official exogenous definition of a Jew did not include persons married to Christians, their parents and children, as well as those baptized, with 1938 as the cutoff date (Lipscher, 1980). In 1946 an estimated 28,000 Jews lived in Slovakia (0.8%), including those not deported, survivors of extermination camps, and returnees from exile (Jelinek, 1984). Jewish ethnicity was not allowed, and no religion was officially registered under communism. Yiddish and Hebrew ceased to be used.

1.b Ethnicity and nationality

The concept of a nation current in the United States, which equates citizenship, nationality, and nationhood and makes it a factor dominant over ethnicity, has been relevant to some aspects of the historical interaction between the Slovaks, Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Roma, and Poles, but it has always been interpreted in ethnic terms in the region. Ethnicity has been the main feature in the interaction between the Slovaks and Magyars. This text uses *nation(ality)* in the sense of citizenship, and *ethnic group* in the sense of the Slovak term *národ* and the Magyar term *nemzet*, i.e., a linguistically, culturally, genealogically, etc., conceived group of people regardless of their citizenship. It should be noted, however, that in publications in English, the practice in Slovakia, Hungary, and other Central European countries is to translate *národ/nemzet* as *nation*.

The dominance of ethnicity over nationality is reflected in language. The current linguistic usage in the United States refers to a member of a local ethnic group as, e.g., a *Slovak-American*. The usage in Slovakia and Central Europe is the opposite: 'a Slovak Magyar' means 'an ethnic Magyar who is a Slovak citizen' while 'a Magyar Slovak' is 'an ethnic Slovak who is a Hungarian citizen'. In fact, there is no single noun in these languages which would only mean 'a Slovak, Hungarian, Czech, etc., citizen' without ethnic implications. This usage caused problems historically in the Kingdom of Hungary where the ethnic 'Magyar' was promoted as a nationality – i.e., as a citizenship noun – but interpreted ethnically, and also later during the existence of Czecho-Slovakia or Czechoslovakia. (The spelling C-S was formally used in 1918-20, 1938-39, 1990-92; the spelling CS in 1920-38, 1945-90; presently, C-S is used in Slovakia, CS in the Czech Republic.[1])

The unsystematic use of the noun 'a Czechoslovak' as a label for nationality regardless of ethnicity in the past decades was seen by some as a residue of the failed 1918-1938 drive by Prague to forge a new Czechoslovakian ethnicity. This mainly Czech effort was also conceived ethnically rather than aiming at a new nationality that would replace ethnicity: it targeted only the Slovaks and Czechs as the proclaimed constituent ethnic groups of Czecho-Slovakia, leaving other minorities to remain Magyar, German, Ruthenian, etc. A degree of resistance to a potential future use of the noun 'a Slovak' extended from ethnicity to nationality ('a Slovak citizen/national') can be expected from the Magyars who are the largest and politically best organized minority in Slovakia.

This drive to develop a Czechoslovakian ethnicity did not have a direct impact on language status and use. Both Slovak and Czech were official languages in Czecho-Slovakia from the start (Johnson, 1985). Slovak was taught at schools in Slovakia and Czech in the Czech lands. There was no inter-teaching of the two related West Slavic languages. All the Slavic languages are mutually intelligible to a degree. This degree is high between

[1] http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba/qsonhist/spellczechoslovakia.html

Slovak and Czech, comparable to that between Norwegian and Swedish, or Slovene and Croatian. Slovaks and Czechs had a very good passive knowledge of the other language through continuous exposure to the bi-lingual media (which existed along with separate Slovak and Czech radio stations and TV), but did not speak it unless they moved to the other part of the country and learned it there. The official Slovak and Czech language institutes were obligated to coordinate their prescriptive policies, and Czech also influenced Slovak outside these efforts.

1.c Social standing and religion

While Slovak was seen as a minority language from the outside, within Czecho-Slovakia it was seen, both formally and by the population, as one of the two official languages in a linguistically, ethnically, and to a varying degree politically dualistic country, spoken as it was by one of the two official ethnic groups at all levels of administration, used as one of the two languages of command in the army, etc. Czech immigrants in Slovakia (and the other way round) were not seen as minorities. The status of minorities applied to the remaining linguistic and ethnic groups. Therefore, neither the status of Slovak, nor that of the minority languages changed after Slovakia and the Czech lands became independent countries in 1993. Slovak has been the official language in the country since 1918 and one of the two official languages in the former Czecho-Slovakia, a country – like Switzerland or Belgium – without one unifying official language.

In the perceptions of ethnicity in Slovakia, religion used to play a role only with regard to the Jews (see 1.a) and Ruthenians. Slovaks and Magyars have traditionally been Roman Catholic, Lutheran (Slovaks), Calvinist (Magyars), and Greek Catholic. The Ruthenians were predominantly Greek Catholic. Ruthenian dialects were originally East Slavic. The census in 1921 and again in 1930 (Zprávy štátneho úradu štatistického, 1933) created a single category of people who listed their ethnicity as Russian, Little Russian (now an obsolete term used in the past by some Eastern Slavs especially from the following two groups), Belorussian, Ukrainian, Carpathorussian, and Ruthenian (i.e., *Rusyn, Rusín/Rusnák*). Before 1918, all of these ethnic labels, but especially Ruthenian, were used to refer to the East Slavic people living in the north-western part of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In 1921 and 1930, their percentage of the population in Slovakia was 2.9%–2.8%. At the same time there were 6.5%–6.4% Greek Catholics, plus 0.1%–0.3% Eastern Orthodox. No generally accepted standardized Ruthenian language existed. The teaching of local varieties in lieu of standard Ruthenian in Slovakia was very limited. Ruthenian schools used the Cyrillic script and taught mostly Russian.

After WW II, following the practice in the Soviet Union, Ruthenian ethnicity was disallowed. This Soviet policy maintained that the Ruthenians and their language were part of the Ukrainian ethnic group and language. At the same time, the Greek Catholic Church

was banned and replaced with the Eastern Orthodox Church under the Russian Patriarch, in an atmosphere which repressed all religions. Thus, in Slovakia the former Ruthenians were technically free to register as any ethnicity but Ruthenian. Their actual options would have been Ukrainian, Slovak, or Russian, but the practice was to disallow Russian ethnicity for these people, again in line with the policy in the Soviet Ukraine. The Ukrainian-to-Russian ratio in Slovakia was approximately 19:1 (Federální statistický úřad, 1990). A degree of resentment existed among the Ruthenians towards the Ukrainian denials of their independent linguistic and ethnic status. About half of them registered Slovak rather than Ukrainian ethnicity. The administrative group 'Ukrainian plus Russian' listed in the 1950 census covered 1.4% of the population (Srb, 1967). The ratio declined to 0.7% by the end of the communist rule (Federální statistický úřad, 1990).

2.a Demographics

According to the 1991 census, Slovakia had 5,274,335 inhabitants (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 1993a). This was the first census since 1930 that allowed the population again to register any ethnicity. The self-registered ethnic composition of Slovakia was Slovak 85.7%, Magyar 10.8%, Romani (Gypsy) 1.4%, Czech 1%, Ruthenian 0.3%, Ukrainian 0.3%, Moravian 0.1%, German 0.1%, and other or unknown 0.3%. The population of the country grew to approximately 5,360,000 by 1995. The Slovak and Magyar numbers are accepted by many activists and politicians of these two groups as approximately representative of their exogenous numbers. Some Slovak and Magyar activists believe that about 1% more of the population of Slovakia should have registered Slovak ethnicity instead of Magyar, or Magyar instead of Slovak. These activists do not consider the question how many of the people they claim for their group might potentially switch to registering Romani ethnicity under different circumstances (see below). The numbers for the Roma and, to some degree, for the Ruthenians and Ukrainians are a matter of controversy.

Based on their pre-WW II number and on the number of Greek Catholics, some of whom they see as at least potential Ruthenians/Ukrainians (R/U), Ruthenian activists and scholars see the number of self-registered Ruthenians and Ukrainians as smaller than their exogenous number. The number of exogenously labeled Ruthenians in 1968-1970 was estimated at 2.1%–2.9% (Magocsi, 1985). Both Ruthenian and Ukrainian activists see these two groups as one ethnic group. The combined self-registered Ruthenian/Ukrainian percentage is 1.1%–12.4% in the 5 north-eastern districts with 24 majority villages. Except for these villages, there are no territories in Slovakia with more than 50% Ruthenians/Ukrainians.

The discrepancy between self-registered and exogenous ethnicity is most substantial with the Roma. The estimates by the Romani activists and non-Roma go hand in hand here: all

assume substantially larger exogenous numbers. In the 1991 census, 75,805 (1.4%) people registered their ethnicity as Romani or Gypsy (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 1993b). 15 East and South-Central districts show a higher-than-average percentage of Roma (1.6%–7.9%). While self-registered Romani ethnicity was not allowed under communism, local and district authorities kept unpublicized records of their exogenously labeled numbers. Their criteria included the language, way of life, and physiognomy. Given the relative secrecy of such accounting, the criteria must have been applied even less consistently than their vagueness would suggest. Since the purpose of the records was assistance with welfare planning, it is likely that a certain number of people who might be exogenously labeled as Roma (both by some Roma and others) but did not need welfare were not included, thus slanting the records and the available statistics on the Roma towards the recipients of welfare.

Official estimates from the late 1960s stated that '50,000-60,000 of the Roma in all of Czechoslovakia were not considered Roma by society any more', another 165,000 in Slovakia and 60,000 in the Czech lands were counted as such (Jurová, 1993). In 1980, the census-takers listed 199,800 Roma in Slovakia (Federální statistický úřad, 1985b). An internal publication used by the Ministries of Interior, Labor and Social Affairs, as well as some others gave the number of Roma for 1989 as 253,943 (Prehľad o plnení plánu a rozpočtu ONV SR, undated: Tab. 2/1, 2/2, 2/3, 2/4), which would correspond to 4.8% of the population. Former Slovak government advisor Klára Orgovánová (1993) estimated the number of Roma at 350,000-400,000 (6.6%–7.6%). The highest estimate, 750,000 (14.2%) Roma in Slovakia, is attributed to President of the International Roma Federation, Prof. Ian Francis Hancock (1993).

Given the problematic status of exogenous labeling itself, it is difficult to guess the geographic distribution of the higher estimates of exogenously labeled Roma and the ethnicity they register for administrative purposes. Any efforts to select representative samples of Roma were certainly influenced by non-demographic factors. An opinion poll of Roma attempting to be representative by sex, age, and region found that their ethnic self-identification (i.e., not necessarily self-registration) was Rom 37%, Gypsy 28% (total 65%), Slovak 18%, and Magyar 17% (Szabó, 1990). The ethnic labels *Rom* and *Gypsy*, in Slovak *Cigán*, refer to the same group of people. *Róm* is the Romani term used in Slovak press and by Romani activists after the collapse of communism in 1989. It is interesting that 28% of the polled people chose to call themselves Gypsy, which has some negative connotations: e.g., the somewhat obsolete verb *cigániť* means "lie, fib" (see also 2.g).

2.b Present ethnicity and nationality

The policy distinguishing ethnicity and nationality continues in Slovakia. Today Slovaks, Magyars, and the others are viewed as bearers of their own distinct languages and cul-

tures, i.e., ethnically. In other words, everyone, and not only the minorities, is seen as a member of an ethnic group.

The geographic distribution of the Czech (including Moravian) ethnic group (1.1%) shows that the contrastive Slovak—Czech self-identification merges both ethnicity and nationality. Almost all of the self-registered Czechs in Slovakia are immigrants (Machonin, 1969). They are distributed relatively evenly all over Slovakia. As opposed to all the other ethnic groups, there are no villages in Slovakia with a traditional or current Czech minority. The approximately 800-year-old and stable national border between Slovakia and the Czech lands (i.e., part of the former border between the Kingdom of Hungary and Austria) is a unique border in Central Europe: there is no Slovak—Czech overlap of traditional communities on either side. The border between the Slovaks and the Czechs (Moravians) is and has been both a national and an ethnic border ever since these concepts became applicable, in spite of the proximity of the bordering dialects, customs, etc. Regardless of whether Slovak and Czech activists in the past promoted the idea of two independent Slovak and Czech ethnic groups or the idea of one Czechoslovakian ethnic group with Slovak and Czech branches, their arguments always included the premise of the historical existence of the Slovaks and Czechs as separate nations (needing to either affirm ethnic and national independence, or to share one ethnic umbrella and nationhood, or, more recently, to maintain ethnic independence and nationhood within a dualistic federation while sharing nationhood *vis-à-vis* the world).

The contrastive establishment of the Slovak and Czech identities on a national rather than an ethnic basis is seen clearly in historical demographics, as well as in the current situation. Migration between Slovakia and the Czech lands has left no ethnically defined traces in these two countries (in contrast to, e.g., some Slovak and to a limited degree Czech villages preserving their ethnic identity for over two centuries in Vojvodina, Romania, or Hungary). After the establishment of Czecho-Slovakia, there was no colonization of land, but the Slovak—Czech migration continued throughout the present (with a significant number of Czech immigrants after 1918 not married to Slovaks expelled or preferring to return to the Czech lands in 1938). Between 1950-1990, 420,000 people immigrated to Slovakia from the Czech Republic (Federální statistický úřad, 1985a). While many of them may have been instances of re-emigration, it is clear that such a volume should constitute more than the 59,326 self-registered Czechs (Moravians and Silesians) in the 1991 census. In other words, Slovakia does not have a second-generation (or older) Czech minority to speak of, nor are the Czechs in Slovakia a traditional ethnic group like the other minorities. The Czech immigrants accepted their new nationality (i.e., living in the Slovak part of the Kingdom of Hungary or in Slovakia as a body politic of the former Czecho-Slovakia) without the ethnic inertia characteristic of the interaction between the other ethnic groups. The same is true about the Slovak immigrants in the Czech lands.

2.c-d Social and economic standing

The Magyars and Ruthenians/Ukrainians are more likely to be employed in agriculture and forestry (27.3%; and 22.1%; within their respective ethnic groups) than the Slovaks (13.9%) (Sokolová, 1987). This coincides with the major source of income in the regions where they live; the Slovaks living in these ethnically mixed regions are equally likely to be farmers or foresters. The structure of employment is influenced by the geographic distribution of these three groups, which in turn carries over to other socio-economic data. What would need further investigation is the over-representation of the Ukrainians in a statistical group which was used in communist statistics and which combined social services, research, and some white-collar jobs (excluding other services, e.g., retail and transportation): 29.1% of Ukrainians, against 21.4% of Slovaks and 16.1% of Magyars held these jobs (Sokolová, 1987). It may be linked to the developments after Ruthenian ethnicity was banned (see 3.c). Another interesting feature in Ruthenian—Ukrainian relations is the proximity factor (1991 census): when the self-registered Ruthenians and Ukrainians are taken as one group (Ruthenian/Ukrainian), the Ruthenians are the majority within the Ruthenian/Ukrainian group in North-East Slovakia, and the Ukrainians elsewhere. In other words, those living in or close to the traditional Ruthenian/Ukrainian villages (areas) were more likely to again register Ruthenian ethnicity than Ukrainian once it was allowed. It is a good example of the revivability of ethnic identity in spite of a group's small size, a relatively more ambiguous status than its neighbors, and an outright ban for 40 years.

The Roma are perceived to be at the bottom of the social scale (see 2.g). The rate of unemployment among the exogenously labeled Roma recorded but not published by the authorities in the last year of communism ranged between 4.9%–38.3% by district (even though unemployment was not officially recognized) (Prehľad o plnení plánu a rozpočtu ONV SR, undated). The post-communist media also consistently report on high unemployment among the Roma. Machonin (1969) confirmed their low status on five of the six social-status scales used, but the study also found the Rom to be above the Slovaks, Magyars, and Ruthenians/Ukrainians on the personal-income scale (i.e., not a per-capita family income).

The study also found the Slovaks and Ruthenians/Ukrainians to share the same average status (Ruthenians/Ukrainians scored somewhat higher in the sophistication of their jobs, living standard, and participation in the then communist decision-making). The Magyars scored lower than the Slovaks and Ruthenians/Ukrainians (except in the way of life which was above that of the Ruthenians/Ukrainians). The Czech minority in Slovakia had the highest overall social status. Their score surpassed that of the Czechs in the Czech lands. This probably contributed to one of the stereotypical Slovak perceptions of the Czechs as

cultured or educated, a trait the Czechs in the Czech lands did not list for themselves (Timorický, 1992).

After the collapse of communism in 1989, many socio-economic factors are in a state of flux, but local economic and natural conditions will probably retain their role. For instance, the recent levels of unemployment broken down by district did not show a bias towards any of the above ethnic groups.

2.e Domains of use

The languages used in the printed and the broadcast media in Slovakia under communism were Slovak, Magyar, and Ukrainian. Slovak alternated with Czech on the Federal TV channel and on an AM radio station covering both Slovakia and the Czech lands, though in some of the mountainous regions of Slovakia it was possible to receive only the Federal TV channel and not the Slovak one. Periodicals and books from the Czech lands were sold in all bookstores and newsstands; Slovakia was an important market for the Czech publishers. One 30-minute TV program per month combining Ukrainian and Ruthenian was introduced in 1992 on Slovak TV.

Magyar periodicals and books published in Slovakia and Hungary were available in areas with a Magyar minority/majority and some periodicals also elsewhere, depending on tourist traffic. Magyar programming on Slovak TV was 45 minutes per week in 1990, broadcast all over Slovakia. It was reduced to 10 min. per week in 1991, and to 30 min. per month in 1992 when Slovak subtitles were introduced. As of January 1995, Magyar TV programming was increased to four 30-minute programs per month. Slovak subtitles were retained. Slovak TV estimated that 3%–6% of Slovaks watched the subtitled Magyar programs in 1994 (Pék, 1994). Slovak Radio broadcast 30 hours of Magyar programming per week in 1994.

15% of the Magyars in the ethnically mixed districts (i.e., those with 10% or more Magyars, M>10%) say that they follow Magyar media from Slovakia, 20% Hungarian media only, and 57% both Slovak and Magyar/Hungarian (Szabó, 1993). 82% Slovaks in the M>10% districts follow Slovak media only. In June 1993, 29% Slovaks and 67% Magyars in the mixed areas said they spoke the other language well, a surprising drop from September 1990 (38% and 79% respectively). If the samples were representative (there is no indication of the pollsters being suspected of bias), it must have been the respondents' answers rather than their language skills that changed so rapidly. This may be indicative of strains at a personal level – strains between Slovak, Magyar, and Hungarian politicians were growing openly – which had not yet surfaced in their expressed opinions ("relations between the two ethnic groups are good": 88% Slovaks and 94% Magyars; in both instances a 10%–18% increase of their positive evaluation over the same brief period). The ability to speak the other language well or with problems was lower among younger Slo-

vaks and older Magyars. 10% of the Magyars over 50 in the M>10% districts said they could not speak Slovak at all. The largest percentage of the Magyars who said they had good Slovak were those in the 30-49 age group.

More bilingual Magyars said in 1993 that they used “mostly Magyar” in local government offices than what the poll showed in 1990: an increase from 29% to 38%. The number of those of them who used “mostly Magyar” in stores (81%) and at work (60%) stayed about the same. Parallel numbers for bilingual Slovaks changed little in all three spheres of life: 96% spoke “mostly Slovak” in government offices, 78% in stores, and 85% at work.

2.f Religion

Religion and language show little correlation in Slovakia today. The situation was different for several centuries in the past when Slovak was a minority language in the Kingdom of Hungary. While the official language was Latin, and later German and Magyar, the Slovak Lutherans accepted the Czech translation of the Bible (1579-1593) as the model for their written language. It was gradually Slovakized to a degree, but at the same time the Czech norm had an impact on the development of literary Slovak. The Catholics began standardizing literary Slovak in the 18th century, relying on West Slovak dialects. Contemporary Standard Slovak is the continuation of an essentially new interdenominational standardization in the 1840s, based on Central Slovak dialects. The Greek Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches have used Church Slavic in their liturgy, but this has had no impact on the language used by Slovak Greek Catholics outside the Mass.

The linguistic legacy linked to religion is that Standard Slovak and Standard Czech are probably closer today than they would have been, had Biblical Czech not served as the written medium or as a very powerful model for the written language used by the Slovak Lutheran intelligentsia for several centuries. The legacy of this situation, with an impact on the concepts of Slovak and Czech ethnicity, was the emergence of the idea of one Czechoslovakian ethnic group (see 1.b), conceived with an emphasis on the use of written Czech by Slovak Lutherans.

Both the Slovaks (70%) and the Magyars (68%) in the M>10% regions said they were satisfied with the language used at church (Szabó, 1993). 8% Slovaks wished for more Slovak, 5% Magyars wished for more Magyar, and 2% Magyars wished for more Slovak. The rest had no opinion. According to this, the Churches in Slovakia provided the most balanced linguistic environment for the two groups. At the same time, a large percentage of those asked did not express an opinion. It would be interesting to see whether there was something to learn from the Churches about operating in bilingual areas, or whether the respondents had different linguistic expectations of the Churches than of secular institutions.

2.g Attitudes

Slovak, Magyar, Czech, and Ukrainian are seen as established literary languages; any controversies concern mainly the official use of Magyar and Slovak in ethnically mixed districts. The Ukrainian activists question even the potential for the existence of a Ruthenian language. Ruthenian activists argue that the Ruthenians (including the Ukrainians) in Slovakia (and elsewhere) are a separate ethnic group with their own language. In January 1995 they announced the codification of the Ruthenian literary language (see 4.b).

The least appreciated ethnic group in Slovakia are the Roma. The reason given is Romani criminality – 65% people feared it would increase – but other factors probably play a role too. 70%-90% would mind having Roma as their neighbors, with the less negative attitude expressed by those who actually had a direct experience of the Roma. They were the only ethnic group in Slovakia with a higher negative than positive rating. The Slovaks' attitudes were more positive than negative to, among others, the Czechs, Jews, Magyars, and Vietnamese, with a 95%–60% approval (Bútorová, 1993). The Roma were the only ethnic group not listed among personal or family friends by any of the other groups; the only non-Roma listed among friends by Roma were rarely the Slovaks and exceptionally the Magyars (Machonin, 1969). A negative attitude to the Roma in this region was noted as early as in the 17th century (Brown, 1673) and is probably more ancient.

The attitudes expressed by the polled Roma mirrored rather than rejected the attitudes of the population at large. 85% of the Roma said that their ethnic group should try to live like the rest of the population, 6% said they should follow their own traditions. Only 13%-21% of the Roma said their relations with non-Roma were bad or rather bad, with the percentage increasing from West to East (Szabó, 1990). The periodicals and books published specifically for the Roma by Romani activists after the collapse of communism in Slovakia found little support among the Roma. The periodicals were in Slovak and Romani, the books (fairy-tales) had parallel Romani—Slovak texts. In this poll, 36% Roma said that there was a need for Romani TV programs, 30% saw a need for Romani periodicals, and 26% for Romani literature. Rather than not expressing an opinion, the majority of them were against any of these (no need: 51%, 55%, 59%, respectively). 80% of the Roma said their language should not be used in primary schools, 8% said it should.

2.h Legislation

Slovak Foreign Minister Jozef Moravčík (1993) stated that the current government is building Slovakia as 'a multi-ethnic civic society'. Aspects of Slovakia's legislation concerning ethnic and linguistic rights have been a matter of controversy between Slovak and Magyar activists and legislators, as well as Hungarian politicians (see 4.a). They were not joined by the other minority groups. After the collapse of communism, new laws have

been passed and old ones amended. More changes can be expected. Both sides have asked the Council of Europe and other international bodies to mediate. The other ethnic activists view the legislation as favorable. Slovakia was among the 21 countries that signed the first Convention for the Protection of National Minorities sponsored by the Council of Europe in February 1995. This section will discuss a less known administrative aspect and one which is unlikely to change soon.

Slovakia continues the policy of the former Czecho-Slovakia, where administrative practice supported the concepts of ethnicity and nationality as two separate issues, applicable to everyone. That such practice was not the norm abroad is something not widely known and understood in Slovakia – a point that can explain some of the mutual misunderstandings in arguments across international boundaries concerning the sizes of ethnic groups. Until 1994, every citizen of Slovakia was issued an official ID which, among other information, contained two entries: nationality (*občianstvo*) and ethnicity (*národnosť*; see 1.b). The new obligatory IDs do not have this box (apparently for a lack of space on the new small cards), but birth certificates, various application forms, and other official documents do retain them. Both of these administrative identities are perceived as carrying the same value, with ethnicity seen as a relatively permanent trait, independent of nationality. Nationality is assigned by the authorities according to the law on citizenship, but ethnicity is entered by the bearer of the ID him- or herself and remains changeable by the individual. For the perception of ethnicity it is important that 'Slovak' has the same status in this entry as any other ethnicity, i.e., that Slovaks are viewed as one of the several ethnic groups of Slovakia. Unlike in the United States, there is no perception that ethnicity is ascribed to the minorities only as a marked feature against the neutral background of nationality. Ethnicity remains an administrative category in the sense that the appropriate box never remains blank, while also remaining the individual's choice. Most bureaucratic forms include both boxes or neither.

The existence of the ethnic category as an administrative feature has not been challenged by any of the ethnic groups. On the contrary, it is seen as an important prerequisite for guaranteeing minority rights. The somewhat unexpected and politically commendable aspect of this rests in the individual choice and changeability of this box. Furthermore, the confusing, though again commendable, feature rests in the fact that, as opposed to the box 'nationality', the existence of the box for (self-registered) ethnicity has no practical legal consequences. There is no law demanding that a specific ethnicity be entered in a person's files, for that person to have a right to make corresponding ethnically and linguistically based demands or to be granted such rights. In other words, one can claim the ethnic rights of one group and yet be registered as another ethnic group in official documents, which may be particularly relevant with the Roma.

3.a–b Language contact and shift

Slovakia has 38 administrative districts. Those with a significant Magyar minority are 11 southern districts, 10 of which border on Hungary, with 16.4% to 87.2% Magyars. (4 other districts have 4.3%–7.2% Magyars, 23 practically zero.) Two of the 11 districts have a Magyar majority amounting to 87.2% and 72.3% (South-West Slovakia). Their percentage in the remaining 9 is 46.5%–16.4%. But the percentages of Magyars when quoted by administrative districts, as it often happens in Magyar—Slovak arguments, obscure, or at least complicate, the search for a consensus between the activists and politicians calling for, or opposing, a degree of ethnic self-rule. While there is no cutoff point where the Magyar population ends and the Slovak population begins, and while only one village with no Slovaks exists, SK>50% and M>50% villages are not distributed haphazardly in southern Slovakia. A line can be plotted that divides these two groups of villages. 3 small M>50% islands remain north of it and 2 small SK>50% islands remain south of it. This line merges with the Hungarian border along several stretches, so that it creates three disconnected M>50% areas. This line is nowhere identical with the administrative districts. The resulting minority groups are divided evenly: approximately 126,000 Magyars live outside the M>50% areas, and approximately 127,000 Slovaks live outside the SK>50% area in Slovakia. More ethnic research outside of Slovakia might be needed if this line were to be construed as the dividing line between Slovak and Magyar majorities per se. The number of Slovaks south of the line given here would have to be increased by the Slovaks living in Hungary.

Probably the most surprising result of our delineation of this current majority/minority ethnic line – village by village based on the 1991 census – is that, in Slovakia, this ethnic line has basically not changed since 1773, the earliest date for which it can be plotted in such detail (Petrov, 1924 and 1928). Along many stretches, the old and current lines match to the village and, with two exceptions mentioned below, most of the contemporary line is within 5 miles of the over 200-year-old one. The minuscule shifts occurred both from Magyar to Slovak and from Slovak to Magyar, the larger shifts are related to the curvature of the line and to the size of some towns in its vicinity. Two narrow M>50% extensions, stretching northwards for approximately 30 and 15 miles in 1773, now have a Slovak majority (the reverse probably happened to the narrow SK>50% extension southwards in Hungary). The current three M>50% islands north of the line are within the former longer extension. Several larger towns close to the ethnic majority/minority line changed from M>50% to SK>50%. What this shows is a very high degree of linguistic stability in these predominantly agricultural communities, regardless of any efforts over the two centuries to change the situation in either direction (some documented and some embellished, denied, or invented by ethnic activists).

A clear linguistic and ethnic shift has occurred from Ruthenian (R) to Slovak since 1773. Where there was a 10-30 mile wide R>50% strip along Slovakia's north-eastern border with 4 SK>50% villages and an island, the region is now predominantly Slovak. The historical perspective also shows that any link in the direction from Greek Catholicism to Ruthenian/Ukrainian language and ethnicity has been weak for quite some time: two East Slovak districts with a high percentage of Greek Catholics today were predominantly Slovak or Magyar in 1773 (see 2.a). In other words, while it is true that most Ruthenians/Ukrainians are Greek Catholic, for at least 220 years it has not been the case that Greek Catholics are mostly Ruthenian/Ukrainian.

3.c Motivation

It was probably the Ukrainian intelligentsia who received the strongest incentive to use their language after the communist takeover in 1948. Some members of the Ruthenian/Ukrainian intelligentsia who decided to register Ukrainian ethnicity and stayed with it benefited partly from government support to Ukrainian print media, radio, theater, and culture in general, and possibly from the affirmative action for the minorities wishing to pursue university-level studies (Magocsi, 1985). Only few students attended Ukrainian high schools.

The Roma attended Slovak and Magyar schools, while their language continued to be used in the spoken form (see 2.g). It is assumed that practically all adult Ruthenians or Ukrainians and most Roma have a good-to-native command of Slovak or Magyar (the latter applies to the Roma). Illiteracy is almost unknown, except with the Roma – 2.6% of Romani men and 3.3% women did not finish elementary education (Jurová, 1993).

For the Magyars, the strongest incentive to change ethnicity and learn Slovak came after WW II. Parts of the border districts were under Hungarian jurisdiction in 1938-1945 following the Vienna Agreement. After WW II, a transfer was started of Magyar and Slovak minorities between Slovakia and Hungary, voluntary for the Slovaks in Hungary and compulsory for the Magyars in Slovakia, who were still treated as Hungarian citizens after the jurisdiction returned to Slovakia. Many Magyars were given the opportunity to change to Slovak ethnicity and so stay in Slovakia. But the transfer remained only partial and was terminated soon after its inception when communism took hold both in Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia (Šutaj, 1991). The use of pre- and post-WW II statistics to document the extent of changed ethnicity can only give results after a careful cross-documentation from other sources. Some problems include: differences in the official registration of ethnicity in Slovakia and Hungary, extermination of Jews, number of Magyars deported to Hungary, number of Magyars deported to the Sudetenland in the Czech lands, number of those who later returned, cover-ups under communism, bias of sources, etc. The number of self-registered Magyars in Slovakia dropped by 43% between

1937-1950 and bounced back by 46% between 1950-1961 (i.e., it did not reach the pre-WW II level). Since 1970 the number of Magyars has been growing by 0.1–0.2% per year, which suggests no dramatic changes of self-registered ethnicity.

Today, 35% of the Slovaks and 24% of the Magyars in the M>10% districts say that there is little or no negative impact on the life of a Magyar who does not speak Slovak (Szabó, 1993). 28% of these Slovaks and 55% of these Magyars say that there is no or little negative impact on the life of a Slovak who does not speak Magyar. 81% Slovaks, and only 63% Magyars think that the knowledge of Slovak is indispensable for the Magyars, though almost all Slovaks and Magyars think it is to their advantage. The exception are the Magyars with only an elementary school education, 11% of whom say that the knowledge of Slovak is useless for them.

3.d Exogamy

The rate of interethnic marriages varies greatly according to ethnic group. The highest number of inter-ethnic marriages is between the Slovaks and Magyars (3.9% of all marriages in Slovakia), the second highest between the Slovaks and the Czechs (2.7%) (1991 census). Approximately a third of all the married Magyars are married to Slovaks, and the majority of the married Czechs, Ukrainians, and Ruthenians are married to Slovaks. 69% of the Slovak-Magyar marriages in the M>10% districts use Magyar at home (Szabó, 1993). This shift from Slovak towards Magyar may be the result of the geographic location of the polled marriages.

While the link between language and ethnicity is obvious in Slovakia, it is hard to follow the patterns of linguistic and ethnic shifts, e.g., changes between the respondents and their parents or during the respondents' lives, from the available data. The census includes the category 'mother tongue', which may be interpreted by respondents as 'mother's native language', 'the language mostly used at home when growing up', or 'the language one is most comfortable with/uses in most situations now'. Only one entry is possible for each category. There are no entries like 'previous language/ethnicity'.

The link between 'mother tongue' and ethnicity is the strongest with the Slovaks and the Magyars. 99% and 91% of those who registered Slovak and Magyar, respectively, as their 'mother tongue' registered the same ethnicity, and 98% of both self-registered Slovaks and Magyars entered the corresponding 'mother tongue'. The link in the direction from 'mother tongue' to ethnicity is the weakest with the Ruthenians (33%), although stronger with the Ukrainians (73%). Considering both directions at the same time showed the Romani 'mother tongue' and ethnicity as the most fluid (72–73%). There is no Moravian language; the Moravian dialects in the Czech Republic are accepted as varieties of Czech. The 'mother tongue' and ethnicity entries overlap among all the languages and ethnic

groups in Slovakia discussed here, although in many instances the absolute numbers are very low (Štatistický ústav Slovenskej republiky, 1991).

The situation was reversed in mixed marriages where 69% bilingual Slovak spouses spoke Magyar at home. This was also true of the whole sample: 17% Slovaks as opposed to 9% Magyars spoke the other language at home. In other words, in the M>10% districts, a Slovak—Magyar marriage was more likely to use Magyar at home than Slovak. As to the Ruthenians/Ukrainians, members of this group say that 87% of them speak the local dialect at home, 6% Slovak, 4% Ukrainian, and 3% another language (Szabó, 1990).

4.a Official recognition

Slovak is recognized as the country's official language, but not as its administrative language that would make it mandatory for exclusive use at all levels of administration. The law allows a minority to use its language in dealings with the authorities in villages where a minority represents 10% or above. In reality, this practice depends on the linguistic skills of the clerks and clients, and both Magyar and Slovak activists complained that their language could not be used in some local government offices. 4% Slovaks and 38% Magyars in the M>10% areas said they used Magyar in local offices (Szabó, 1993). The Magyar activists want to change the legislation so as to increase the official use of their language.

Languages other than Slovak are recognized as minority languages. A distinction between indigenous minority languages and the languages of the more recent immigrants has not been established. A department handling subsidies for non-educational efforts of the minorities exists at the Ministry of Culture. Its policy has been to negotiate and provide support based on the demands presented by cultural organizations of any minority ethnic group. As of August 1993, 13 organizations for 7 minority ethnic groups were registered with the Ministry. Out of those, the organizations of the following 5 minority ethnic groups asked for subsidies relating to the use of their language in 1992, i.e., mainly the publication of periodicals and books, and the use of the minority languages on the stage (the first number in brackets is the number of their publishing houses and the second one is the number of their amateur theater troupes, if any, in 1991): Magyar (6; 176), Ruthenian (1; 2), Ukrainian (1; 39), Romani (2; -) and German. The Ministry also supports permanent theater troupes, including one for each of Magyar, Ukrainian, and Romani (Ministry of Culture, internal documentation, 1993). The Ministry of Transportation and Communications maintains state-owned radio programming in Slovak – 24,600 hours per year, Magyar – 2,076 hours, and Ukrainian and Ruthenian – 747 hours (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 1993d).

4.b Schools

The main minority language taught in Slovakia is Magyar. 77.8% of the Magyars in Slovakia live in villages and towns with a Magyar majority (M>50), i.e., 8.3% of the population of the country. Some of the remaining Magyars live in villages with Magyar minorities comparable in size to the Slovak minorities in the M>50 villages, and some live elsewhere.

A Magyar school (M school) in Slovakia means that all the subjects are taught in Magyar. Its curriculum includes 5 lessons of Slovak a week, taught through Magyar. A school with Magyar (SM school) teaches 4-5 lessons of Magyar a week; the other subjects are taught in Slovak and might be reviewed with terminology given in Magyar. An elementary school covers grades 1-8(9) followed by a 2-4 year secondary school, which could be a *gymnázium* (the most widespread non-specific pre-college school) or a vocational school. The choice of vocational schools is limited, with only a few schools for each specialization in the country, so that students with a strong preference have to live away from home, regardless of their ethnicity.

Of the total of the elementary schools in Slovakia in the 1992/1993 academic year, 11.3% were M schools and another 1.5% SM schools, totaling 12.5%. Of all the *gymnáziums*, 7.9% were M schools and another 4.8% SM schools, totaling 12.7%. The combined percentage for various kinds of vocational schools, both M and SM, was 8.6% (Slovak Statistical Office: Department of Social Statistics and Demography, internal documentation, 1993). There was a Department of Magyar Language and Literature at Comenius University in Bratislava and a teacher training division for M and SM schools existed at the University of Nitra. (Under communism, colleges all over Czechoslovakia had a special quota for Magyar applicants, similar to the affirmative action in the United States.)

This situation is reflected in the opinions of the Slovaks and Magyars living in the M>10% districts (Szabó, 1993) with 6% of these Slovaks and 11% of these Magyars indicating that their children could not attend an ‘own-language’ school in their village. 4% of these Slovaks and 30% of these Magyars said the same about all types of ‘own-language’ secondary schools in their district.

In 1993/1994, the teaching of German at some kindergartens and an extended teaching of the language at the primary schools was introduced in 4 traditionally German villages as part of the drive to revive German traditions in Slovakia. German has been taught at all secondary and many primary schools as a foreign language since 1918.

At this time, preparations for a Ruthenian curriculum were being made, while the limited teaching of Ukrainian continued. Romani was not taught at any level. A department of Romani studies was set up at the University of Nitra in 1993 to prepare a program for the

education of Romani speakers. The subsidies for school textbooks by the Ministry of Education were at the level of 350-700 crowns (Sk) per book in written in Magyar, 900-1,000 crowns per book in Ukrainian and 120-150 crowns per book in Slovak, due to the differences in volume. The Ministry also subsidized a Ruthenian primer and a Ruthenian school reader published in 1994 for elementary schools. The organization Ruthenian Revival announced that the Standard Ruthenian language was codified on January 27, 1995 (Rundesová, 1995). Some Ukrainian activists reacted by repeating the argument that the Ruthenian dialects on which the standardized language is based are Ukrainian dialects. The Slovak authorities remain non-committal on this issue and give financial support to both groups.

4.c Spelling

The Ruthenians/Ukrainians use the Cyrillic, while the rest use the Latin alphabet. The spelling rules for Slovak are standardized by the Ľudovít Štúr Linguistic Institute in Bratislava, while the other languages accept the spelling rules applied in the country where their language is the official language (see 4.b for Ruthenian). A protracted controversy about the spelling of Magyar personal and place-names in official documents has culminated recently. The spelling of names concerned identical sounds written differently in Slovak and Magyar (e.g., *č-cs, s-sz, š-s, ž-zs*). The spelling of family (last) names was accepted in any form. The communist practice promoted the Slovak spelling of given (first) names (*Žolt–Zsolt*), also when the name was typically used by Magyars.

As of January 1, 1994, a law took effect allowing the official registration of personal given names in any language. In July 1994 a law was passed (Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky #154/1994) regulating the official registration of women's family names. Its vaguely worded article 16 says that at the request of a woman 'of other than Slovak ethnicity', her last name may be officially registered without the *-ová, -á,* suffix – a grammatical feature that had been mandated as a rule of the Slovak language by the Linguistic Institute in 1953. The law is based on the woman's ethnicity (and does not mandate that the name itself be 'non-Slovak'), while a person's ethnicity is selected and remains changeable by that person (see 2.h).

A similar controversy concerned the use of place-names for villages and towns in the Slovak—Magyar mixed areas. Many of the places had both traditional Slovak and Magyar names. After 1867 all Slovak villages in the former Kingdom were assigned Magyar names by Budapest. After WW II some villages were given new names after Slovak activists, or Slovak neologisms were designed for them. Under communism, only the Slovak or Slovakized versions were used on road-signs and in official documents.

After the collapse of communism, the Magyar activists brought the matter to the open, and it became the subject of ongoing negotiations in the Parliament. In the of fall 1993,

the Parliament concluded that there was no law preventing the use of Magyar-spelled place-names on non-standard road signs next to the Slovak names on standard signs (e.g., *Žihárec-Zsihárec*), but the use of the traditional Magyar names was deemed unacceptable (e.g., not *Zsigard* for this specific village).

On July 7, 1994, the Parliament passed a new law (Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky #54/1994) on place-names in minority languages. The law lists 587 villages that can use both Slovak and non-Slovak names. The Slovak name will be used in all official documents, seals, and maps, as well as on standard road-signs. A 'standard road-sign' with the name of a community has a specified size and colors in the whole country and serves as an official traffic sign at the same time, indicating the point from which a lower speed limit applies. Separate non-standard signs will give the name of the village in the minority language if the minority reaches 20% or more. A community may change its name through a vote (the turnout must be over 50% and 80% of the cast votes must be for the change). This option is not open to villages whose Magyar names were assigned in 1867-1918, i.e., in the former Kingdom, and in 1938-1945 on the territories controlled temporarily by Budapest. Some Slovak activists criticized the law because it does not maintain that the Slovak names be also used on all mail. The post-office was not concerned, indicating that the zip code takes care of any related delivery problems.

5. Future directions

In the future, the linguistic and ethnic minorities are likely to partly maintain their traditional inertia and will partly depend on political developments. The Ruthenian/Ukrainian group may become predominantly Ruthenian, but will remain small. Political pressure from neighboring Ukraine is not likely, unless the Ruthenian activists come to be associated with Ruthenian activism in Ukraine where they may gain little or no official approval as an ethnic group distinct from the Ukrainians. The impact of Czech on Slovak will diminish in many spheres, but may intensify for commercial reasons. If the passive knowledge of Czech remains on the current level, and if there is no official intervention to subsidize Slovak publishing houses, Czech books and periodicals will become more competitive due to the size of the combined Slovak and Czech markets; dubbed foreign films are now distributed exclusively in Czech (as opposed to the regulated 33% Slovak ratio under communism).

In spite of any official efforts, the social status of the Roma will remain a problem for a long time to come, especially given the post-communist economic problems of the country as a whole, though a recent educational initiative (see 4.b) and some efforts by several Romani cultural organizations and entrepreneurs have been noted. The few aspiring Romani politicians have a small electoral basis, but the potential is there. For example, in the 1992 elections, the two Romani parties got a combined 2.9% of the votes in a district

with 7.9% self-registered and 13% exogenously labeled Roma, which is to say that practically every adult Rom voted for them (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 1993). In the unlikely event that the Romani activists should be highly successful and the number of self-registered Roma start approaching their exogenous numbers, the ethnic balance and political potential in some of the M>10% districts might change dramatically and have an impact on Slovak and Magyar activism there.

The Slovaks and Magyars in the M>10% districts say they are relatively satisfied with their situation. 50% of those Slovaks and 15% of those Magyars say that the local Slovaks risk becoming Magyarized. 13% of those Slovaks and 42% of those Magyars say that the local Magyars risk becoming Slovakized. And in a region where ongoing Slovak—Hungarian comparisons play an important role, only 13% of the Magyars think that they are worse off than the Slovak minority in Hungary. In 1993 these expressed attitudes were still in contrast with what the ethnic activists and politicians were saying. But the high numbers of those who said there was a risk of a change of their ethnicity, quite contrary to what has actually happened over two centuries with periods of seriously adverse conditions (see 3.a), the sudden drop in the declared bilingual competence (see 2.e), and the large differences in Slovak and Magyar opinions on a range of administrative solutions (Szabó, 1993), somewhat similar to the differences between the Slovak and Czech views in Czecho-Slovakia – all these attitudes are indicative of a potential for continued political tensions. At the same time, they show a potential for continued good interpersonal relations. The actual resolution of the situation will depend much more on the actions of the present and future governments in Bratislava and Budapest than on the attitudes of the population of the M>10% districts. Regardless of that, the historical perspective shows that only a drastic and protracted policy against one of the ethnic groups would bring about an early change in the line between the territories with a Slovak and Magyar majority.

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