

Ideology of Czechoslovakism in Slovak secondary school textbooks 1918-1938

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Apart from the teachers themselves, textbooks had an irreplaceable role in the formation of the collective national identity of Slovak secondary school pupils in the spirit of Czechoslovakism. The most striking reflection of the perception of the nation and the attempt to present it in the intentions of the official doctrine of the state can be obtained through the analysis of history textbooks. In the interwar period, textbook authors attempted to show that although the Czechs and Slovaks had developed separately politically since the Great Moravian period, their histories were interconnected and could thus be understood as a single unit.

The period of the Hussite movement was presented in the textbooks as another period of the flowering of national history. The vision of a nation united by a noble idea standing against the whole of Europe had distinctly romantic features. Similarly, the period of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation was described as a time of strengthening ties between Slovaks and Czechs.

The period of the formation of modern nations at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was another theme within which the basic principles of the Czechoslovak conception could be suitably developed. In particular, František Palacký as a Moravian studying in Slovakia and two Slovaks, Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, advocates of a unified Czechoslovak tribe, came to the fore.

National character or nature was also important. The national community was personified, which allowed it to be perceived as a truly social being with qualities comparable to those of a human being, by which it could be distinguished from other nations.

The struggle for independence and against enemies was interpreted as something that had been present from the earliest moments of the nation's existence. It suggested the idea that the freedom gained was to be cherished and to be constantly vigilant. The permanent enemies were the Germans. The second greatest enemy were the Hungarians.

Part of the creation of the image of the enemy-neighbour was also an attempt to prove its cultural backwardness. Thus, the theory of the cultural superiority of the Slavs, especially the Germans and Hungarians, was given space in the textbooks.