

to chapters and adding high quality illustrative material to produce a multi-volume work, and perhaps adding a DVD with contemporary film and sound recordings.

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THREE PUBLICATIONS ON THE THEME OF ŠTEFÁNIK FROM THE
INSTITUTE OF HISTORY OF THE SLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

KŠIŇAN, Michal. *L'HOMME QUI PARLAIT AVEC LES ÉTOILES. Milan Rastislav Štefánik, héros franco-slovaque de la Grande Guerre*. Paris: Eur'ORBEM Éditions, Collectuoin Histoire(s) – Europe centrale sous la direction d'Antoine Marès, 2019. ISBN 979-10-96982-08-0.

MACHO, Peter. *MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK AKO SYMBOL*. [*Milan Rastislav Štefánik as a Symbol*]. Bratislava: VEDA vydavateľstvo SAV; Historický ústav SAV, 2019. ISBN 978-80-224-1785-3.

MICHÁLEK, Slavomír. *MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK AND THOSE WHO FOLLOWED HIM*. Berlin: Peter Lang, Spectrum Slovakia Series Volume 23; Bratislava: VEDA, 2019. ISBN 978-3-631-80316-5; 978-80-224-1788-4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.6.8>

From May 2019 to July 2020, that is from the centenary of his tragic death to the 140th anniversary of his birth, was declared the “long” year of Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Slovakia. As one of the leading creators of the Czecho-Slovak state, Štefánik was one of the key personalities, who shaped the modern history of Slovakia and the Slovaks. Many books and articles, both academic and popular, documentary films and theatre plays, were produced in Slovakia on this occasion. They include several books published by the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Especially the books by Michal Kšiňan, Peter Macho and Slavomír Michálek have the ambition to also address the academic community, bringing new information about Štefánik or shifting interpretations of him.

Kšiňan's historical biography represents a conceptually reconsidered academic work, lacking in Slovakia up to now, although this may be surprising in relation to the importance of Štefánik in Slovak history. The Slovak public is impatiently awaiting a Slovak language version. Kšiňan's work is based on a multitude of archive sources, published sources and an extensive bibliography. No work on Štefánik published up to now has such a rich and firm factual research background. This basis has enabled the author to bring to Štefánik's biography various new facts, and to correct old often repeated stereotypes.

It is necessary to state that historical biography represents an extraordinarily demanding genre, clearly the most demanding for analysis and explanation. Knowledge

of the period and circumstances in which a person acted is a pre-condition for a high quality biography. We often encounter statements that important personalities “outgrew” or “were ahead of” their time, but it is also true that all personalities are marked or influenced by the period in which they lived. Nobody lives “outside time”. For successful historical biography, it is not enough to only know the facts about a person’s life, the author must also know something about psychology, because a person’s psychological character also determines his public activity. Michal Kšíňan conceived his book with a theoretical preparation, which enabled him to find a balance, but also connection between Štefánik’s private and public lives.

Kšíňan’s book is not conceptually based on the chronological – linear method, but on solid thematic studies. The introductory chapter is devoted to the history of Slovakia in the “fin de siècle” period. Although this chapter is brief, it assists understanding of the starting points from which the personality Štefánik emerged as a son of “his time”. In the following chapters, the author devotes attention to the remarkable rise of a person from an area of small rural settlements. This is Štefánik’s dominant story line: from poor village parsonage to the salons of Paris. The third chapter endeavours to depict Štefánik as a visionary and charismatic personality – another feature that accompanied his whole life. The fourth chapter is devoted to more extensive consideration of Štefánik’s main work: creation of the Czecho-Slovak state. The final chapter is devoted to the question of Štefánik’s identity and connected questions including that of the use or misuse of his tragic death. The chapter actually forms an independent discourse on this theme.

When considering Štefánik’s identity, the author leaves various questions open or only outlined. Štefánik’s identity was undoubtedly complex and so was the period that influenced it. It is clear that he had a Slovak identity, which can be documented by various facts. Among other things, when he gave his nationality on going to university in Prague, he unambiguously stated: “slovač”. There are also the memories of his contemporaries. However, for Štefánik, Slovak identity merged with Czechoslovak identity, which had a political character. The Czecho-Slovak state was definitely Štefánik’s most important life’s work. His French identity also appears definite, although the fact that for Štefánik French citizenship was an important practical factor also played a role here. Other potential identities mentioned by the author: namely Italian or relating to the historic Kingdom of Hungary, supposedly expressed in his ostentatious gallantry, probably do not fulfil the criteria required for national or ethnic identity. There were some expressions of sympathy or life style, but that is on a different level from identity. When describing the relations between the so-called Big Three (Masaryk, Štefánik, Beneš), the author expresses doubts about the unambiguously positive relationship between Masaryk and Štefánik, but does not document his doubts with relevant arguments. As far as it is about differences of views on the so-called Washington Declaration, which those who want to see a Masaryk – Štefánik split like to mention, these are well documented in telegrams between the two, which clarified the matter. It is the same with Masaryk’s refusal to answer the question from Marchioness Benzoni on whether he liked Štefánik. It is necessary to know Masaryk and his rejection of strongly emotional statements, if we are to understand his relations with Štefánik. The two men were opposites in this respect. Štefánik spoke almost as if he was Masaryk’s son from his student days to the

end of his life. Such openly emotional expressions were unpleasant for Masaryk, and he avoided them. However, this does not change his evaluation of Štefánik as a successful and extraordinarily useful representative of the struggle in exile. This was how Masaryk saw him and described him in the book *Světová revoluce* (*The Making of the State*) and many other documents.

It is necessary to value the author's effort to achieve impartial evaluation of the existing literature and various views on the causes of the air disaster in which he died. However, it is questionable whether it is possible to have a reasonable discussion of the awkward, unargued views of ideologues and doubtful publicists. These views penetrate into discourse without clear rejection because they cannot be argued again, and are only "shots in the dark", which raise writings to the level of serious works.

Peter Macho's book already attracts attention with its design and cover, where we find an entirely untraditional portrait of Štefánik by the artist Jozef Dablár Gertli. We find Štefánik surrounded by the symbolic attributes through which Slovak society perceives him: the general's hat, blue eyes in an unshaven face, his life motto: Believe, love, work (there are naturally more such mottos), military stamp with the number of the asteroid named after Štefánik, the design for the Czecho-Slovak flag on a glove and so on. Peter Macho's book is less about Štefánik as a person and more about Štefánik as a symbol. This is connected with the author's expert orientation, which is directed towards historical memory, its changes and its place in social consciousness.

Peter Macho has studied the memory of Štefánik for a long time. Numerous studies published in various magazines and journals became the basis on which he could conceive this relatively extensive monograph. In the introduction, we find a relatively brief biography of Štefánik, which serves only as a starting point to enable the reader to understand the subjects of the following chapters. Peter Macho argues with the widespread view that Štefánik was an unknown person in Slovakia before his death. On the other hand, the facts he mentions show that Štefánik was present in part of the Slovak press and in the circles of the Slovak intelligentsia, which was so small that they all knew each other. The truth lies mainly in how we perceive this knowledge or ignorance. From the time of his studies in Prague, Štefánik came to Slovakia only for more or less occasional holidays. The circle of his acquaintances was not large, and the community of readers of the *Hlas (Voice)* and other publications where he sometimes appeared was not wide. He was known mainly to his immediate and extended family and to some leading members of the Evangelical intelligentsia. He only really became known to the whole of Slovakia after his death and ostentatious funeral, which is also a subject of Macho's book. The author also devoted a relatively extensive chapter to the history of Štefánik's possessions, which last received attention in Eva Králiková's book.

Peter Macho's book also contains an account of how the Štefánik cult began to develop in the years of the First Republic and in Czech as well as Slovak society. He devotes relatively detailed attention to the origin and reception of Jan Svíták's film from 1935. In the responses to the film, we can trace how the Štefánik cult influenced the reception of the film by the public and film critics already in the years of threat to the Czechoslovak Republic.

“Štefánik in the public space” is the theme of another extensive chapter, which also speaks of the period and its relationship to Štefánik more than about Milan Rastislav himself. Statues and busts of Štefánik, streets and squares named after him have their extraordinarily varied fates. Consideration of Štefánik Slavism is interesting. It is generally known that Štefánik was a globetrotter, free-thinker and free mason. While travelling to Turkestan, he visited his favourite writer Lev Nikolajevich Tolstoy, but otherwise we do not find much Slavism in his life. His Slavism was shifted in an unusual direction – towards the south, where it would be based on his military activity on the Serbian front and other pro-Yugoslav activities. Paradoxically, after 1939, Štefánik, an Evangelical by baptism, became an object of veneration by the mainly Catholic Slovak Ludáks, and his Slavism was emphasized in connection with the Catholic Croats.

There is also an interesting chapter on Bradlo as a symbol – a “national sacrosanctum” as Peter Macho calls it in his book. The fates of Bradlo through the decades, especially during the fateful events of 1938/39 and 1968 are also dramatic testimony to the fate of the country. Peter Macho’s book gives many interesting details, which the author has “dug up” from various published and archive sources during many years of study.

Slavomír Michálek’s book contains seven biographies of Slovak diplomats. It begins with Milan Rastislav Štefánik, who is also a dominant and inspiring personality in this field. In Austria-Hungary ethnic Slovaks had no chance to apply themselves as diplomats. For many decades, this profession was a privilege of the nobility, and although in the last decades of the existence of the Habsburg Monarchy, members of the middle class gradually and timidly began to apply themselves in diplomacy, there were no Slovaks among them. Štefánik was an astronomer by profession, a field far from diplomacy. He did not have a military education either, but he became a general, and as a soldier he applied himself especially in the field of military diplomacy. While still a civilian he showed his diplomatic ability especially during his mission in Ecuador, for which a gained a French state award. During the First World War he also gained attention from his diplomatic activities during his mission in Russia, where he was able to unite the quarrelling Czechs and Slovaks in Russia, and push them into joint participation in the struggle led by the Czechoslovak National Council. Another extraordinary success was winning the support of Italian politicians for the Czecho-Slovak exile struggle. In this way, Štefánik showed natural diplomatic talent by convincing people and winning their support. He always knew what arguments he had to use in a given situation.

Štefánik stood at the head of a whole series of other Slovaks, who were able to apply themselves in diplomacy mainly after the origin of the Czechoslovak Republic. The first in the series is Štefan Osuský. He was followed by Vladimír Hurban, Vladimír Martin Palic, Juraj Slávik, Ivan Krno and Ján Papánek. It is interesting that half of them came from Štefánik’s district. Štefan Osuský and Ján Papánek were born in Brezová, to which Štefánik’s home village of Košariská was administratively subordinate. Ivan Krno was born in Myjava. Vladimír Hurban was born in Turčiansky Sv. Martin, but his grandfather, a famous leader of the Slovaks in the revolutionary year 1848–1849, was Evangelical pastor at Hlboké. If we add that Vladimír Martin Palic was born in a village of the foot

of the Biele Karpáty, it appears that the district below Bradlo and Veľká Javorina gave Slovakia and the world some important diplomats.

Štefan Osuský, whose signature we find on the Treaty of Trianon, and Ján Papánek, one of the 14 diplomats, who formulated the final text of the United Nations Charter, are undoubtedly the first class stars in this Slovak “diplomatic pantheon”. Vladimír Hurban also participated in the founding assembly of the UN in San Francisco as a member of the Czechoslovak delegation. Ivan Krno was Deputy General Secretary of the UN. Juraj Slávik participated in the Paris Peace Conference of 1946 as a member of the Czechoslovak delegation. The gains from Michálek’s book include the fact that apart from these best known diplomats, he presents another important but less known diplomat: Vladimír Martin Palic, first secretary of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington, who had worked as a leading specialist at the Library of Congress in Washington for twenty years, after emigrating to the USA.

The three books in three languages from the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences are important contributions to spreading knowledge of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, and in the last case also of his successors in the field of diplomacy. It is necessary to hope that after the end of Štefánik’s Year research on him will continue, because these three important publications also show that many aspects of this important personality are still not sufficiently known.

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KÁZMEROVÁ, Ľubica. *PRÍBEH UČITEĽA. Jozef Sivák v školských službách 1918 – 1944*. [THE STORY OF A TEACHER. Jozef Sivák in the Educational Service 1918 – 1944]. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Veda, 2019, 108 pages, ISBN 978-80-224-1745-5.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.6.9>

The author Ľ. Kázmerová has long devoted her publishing activity to the problem of schools, education and spreading of information in Slovakia during the period of great changes from 1918 to 1945. Numerous books and studies are evidence of this. Her latest publication is also a contribution to the history of education, schools and teaching in Slovakia. By sharpening our view of the teacher, school inspector, publicist, Member of Parliament for the Slovak People’s Party (SPP, from 1925 Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party – HSPP) and Minister of Education Jozef Sivák, the publication reviewed here has the potential to interest not only historians and experts on education, but also the wider teaching community. The author presents Jozef Sivák as a person who devoted the greater part of his working life to educational and cultural activities. From his many sided activities, she devotes attention to that which appears to have been his dominant concern in the period 1918–1944. This was questions of education in the political context of the People’s Party, although Jozef Sivák recast them according to his own ideas and made them more specific in practice. In this spirit, Ľ. Kázmerová has mapped the views and activities of J. Sivák in the context of their social significance. By presenting a