

REVIEWS

MANNOVÁ, Elena. *MINULOSŤ AKO SUPERMARKET? Spôsoby reprezentácie a aktualizácie dejín Slovenska*. [THE PAST AS A SUPERMARKET? Ways of presenting and up-dating the history of Slovakia]. Bratislava: Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences; VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2019, 463 pages. ISBN 978-80-224-1706-8.

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This academic publication with a rather untraditional, even explicitly provocative title, presents themes that are not very frequently considered in Slovak historiography. Individual chapters of the book represent modified versions of texts already published by the author. The introduction initiates us into the “mysteries” of individual phenomena and concepts such as historical consciousness and historical knowledge, tradition, historical memory or place of memory (*lieux de mémoires*) of the French historian Pierre Nora. The author acknowledges that personally she is close to the conception of memory as a social palimpsest, for which it is characteristic that it is constantly being rewritten, or provided with new layers for events, personalities, evaluations and meanings. However, in the book she also works with the concept of cultural representation. It is concerned with collectively shared social and cultural knowledge – especially the shaping and communication of an image of the past that is presented as real. Under this summarized concept, it is possible to include social categorization, stereotypes, images and mythical stories. They are associated with elites that have the power to classify, name and promote their visions of the world in all or part of society.

The following chapters consider the role of myths in the formation of modern nationally defined communities, for example, the political myth and national memory. The second part of the publication is devoted to analysis of the “second” lives of two female personalities, who are not authentic members of the Slovak national pantheon: St. Elizabeth of Hungary and the Empress and Queen Maria Theresa. The author not only points to the changes of image and story with their social, political and ideological functions, but also analyses the concrete mechanisms, media, relevant elites or social and confessional groups, which identified with these personalities. In connection with Maria Theresa, she points not only to the state propaganda of her time, but also, for example, to the gender context.

In the third part of the book, attention is directed to the phenomenon of celebrations. The author explains the conceptual and terminological ambiguity in Slovak and other languages, using the words “slávnosť” and “oslava”, which both mean “celebration”. She seeks an answer to the question of how celebration and remembering of the revolutionary year 1848 helps to shape collective identification in the Slovak and Hungarian environment. She states that the Hungarian memory of the revolution is more intensive and widespread, celebrations in the Hungarian environment, including among the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, have a more spontaneous character and connection with

folk and popular culture. While the historical personalities – Lajos Kossuth and Sándor Petőfi – associated with the revolution still have an important place in the Hungarian historical memory, in Slovakia it is not so. Jozef Miloslav Hurban leader of the Slovak volunteers is not very intensively present in oral folklore.

The chapter on the Slovak National Uprising of 1944 concentrates on anniversary celebrations and changes of view of this historical phenomenon. The author points to connections with the ruling political regime. From 1945 to 1948, before the communist regime came to power, there was pluralism in the memories of activists. After 1948, the Communist Party monopolized the explanation and interpretation of the uprising. In the end this meant an emphasis on the uprising as the beginning of the project to modernize or industrialize Slovakia and the beginning of the road to communism. Today, the official narrative emphasizes the pro-European dimension of the Slovak National Uprising, but counter-narratives persist in society, and part of the Slovak population still identifies with the Ľudák regime. The author also devotes considerable attention to the artistic representation of this phenomenon, for example, in sculpture, monuments and films. She points to the fact that in the course of historical development there has been a transition from remembering heroes to commemorating victims.

The fourth part includes two chapters devoted to the discovery of medieval and modern Bratislava or Prešporok from the 19th to 21st centuries. This does not serve only the shaping of collective identity or memory, but also the tourist industry, as in the case of re-enactment of coronation ceremonies in present-day Bratislava.

Part five of the book is also oriented towards local memory, this time extending beyond Bratislava. Chapters concentrate on Komárno, a town on the Slovak – Hungarian frontier, notable as the cultural centre of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and Levoča, from the Middle Ages, the traditional centre of the Spiš Germans. In the broad complex of identities, memories and loyalties, the author interprets the development and changes of such phenomena, covering celebrations and rituals, (self)-images and narratives, symbols and monuments. The situation in present-day Komárno, where the national Hungarian or Slovak pasts are represented in the public space especially by monuments, shows the rivalry and competition between Slovak and Hungarian nationalism. For example, there have been conflicts over the placing of a “Slovak” monument to Sts. Cyril and Methodius or a “Hungarian” monument to the King and Saint Stephen of Hungary.

The book is on a high expert level in cultivated language. Its graphic design and choice of illustrations are equally high quality. It is a pity that the text includes some small mistakes, although they do not really lower the author’s high standard. They include calling Zita Bourbon-Parma “Empress of Austria-Hungary” (p. 209), describing Philip Melanchthon as Martin Luther’s successor (p. 255), and using inadequate terms, for example, stating that services were celebrated in German in the Evangelical church in Levoča (p. 364). The reviewed publication is one of the best to be published on this theme in Slovakia. It provides theoretical and methodological insight into this problem.

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