

SUMMARY

The aim of the presented collection of 29 chapters and essays is to sketch a comprehensive picture of Slovak society, reflecting the interactions between its political and cultural elites, as well as the coherence of historiography and historical consciousness in the 20th century. It might be stressed that these relations weren't static, although in their frames, some resistant stereotypes arose which are still very popular in some parts of Slovak society. The stereotypes, auto-stereotypes and myths never failed to exist; just the contrary – they were going through a process of specific evolution, influenced by numerous fundamental, state-political and constitutional changes, that attended the life of Slovak society in the past century. These changes, or better, ruptures with global social impact had not only positive, but also – and this seems to be the majority of the cases – negative consequences for the situation of particular generations living in Slovakia. Simultaneously, they determined all spheres of cultural life of Slovak society, much like the Slovak historiography influencing both its internal development and its perception by the public.

The presented work is divided into four thematic parts. First of them is dealing with both the direct and the indirect impact of political events and decisions taken by the administration on citizens, i.e. particular parts of society. This is the reason, why the tragic issue of the so-called social engineering and Holocaust is also taken into consideration. The author is supposing, that the discrimination and persecution of certain groups of population defined by their nationality, religious, racial or class identity afflicted not only individual victims, but, taking into account its global impact, it was a tragedy for the whole society. In particular it devastated the moral, cultural and religious values of the society and its constitutional consciousness.

Culture also suffered by these socio-political processes. The culture and its prominent representatives enjoyed a specific position within the public life in Slovakia, since they were either substituting the absenting “national policy” or they were an active part of this policy – representing and defending universal ideals of humanity proclaimed by themselves or, in other cases, representing the political elites. This contradicted engagement and existing intellectual disunity were symptomatic especially during the existence of non-democratic, i.e. totalitarian political regimes, which afflicted the most part of the decades of Slovak history in the 20th century. As a logical consequence, it resulted not only in disappointment and frustration of Slovak cultural elites, but also in loss of confidence by the citizens in what they have represented.

The situation of the Slovak historiography that, as a professional scientific discipline and in its institutional form was going through a process of intensive development just in the frames of communist regime was some kind similar. Just as the culture, the Slovak historiography was also strongly influenced and eventually deformed by the political reality. Slovak professional historiography was facing two main challenges: on the one hand it had to reflect scientific problems and questions and, on the other hand, there was a necessity of defending its own social status and position within the social

hierarchy. This position only partly resulted from the scientific outputs of the Slovak historiography, since the role it had to play was strictly defined by the communist state. During that time, the Slovak historiography was going through a difficult development including hopes, unfulfilled illusions, disappointments, disgraceful moral and professional failures, but also happier stages such as significant achievements or civil resistance against the political regime and its leading figures. From today's perspective, taking into account these phenomenons, the biggest detriment the Slovak historiography had to suffer seems to be the multiple interruption of natural continuity of its development and the visible lack of confidence on the side of citizens that it is permanently trying to regain. On the other hand it should be pointed out that in spite of unfavorable political and social conditions in the past the Slovak professional historiography achieved remarkable scientific results that allowed, after 1989, to be a part of European scientific community.

Fourth thematic part of the presented book is dedicated to chosen historical personalities playing significant role in the modern history of Slovakia. Also reflected are chosen historians, which in their professional career and work were able to harmonize their scientific abilities with their civic attitudes, regardless of the risks.