
SUMMARY

Candidates for Power and Success Formation of Elites in Modern History

There has been always been a great buzz around Valerián Bystrický. It is not different even today. His study is almost continuously occupied by his friends, colleagues and pupils. They work not only at his household institution – the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences – but also at other scholarly institutions and universities. They come to him for a friendly chat and to discuss their professional issues expecting his opinion and advice. Authors who participated on this publication represent a small sample of them. The topics included in this book represent a very broad and colorful spectrum and the same can be said about the view and professional erudition of Dr. Bystrický. It would be not very useful to list all the topics he has dealt with. They can be found in the selected bibliography of his writings at the end of this book. It doesn't matter if he is dealing with European or Slovak history; the 1st and 2nd Czechoslovak republic or the war Slovak republic; politics, personalities or society – all his works are characterized by comprehension, detachment and great knowledge of sources. He doesn't belong to theoreticians or speculative methodologists of various systems and –isms. He goes to the problem always *in medias res*. His method is the accurate documentation of historical processes and consistent knowledge about the searched topic and sources. That is how his pertinent works based on arguments had been created. Many of them belong to fundamental and pioneering works of our historiography.

We must admire the curiousness and interest of Dr. Bystrický for new problems. We can say that a man with such an erudition and detachment can't be surprised easily. It is a gift or a privilege that there is always something which he is interested in – he is still able to contemplate and to think intensely about historical and social problems. He is a proponent of the necessity to always take a clear and resolute stand to key questions. He is not shy to let his positive or negative attitude be known. The latter possibility brought numerous stories, occasional good-hearted acrimonies and anecdotes that are still very popular. They originated from the fact that he is a well-known enemy of small-mindedness and petty wars. As he often says: „*Something is always going to happen.*”

For a scholar of his caliber, one must admire the graciousness of Dr. Bystrický which has an extra significance in the scholarly circles. In connection with his natural authority, it has a special value mainly for the middle generation of today's historians. He has always treated them with human understanding and they have had the opportunity to cooperate with a wise and helpful man.