

Reviews

MACHÁČEK, Ladislav: *Ako sa máte Maďari na Slovensku?* (Are Hungarians getting well in Slovakia?)

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The author - professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, presents a specific approach to the analysis of Slovak-Hungarian relations in his publication. The relations between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia are usually the subject of many sociological researches in the Slovak population. The publication *Ako sa máte Maďari na Slovensku?* (Are Hungarians getting well in Slovakia?) is based on the research project Enria EAST, which analyzes opinions, attitudes, values and expectations from the representative sample of the Hungarian minority, but not exclusively in national issues.

The first chapter entitled *Historical and sociological contexts of minority issue in Slovakia* leans on the results of the 2001 census, according to which the Hungarians represent about 10 % of the population of the Slovak Republic. Most Hungarians live very closely to the Hungarian border in southern Slovakia and exceed 10 % of the local population in five counties (kraj). The author agrees with Marcela Gbúrová that the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is not only the most numerous but also most developed civil and cultural minority. The election results of the parties representing the Hungarian minority are the proof of this forwardness. The Hungarian minority was organised politically in the SMK-MKP that was a member of the ruling coalition of the Slovak Republic (1998 – 2006) and consistently acquires approximately 15 % of the parliamentary seats in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The Hungarian minority has a strong participation in the regional self-governments and has a majority position in the municipal councils in many towns and villages. Thus, it is interesting that no candidate for Chairman of the autonomous region from the political parties of the Hungarian minority won the election. The author emphasizes that major society is sensitive to the decisions of municipal self-governments in cases of limiting the cultural rights of the Slovak minority in cities with a Hungarian majority (e.g.: the acceptance of placing a statue of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in the Komarno city center).

A description of the Enri EAST research project is an integral part of the introductory chapter. The project should render new data about the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The research profile provides a possibility not only for a comparison with other researches carried out in Slovakia in the recent years

(Krivý, V.; Mészáros-Lamplová, Z.; Homišinová, M.), but also for comparing the conditions for the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, and for the Slovak minority in Hungary. The Enria EAST project provides an opportunity to clarify the effect of state policy in the field of cultural development of national minorities in those countries.

The second chapter is entitled *The role of ethnicity in collective (social) identity*. The concept of identity should be strictly construed in situational contexts. The identity of an ordinary citizen is multi-layered, and layers internally do not interact with each other. This socio-constructivist conception of identity is held by the authors of the research, and the respondents made use of three options. Out of 801 respondents in Slovakia, 174 respondents chose "important" for the identity in the first place category of "national identity", 145 respondents chose this option in the second round of selection, and 107 respondents did so in the third round. The ethnic dimension of identity is considered as the most important by 17.7 % of the Hungarian respondents in Slovakia. Other important identity dimensions are gender (14.9 %), age (11.4 %), the municipality in which they live (12.3 %), employment (9 %), the Slovak citizenship (7 %), and Europeanism (4.7 %). Other components (social class and party affiliation) occupy a negligible position. For the Slovak citizens with Hungarian ethnicity, nationality is of a significant, but only complementary importance in the field of role-status identities.

The comparison of the Slovaks in Hungary, the Hungarians in Ukraine, and the Hungarians in Slovakia demonstrates that countries and their national minorities are really different in those segments of their own identity they regard as important. The Slovak Hungarians more often than the other minorities derive their identity from the town or city in which they live. In particular, the demonstration of civic loyalty of a minority to the state is the most important for the Slovaks living in Hungary (14 – 17 %) if compared with the Hungarians in Slovakia (6 – 9 %), but particularly with the Hungarians in Ukraine (1.2 to 3.8 %). In Ukraine, the citizens of the Hungarian minority mainly emphasize their confessional identity that is different (Orthodox) from the majority population. The third chapter presents an identification construct of the Enria EAST project which was created by combining two indicators: the "national identity" and the "citizenship." The respondents in Slovakia made use of four options for the self-categorization and most members of the ethnic minorities were identified with the characteristic "I am a Hungarian living in Slovakia" (68 %). Two groups of a relatively same size chose the identity "I am a Hungarian" (16 %) or "I am Slovak with Hungarian origins" (13 %). Only a few individuals indicated that they are Slovaks (1 %).

The research results hypothesize that "adaptation" or "acceptance" of coexistence with the majority society does not automatically mean a "cultural

assimilation" or the loss of "ethnic identity". According to the author, „...the willingness of the Slovak Hungarians to prove certain "civic loyalty" to the state framework of its existence, which is balanced by adequate possibilities of cultural development, confirms the hypothesis“ (p. 26). The examples obtained by a qualitative method of individual depth interviews clearly show the fact that respondents identify "citizenship" and "nationality" as two separate but interdependent entities.

The identity type "I am a Hungarian living in Slovakia" is the core identity for the Slovak citizens with Hungarian nationality and it is indicated by slightly higher pride in this form of identity compared to the others. This form is experienced more intensely, up to 44.2 % of the respondents are very proud of being "Hungarians living in Slovakia." This chapter also analyses what it means to be a "true Hungarian". The respondents take into consideration speaking fluently the Hungarian language (72.5 %) as well as feeling like Hungarians (69.2 %) to be the most important factors. The Hungarian ancestry (38.5 %) is much less important than the first categories, and other factors, such as religion or to be born or live in Hungary, are even less important.

According to the research results, the opportunity to develop identity through own cultural customs and traditions by communication with friends (66.7 %) and reading newspapers and magazines (53.2 %) in the Hungarian language have the greatest importance for the respondents. The language is thus perceived as a symbol of minority identity and also as an instrument of its conservation and development. The results also indicate that the Hungarian language is the only language spoken in families and households (75.4 %). In many families, communication among its members is commonly carried out in both the Slovak and Hungarian languages (21 %), and there is only a small number of families speaking exclusively in the Slovak language (3.4 %).

A preference of the Slovak and Hungarian communication channels for obtaining new information about the latest development in society was also one of the project's partial objectives. Surprisingly, while Slovak newspapers and those dedicated to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia are more popular than the original Hungarian periodicals, the Hungarian television is watched about 20 % more often than the Slovak one. Moreover, there is a considerably very low interest in watching the programs designed for the Hungarian minority broadcasted by the Slovak Television, which is regularly watched by only 3.5 % of the respondents. The situation in radio broadcasting is different: the Hungarian radios dominate in the radio popularity, followed by the Slovak Radio, and specialized programs for the Hungarian minority in the Slovak Radio are listened by the smallest group of respondents.

In Slovakia, the dispute over the state and minority languages has been in the centre of political and public debates for many years. The research results indicate a relatively positive development of the Slovak language usage as well as an attitude of the Hungarian minority towards its usage in the daily communication. According to the author, Hedviga Malinova's case has served to aggravate national tensions for a very long time. Therefore, the research questions dedicated to the perception of the social inequalities and disparities, conflicts and discrimination are still up to date. Do the respondents consider them as a source for social conflicts? The nationality tension between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian one is perceived by the respondents as the third most acute (11.7 %). According to the project, the tension between the Roma minority and the Slovak citizens (35.8 %), and that between the rich and the poor (23 %) are more acute. The relations between different religious groups are problematic only for a small group of respondents (7 %). Thus, the antagonism between different nationalities in Slovakia is not considered as the most critical and important aspect in the society common life.

The seventh chapter deals with the personal and institutional trust in Slovak society. The issues related to discrimination show that the Slovak Hungarians have experience with discrimination not only owing to their nationality (12.9 %), but they were also discriminated because of their age (9.1 %), gender (4.6 %) or even, in exceptional cases, of their religion (1.4 %). On average, one of the 10 Slovak Hungarians has experienced discrimination because of her/his nationality. Some cases of ethnic discrimination are illustrated in the examples of the in-depth interviews with the respondents.

In general sociological surveys, trust to social institutions and groups of people of a different race or ethnicity is monitored continuously. The phenomenon "trust between people in general" is essential for the distinction from "trust" for persons of other nationality which is usually monitored in a given community and given time. The Slovak Hungarians can be characterized by relatively high "trust in people" (61.5 %). Average trust in the Slovaks reaches 64.4 %. It is obvious that trust in the Hungarians living in Slovakia (77.5 %) and those living in Hungary (71.8 %) is higher.

In principle, trust opinion polls illustrate that the Slovaks show relatively low trust not only in the executive power (government) or legislative (parliament), but mainly in politicians and political parties. The citizens of the Hungarian minority show the greatest skepticism for the government (66.5 %) and parliament (65.6 %), followed by the judicial system (59.2 %) and police (55.6 %). The best position among the respondents was obtained by media (mistrust manifested only by 49.5 % of the respondents). All public opinion surveys in Slovakia also confirm that the Hungarian minority has relatively

high civic and political participation especially in comparison with the majority population. The research focused on the specification of this overall trend. In the Hungarian minority, mild interest in politics (35 – 40 %) dominates over strong interest and political apathy. In this case, the Slovak Hungarians concern themselves less frequently and less intensely with politics of Hungary than with that of Slovakia. The focus on the area of problems that are directly related to the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia is the dominant part of this interest. There is an increasing share of the respondents with high and intense interest (from 12.2 % to 20.8 %) in this field.

The research informatively deals with the participation of the respondents in the latest two elections: the parliamentary elections in 2006 and the European ones in 2009. In both cases, it was confirmed that the participation of the Slovak citizens of the Hungarian nationality had been higher than the general average Slovak turnout. The respondents chose the SMK – the Hungarian Coalition Party the most often. But not all members of the Hungarian minority voted for the Hungarian political parties. Both the SDKÚ and SMER-SD received a relatively large share of votes from the Hungarian minority.

In Slovakia, the process of integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions was relatively problematic after 1993. But the Hungarian citizens express their positive attitudes not only to the EU as a specific institution (50.7 %), but also to the positive evaluation of the benefits that the EU membership has brought for Slovakia (58.1 %). The position of minorities is associated with this aspect, too. According to the respondents, the level of "recognition of the Hungarian culture" is the same after Slovakia's accession to the EU as before (52.6 %). Similarly, the citizens with the Hungarian nationality reflect the case "application of the minority voice in politics" (45.6 %). Deteriorating and improving conditions for the cultural development of the Hungarian minority or deterioration of the ability to exercise minority claims in politics are perceived by approximately the same proportion of the respondents (16 % – 23 %). The Slovak citizens with Hungarian nationality, as well as the citizens of the old EU member states, show some concerns for the consequences or the side effects of the integration process. It is noteworthy that the critical concern is not connected with the integration and "ethnic" issues, but mainly with the personal and family safety and social security.

The final chapter is devoted to generational aspects in the transformation processes of ethnic minority identity and specific communication and information channels used by generations, to the Hungarian identity and its generational dimensions and to the civic and political participation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. In principle, the younger generation does not associate the integration process with the concerns of losing its ethnic identity. But the older generation does. Although the publication contains a conclusion

at its end, the last chapter excellently summarizes the main results of the research and the attitudes and opinions of the Hungarian minority in a wide range of issues, not only the national ones.

The reviewed publication specifies some areas that have been discussed in the above mentioned sociological researches, but also provides new answers to the questions which have not been asked till today. At this point it should be noted that chapters in this publication are mostly attractively and suitably supplemented by testimonies of the respondents. It increases the attractiveness for readers from the non-academic community, for instance from the civil society. At the same time, testimonies of the Hungarian minority prove that the radical nationalist and civil disloyal opinions are definitely not a majority position among the Hungarians living in Slovakia. The materials published in the annex (pp. 77-78) show that the Slovak massmedia are tendenciously biased to present the research results. Especially the ability and usage of the Slovak language by the Hungarian minority serve to attract the media attention.

The political and scientific contribution of the reviewed publication consist in the whole complex of data clarifying the fact that the nationalist radical political party SMK did not receive a such number of votes in the 2010 and 2012 parliamentary elections as the MOST-HID which accentuated national understanding and civic cooperation.

The publication has a potential to provide useful and interesting information for both the Slovak or Hungarian civic spheres that can transform it into a better understanding of other cultures and increasing the overall tolerance of our society.

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