

Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III

Re-thinking the meaning
of Symbiosis -Past,
Present and Future

Edited by

Osamu Ieda

and

Susumu Nagayo

Waseda University Press

Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III

Re-thinking the meaning of Symbiosis—Past, Present and Future

Editors: Osamu IEDA, Susumu NAGAYO

First published in 2018 by
Waseda University Press Co., Ltd.
1-9-12 Nishiwaseda
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0051
www.waseda-up.co.jp

© 2018 by Osamu Ieda, Susumu Nagayo

All rights reserved. Except for short extracts used for academic purposes or book reviews, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form whatsoever—electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise—without the prior and written permission of the publisher.

ISBN978-4-657-18003-2

Printed in Japan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	5
----------------	-------	---

I. Investigating the Past

Chapter 1

Propaganda and “Realpolitik.” T. G. Masaryk and His Attitude towards Hungary and the Magyars during and after World War I.

Dušan KOVÁČ	7
-------------	-------	---

Chapter 2

Upheaval of 1918/1919 in Pressburg/Bratislava

–An example of differing representations of a common past in Historiography

Gabriela DUDEKOVÁ KOVÁČOVÁ	21
----------------------------	-------	----

Chapter 3

The Aftermath of Renaming Bratislava after 1919

–A Reflection on the Name of a City in the Borderlands(Part III)

Susumu NAGAYO	37
---------------	-------	----

II. Viewing the Present

Chapter 4

Memory of the First World War

–A “resurrection” of a Prisoners of War Cemetery 59

Barnabás VAJDA		
----------------	--	--

Chapter 5*National Identity as Future Aspirations**–Analysing the Results of Questionnaires of Hungarian Students at Selye János University in Komárno, Slovakia, in 2011 and 2014*

Tatsuya NAKAZAWA 69

Chapter 6*Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Research of the Slovak-Hungarian Relationships in History**–Possibilities of Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences*

Štefan ŠUTAJ 77

III. Sounding the Future**Chapter 7***Hungarian “Minority” Networks and Borderland Community under Political Influences of the Slovak-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation*

Yuko KAMBARA 93

Chapter 8*Another Referendum in 2016 on Migration in Hungary**–A New Europe from East?*

Osamu IEDA 113

Record on our panel at the IX ICCEES World Congress, Makuhari, 2015 131*Report of the joint project “Road to a Multidimensional Ethnic Symbiosis: The Mid-Danube Region and EU Integration” (2013-2018)* 143

Memory of the First World War

- A “resurrection” of a Prisoners of War Cemetery

Barnabás Vajda

(University of Selye János, Komárno, Slovakia)

Introduction

In this study I would like to describe a particular way of keeping the memory of the First World War alive. More precisely, here comes an example when and where some positive attitudes toward history and the historical past could enrich an urban neighbourhood, Hungarians and Slovaks alike, and even perhaps the international community.

If we speak about the First World War, an event increasingly referred to as The Great War in recent historiography, and especially if we research the memory of the Great War, we can not neglect the contemporary scientific discourse about it within Slovak historiography. It is important to note that the first synthesis or general overview of the Great War from the Slovak perspective was written in 2008, by a renowned group of Slovak historians at the Slovak Academy of Sciences led by Dušan Kováč¹, including authors such as Gabriela Dudeková, Roman Holec, Marián Hronský, Elena Jakešová, Elena Mannová, and Milan Podrimavský. As far as Prisoners of War (POW) of the Great War are concerned, we have to name a recent work by Jana Zařková² who has written a groundbreaking and powerful story of the POWs who spent the time of their captivity in Austrian-Hungarian POW Camps. It is also worth listing further significant works on the specificities of the Great War, for example by Gabriela

1 Dušan Kováč a kol: Prvá svetová vojna 1914-1918. Veda vyd. Slovenskej akadémie vied, Bratislava, 2008.

2 Jana Zařková: Zabudnutí vojaci. Zajatci v oblasti Vojenského veliteľstva Bratislava 1914 - 1918, Bratislava, Vojenský historický ústav v spolupráci s o. z. Pro Militaria Historica, 2013.

Dudeková, Dušan Kováč, and László Vörös - significant scientific contributions that deal with either the Great War itself or its memory.³

It is probably not an incident that there has been a significant progress and good Slovak books written on historical memory. Books have been written not only on the memory of the Great War, but on historical memory, including „cultural and communicative memory according to Jan Assmann”, and the „realms of memory (lieux de mémoire)” etc. I am sure it is not only me who thinks that research on historical memory, transitions of historical memory, and especially research on historical symbols, myths, traditions or notions have made significant progress in contemporary Slovakia. I can refer to some research conducted by distinguished Slovak colleagues such as Slávka Otčenášová, Eva Kowalská, Gabriela Kilianová, Juraj Podoba, Oľga Danglová, and Eva Krekovičová.

I. Memory of the Great War's POWs - A Local „Resurrection”

In the next part, I focus on a particular historical revitalization process, i.e., on a revitalization of a Great War POW Cemetery in Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda, Slovakia.⁴

In Dunaszerdahely, there was a big POW Camp between 1914 and 1918, situated in and around the Western edges of the town, referred to even today as Tábora utca [*literally: Camp Street*]. There were times during the First World War when there were up to 35,000 POWs there. Since many captive soldiers, who fought in alliance with the Allied Powers (Entente), died due to different diseases (most typically dysentery), there was a POW's Cemetery established in Dunaszerdahely, some 2 kilometers away from the POW Camp itself, further from the town, in a locality called Sikabony, a separate small village at that

3 See e.g. (i) Gabriela Dudeková: *Stratégie prežitia v mimoriadnej situácii. Vplyv Veľkej vojny na rodinu na území Slovenska*. In: *Forum Historiae*, 2009, roč. 3, č. 1.; (ii) Dušan Kováč a kol.: *Slováci pri budovaní základov Československej republiky*. Literárne informačné centrum, Bratislava, 2013; (iii) László Vörös: *Slováci najvlasteneckejší Uhri alebo slobodný národ? Sociálne reprezentácie Slovákov v maďarskej tlači v rokoch 1914-1918*. In: Dráľ, Peter-Findor, Andrej eds: *Ako skúmať národ*. Brno, 2009, pp. 79-105.

4 Since the town of Dunaszerdahely did not have a Slovak name prior to 1918, in my study I refer to its Hungarian name; the actual town district where the cemetery is situated is called Sikabony (in Hungarian) or Malý Aboň (in Slovak).

time.

The existence of the POW Camp in Dunaszerdahely stretches from its opening in September 1914 until its closure in early November 1918.⁵ According to several - unfortunately far from complete - sources, we estimate today that 850 to 1100 soldiers altogether were buried here between 1914 and 1918. According to our best knowledge, these soldiers, i.e., POWs came from at least seven nations, such as Russians, Italians, Poles, Serbs, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians; among them Russians formed the largest group, followed by Italians and Serbs.

Shortly after the POW Camp, and consequently the POW Cemetery were closed in November 1918, the town of Dunaszerdahely along with the whole neighbouring region was occupied by the Czechoslovak Army, becoming part of the newly created Czechoslovak Republic.

This is the point when the story of the two places, the Camp and the Cemetery, start to diverge. The once big and well photographed local POW Camp was now ruined - in fact, all valuable wood, metal, and stone was carried away (less politely: robbed) by locals, including a huge quantity of wood (which from the barracks were built), metal parts and other utensils, all valuable stuff precious for the locals in the aftermath of the four-year-long war. At the site of the POW Camp a public park was created and the Camp ceased to exist. Its name, however, has survived, and that part of town is still referred to as *Tábor utca* [*literally: Camp Street*].

Meanwhile, the POW's Cemetery in Dunaszerdahely/Sikabony, cautiously avoided by locals, and hardly photographed during its 'active' existence, gained a new life after 1918 - "a postwar existence", a significant *lieux de mémoire*.

The cemetery was well treated under the Czechoslovak regime after 1918, up until 1938. It was also kept in good order during the so-called Hungarian times, when Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda became a part of Hungary after November 1938 according to the territorial changes made in the Treaty of Vienna. However, after 1945, and especially after 1948, when Czechoslovakia fell under the rule of the Communist Party, the cemetery was completely forgotten, and it became a totally abandoned piece of land on the outskirts of town. Although the 3,000 square meter cemetery was legally and officially under the supervision of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior since 1951, it had in fact

5 Horváth-Nagy-Varga 2015: 21, 67.

been a neglected place, a jungle of overgrown trees up until 2014.

II. The POW Cemetery after 2014

In early 2014, a local civil society called Csallóköz-Szerdahelyi Kaszinó 1860 (which I am also a member of) proposed to the local municipality to revitalize the POW's Cemetery. It was not an easy process, neither in technical terms nor "politically". On the one hand, we had to fight hard to raise public awareness, through local newspaper articles, participating at town council gatherings, through press conferences held directly at the Town Hall and publishing a book about the cemetery. On the other hand, Csallóköz-Szerdahelyi Kaszinó 1860 worked hard to persuade the mayor and the members of the town council to secure funding. The town council collected several thousand euros for the project.

First, we had to prove our personal commitment to the case. We changed clothes, grabbed axes and machetes, and in March, April, and May of 2014, went to the POW cemetery, and cleaned the trees, the bush, and the thick undergrowth. It was done by a small group of devoted locals, including a railway worker, a sport manager, a professor, a policeman, a school director, a local politician, and a photographer. In technical terms, we failed - the green nature was so persistent that the trees chopped off in March were nearly double their size in May. Then we asked for technical and expert advice (i.e. for heavy tools and chemicals) to fight the weed. It was in early summer of 2014 when our efforts finally reached the ears, the hearts and the purse of the mayor and the members of the town council.

As a result of the cooperation between Csallóköz-Szerdahelyi Kaszinó 1860 and the Town Council of Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda, as well as the generosity of entrepreneurs who contributed to the project with cash and labour, the cemetery was successfully redeveloped and on November 11, 2014, it was officially re-opened.

A major part of the project was the recreation of an Orthodox chapel - a remarkable restoration of a sacred place which (since hidden in an inaccessible jungle) used to serve as a place for Satanic orgies (literally!) for years. Part of the project was saving remaining artefacts on behalf of the local museum, including some rusty metal crosses and some fractured stone graveposts, and also a well-preserved stone obelisk. The chapel and the obelisk are two landmarks

that are located in their original place - they have been standing there for one hundred years now.

III. Why should we commemorate our enemies?

As for the official reopening of the cemetery on November 11, 2014, we were delighted to discover that our Great War cemetery, which we thought of as a local thing, soon became an international landmark. Everyone whom we invited to the reopening ceremony was keen to be present personally on the great day. Thus the reopening of the POW cemetery took place in the presence of the following guests: Tomasz Chłoń, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Slovakia; Vera Ostojit', Consul of the Republic of Serbia in Slovakia; Sergei Nikityn, Secretary of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Slovakia; Roberto Rizzo, Secretary of the Embassy of Italy in Slovakia; Marco Centritto, Military Attache of the Embassy of Italy in Slovakia; Sándor Zoltán, Secretary of the Embassy of Hungary in Slovakia; and István Tarján, Military Attache of the Embassy of Hungary in Slovakia.

The Csallóköz-Szerdahelyi Kaszinó 1860 discovered that there were at least three relations involved in our resurrection efforts that positively attracted not only the ambassadors, but also a wider circle of participants.

One was the idea of commemorating the dead - a general idea which is based on an ancient human affection. Secondly, the cleaning process of the cemetery as a physical place, was attractive for the locals, especially for the owners of the nearby houses and flats, just a few metres from the cemetery - even if they only discovered the advantages of the clearing process afterwards, when the jungle was turned into a clean, pleasant and well-kept park. These two relations of our intentions - the human and the practical - were easy to understand, so everybody got it right.

The third relation of the resurrection of the cemetery, however, was a hard nut to crack for our fellow citizens. The problem was the idea of commemorating fallen soldiers who one hundred years ago fought against 'us'. Indeed, the soldiers buried in the Sikabony cemetery, Russians, Italians, Poles, Serbs, Latvians, Estonians, and Romanians, fought for the Allied Forces, so they were the enemy of the Austrian-Hungarian Kingdom, who after the Great War became winners - unlike Hungarians, who found themselves on the losers' side. People we met sometimes asked us: Why should we commemorate our enemies? They

were educated by traditional historical patterns of “the winners and the losers of the First World War”, so their questions were not surprising. Furthermore, our Hungarian soldiers from Dunajská Streda, in fact our grandfathers and great-grandfathers who died in the distant battlefields of the Eastern front in Ukraine or Poland, and in the trenches at the Isonzo River in Italy, do not have physical places of commemoration in our town.⁶

So why should we commemorate our enemies? Firstly, because we are humans (and many of us faithful Christians) who are ready and able to forgive - especially for deeds that were committed one hundred years ago. When is a proper time to overcome historical hatred and cruelty if not when celebrating the centenary of the Great War? We are humans who respect human life and death. Beyond that, we would like to follow in the footsteps of other nations; anybody who has a chance to visit carefully kept First World War cemeteries of the ‘enemy’, for instance in Italy, may easily understand the civilized potential of such a place. This was our third intention. As a historian, I am deeply convinced that we should break the traditional divide between “winners” and “losers” of the Great War. After one hundred years, I think, it is time to commemorate *all* fallen peoples from the senseless killing that happened one hundred years ago - regardless of the military affiliations and/or nationalities of the dead.

IV. The Jewish obelisk

As mentioned above, the restoration of the POW Cemetery in Dunaszerdahely/Sikabony included a recreation of an Orthodox chapel, and a preservation of a cca 150 cm high stone obelisk, containing a Hebrew inscription. The chapel was successfully and beautifully restored; and the “mysterious” inscription on the obelisk had to be deciphered, since no local could read it. It was difficult to find an expert who could read it. The translation of the Hebrew inscription was finally completed in 2015, and for the English translation I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Davide Cutri, University College London, who gave me a generous hand in this endeavour.

6 The reason is simple: since in 1918 Dunaszerdahely found itself in a new country, in Czechoslovakia, it was problematic to commemorate the Hungarian military past. Hundreds of First World War monuments were erected throughout post-1918 Hungary, but this was not the case in regions like Dunaszerdahely, which fell under Czechoslovak control.

<p>Here is buried One of the prisoners' fathers from Russia The groom Menachem Mendel Fabrikant who came from Goronitz in the Volinia region He died on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Tishri in the year [I]915 This gravestone has been donated [to him] by the prisoners' fathers in the camp Daphe in Duna-Serdahel May his soul be bound in the bundle of life.</p>	<p>Itt nyugszik Az egyik fogoly apja Oroszországból Az inas Menachem Mendel Fabrikant aki a Goronitziból jött a volhíniai területéről A héber naptár Tishri havának 13-dik napján halt meg az [I]915-ödik évben Ezt a sírkövet a hadifoglyok apái adományozták [<i>neki</i>] a Daphe táborban Duna-Szerdahelen Lelke kötődjék össze az étellel.</p>
---	---

V. Closing remarks

The restoration of our First World War cemetery is not complete. Historical research aimed at discovering the exact identity of the buried soldiers is still in progress. We were able to gain public support not only for the local memory of the Great War, which is important for a handful of intellectuals, but we also gained wider public support, since this action revitalized an abandoned and polluted area of our town.

I think this is a case study of a good practice in contemporary Slovakia. Among others it responds and resonates to the public call which was made within the framework of the EU's Europe for Citizens Programme to encourage active civic engagement with social memory of the Great War. I think our effort shows, among others, how social memory evolves, how it develops, and how it can be directed toward a good and noble cause. I wish it could help to build a regional, East Central European memory of the Great War.

Bibliography

Nagy Attila: Dunaszerdahely emlékhelyei. Épületek, szobrok, emlékművek és

emléktáblák, szakrális kisémlékek, temetők, történeti síremlékek, eltűnt emlékhelyek. Historikum-Biró Márton Polgári Társulás-Csallóközi Barátok Társulása, 2013.

Nagy Attila-Nagy Iván-Novák Veronika-Simon Attila-Vajda Barnabás: Dunaszerdahely. Várostörténeti monográfia. Dunaszerdahely Város Önkormányzata, Csallóközi Barátok Társulása. Dunaszerdahely, 2012.

Horváth, Lajos - Nagy, Attila - Varga László: Császári és királyi hadifogolytáborok a Csallóközben (1914-1918). Dunaszerdahely, Nagymegyér, Somorja. Szlovákiai Magyar Művelődési Intézet, 2015.



Photo No 1: The Great War POW Cemetery in Dunaszerdahely/ Dunajská Streda prior to its restoration in early 2014.



Photo No 2: The Great War POW Cemetery with the Orthodox Chapel in Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda in the Spring of 2015.



Photo No 3: The Jewish Obelisk Great War POW Cemetery in Dunaszerdahely/Dunajská Streda,

Ime	Ročník	Ram	číslo	Mesiac	Strana
Ach. Hoianu	1877	Kalona	číslo 1	1912 3	521
Dimiit Keldianu	1887	"	číslo 2	" 10/21	522
Maxim Toke	2	"	číslo 3	" 12/2	523
Daniil Hancu	1893	"	číslo 4	" 11/1	524
Geo. Antoni	1894	"	číslo 5	" 11/2	525
Georg. Bolos	1890	"	číslo 6	" 11/2	526
Georg. Bolos	1891	"	" 20 9	" 11/20	528
Geo. Valea	1881	"	číslo 13	" 11/1	529
Trigi Pinci	1892	"	" 9 4	" 11/2	528
Mario Trusianu	1892	"	" 33	" 11/2	527

Photo No 4: A detail of an archive material. In August and Autumn of 1939, the Hungarian authorities ordered a "careful survey" of the local POW cemetery in order to "preserve heroic graves and keeping the POW cemetery well". Source: Štátny archív v Nitre so sídlom v Ivanke pri Nitre, Pracovisko Archív Šafa. Fond: Obvodný notársky úrad vo Veľkých Dvorníkoch 1913-1945, kartón č. 9.