

# Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III

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

Edited by

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and

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**Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III**  
Re-thinking the meaning of Symbiosis—Past, Present and Future

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# Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Research of Slovak-Hungarian Relationships in History

## Possibilities of Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences<sup>1</sup>

Štefan Šutaj

(University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik, Košice, Slovakia)

Research on national minorities in Central Europe has been since the 20th century an important part of social and scientific research. This is evidenced by the many publications, as well as the fact that many social sciences deal with this issue. Institute of Social Sciences SAS (currently part of the Institute of Social and Psychological Sciences SAS), already in the 80s of the 20th century, became an important institution in which the ethnic issue has been paid increasing attention. Part of the research was the study of the issue of Hungarian minorities in Central Europe, especially in Slovakia in the 20th century. Such research has involved representatives of several social science disciplines, above all historiography, social psychology and sociology. During many years of joint research of ethnic relations and ethnic politics, where individual disciplines followed their own research methods was established a joint research method based on effective interconnection of scientific methods of individual scientific disciplines. This paper will try to outline the specificity of this joint method in terms of historical science.

Using methods of different scientific disciplines in examining the same

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1 The study was prepared as a part of project: APVV - 0475, Tendencies in the Development of Ethnic Relations in Slovakia (Comparative Research of National issues in 2004-2020)-(TESS2).

phenomena (events, developments or state) allows deeper insight into the nature of the problem studied. Modern trends of historical research also reflect the research fields/focus, which were marginalized by historiography in the past. This is particularly the use of statistical, demographic methods, work with history through the concept of history and memory, research of events depicting everyday life (History of Everyday Life), lifestyle (on the level of groups/classes/social or professional groups, the lives of the elite and the “ordinary” people), myths, celebrations, holidays, various celebrations, from political to private, and the issue of historical stereotypes. In historiography, particular attention was paid to internal dimensions of human life (elites, personalities, relationship of the persecuted/victim and the persecutor - victimology, identity).

It turns out that the intersection of past and present is an important indicator of the influence on historical knowledge and insight into the current ethnic relations and ethnic politics. It is not a new finding that the use of theoretical and methodological approaches of other scientific disciplines may be a significant factor in mobilizing a scientific discipline. In the case of the Institute of Social Sciences SAS (ISS), a crucial role was played by historiography and social psychology. Basic concepts of social psychology (cognition, activity, socialization, attitudes, social identity, etc.) are applied in historical research, whereas the basic categories of historiography (source, criticism of empirical material, interpretation, historical fact, event, etc.) can be assessed in terms of knowledge of social psychology. The point of contact of scientific research, in addition to ethnicity itself, was the research of man and his interaction in society. The position of man with his ethnicity and his experience of ethnicity have become the intersection of joint research.

Modern historiography must deal with the fact that there are new types of sources that did not exist in previous periods. A historian must work with extensive statistical and demographic material and must cope with the fact that traditional written document and correspondence are disappearing from the source base of a historian. One of the new sources they must learn to work with are sociological and socio-psychological research, as well as opinion polls. A historian must be able to determine their credibility, validity of the material, assess the objectivity of scientific methods and learn to interpret sources obtained in such manners. For a historian, the new types of sources are gradually becoming empirical material to be reviewed and assessed in the future. As with other historical sources, they must be subjected to criticism as the basic historical meth-

od of processing empirical material. As a historian of the Middle Ages must evaluate a document, for example, from palaeographic, heraldic and contextual points of view, similarly, a historian of the 20th and 21st century must know how the document was created. In our case, in the assessment and evaluation of socio-psychological, and sociological research, we must master the methodology of the research process of a sociologist or a social psychologist. For instance, historians must evaluate and interpret a method of questionnaire preparation, question types and methods of their formulation, realistically assess the distribution, collection, and method of computerized processing of the data collected by the questionnaire, interpretation of tables, method and evaluation of their preparation, including knowledge of computer programs processing and evaluating questionnaires. It is also important to master terminology used by the disciplines involved in the creation of empirical material. "Modern" social sciences and humanities (including social psychology and sociology) have, in this case, the function of auxiliary historical sciences.

From the point of view of scientific procedure, it is the use of general theoretical and methodological principles that combine exploring mechanisms of the transfer of information both in time, i.e. from the past to the present, and from a wider community of people to an individual.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of mutual cooperation of social sciences in terms of usage and the conjunction of methods of historical sciences and other social sciences can be viewed also in terms of historiography. It concerns how we can use knowledge of other disciplines in historical research. We can follow two methodological processes:

1. Direct research in cooperation with representatives of these sciences. Joint approach of a historian and a social science researcher enables collaboration at various stages of the questionnaire survey. It presumes a joint method in developing the questionnaire. Application of historical (knowledge of the history of ethnic relations, minority and ethnic politics), social psychological and sociological knowledge (theoretical-methodological and practical knowledge of ethnicity) during establishing research methods, objectives and formulation of re-

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2 BAČOVÁ, Viera - ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Comparison of Historical and Social - Psychological Research Approaches: The Cooperation Model. In Vajdová, Libuša (ed.). *Les approches et les méthodes interdisciplinaires de recherche en sciences sociales*. Bratislava: École des Hautes et Sciences sociales Paris - Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV - Institut français de Bratislava, 1994, 45-51.

search questions used in the questionnaire is presumed. Such a method enables targeted questions that could be effectively used in determining the state of knowledge, historical consciousness, historical memory, i.e. the perception of history and the mechanism that allows for the past to shape the real knowledge, opinions and attitudes of respondents. The method enables targeted focus on certain groups of the population, not only in terms of ethnicity and perception of ethnicity, but also in terms of regional identity, age structure, and social or professional stratification. An advantage is a joint approach and participation of historians and representatives of other scientific disciplines in the processing of questionnaires and the interpretation of obtained results. A historian himself then forms the future source of historical research in this way. Such an approach enables the coordination of processes of sociology and social psychology at various stages of research preparation combined with the methods of historical research.

2. Indirect research that is based on the use of already implemented research of social sciences (interviews, questionnaires, statistics, interpretation tables, charts, and other diagrams used) for the purposes of historical research. In this case, a historian implements the criticism of originated sources and monitors and critically evaluates: how the source originated; what methods and procedures were used to create the material.

Particularity of methods in the research of ethnicity and ethnic relations at ISS is in the use of the direct method. We will try to present the research methodology at ISS in the field of research of ethnic relations and minority issues on the example of selected interdisciplinary research of ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic relations and ethnic politics implemented in conditions of ISS in 1990 - 2016.<sup>3</sup> The results have been published in many publications and scientific stud-

3 In 1990, as the first after the change of regime in Czechoslovakia after 1989, a field empirical research aimed at identification of the views on the position of the Hungarian and Ukrainian minority in Slovakia and Slovaks living in ethnically mixed areas of Slovakia was carried out. The results were published in the work PAUKOVIČ, Vladimír a kol. *Vzťahy Slovákov a národnostných menšín v národnostne zmiešaných oblastiach Slovenska*. SvÚ SAV, Košice, 1990; The second was the project „*Minoritné etnické spoločenstvá na Slovensku v procesoch spoločenských zmien*“. The subject of the research was Continuity of perception and evaluation of Slovakia-Hungarian relations (past and present) with some ethnic and social and psychological characteristics, which we have considered: ethnic affiliation, its awareness and experience, ethnic composition of a location and family environment, social acceptance



ies. The selection which is presented here is more or less illustrative and its detailed description may be found in progress reports of ISS for individual years of its operation.<sup>4</sup>

The subject of our analysis in this work is not a mere interpretation of the results of individual forms of research. We aim rather to define the specific method that has been used for research in the individual projects.

Resulting from themes in methodology of ethnicity research (minority issues - ethnic relations and ethnic politics) an interdisciplinary approach of three collaborating disciplines was applied. The main method in most forms of research conducted by ISS was an extensive multiple entry questionnaire.

The beginnings of interdisciplinary cooperation at ISS is dated back before 1989. However, it could only be fully applied after the “Velvet” Revolution. After 1990, several studies that focused on examining the status of ethnic communities as well as the relations between the majority and minority, ethnically conditioned activities and interethnic relations were conducted. These included the definition of attributes of ethnic identity, various identification mechanisms, detection of ethnic factors determining the status of ethnic identity and other factors.

After the 1989 Revolution, the old issues of coexistence of Slovaks and minorities resurfaced in new dimensions. This was the area that gave opportunities to explore these issues through the prism of historical memory. We examined issues such as perceptions of historical events on the timeline - through the perception of several generations. Significant research questions were raised in the research of ethnic relations aimed at teachers working in Slovakia.<sup>5</sup>

The problem of social psychology and sociology in the research of intergenerational memory viewed from one point in time is how it is perceived by different generations living at the time. However, for a historian, the effort to get

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of other ethnic groups, the acceptance of Hungarian language in Slovakia, and particularism versus universalism. The result was a collective monography: ZEEOVÁ, Alena et al. *Minoritné etnické spoločenstvá na Slovensku v procesoch spoločenských premien*. Bratislava: Veda, 1994.

4 <http://www.svusav.sk/sk/dokumenty/spravy-o-cinnosti-ustavu/>

5 ZEEOVÁ, Alena - BAČOVÁ, Viera - ŠUTAJ, Štefan - VÝROST, Jozef. *Interpretácia slovensko-maďarských vzťahov v súvislosti s vybranými etnickými a sociálnopsychologickými charakteristikami (výsledky výskumu v súbore učiteľov)*. Košice, Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1992.

closer to an understanding of the problem means to work on the border of his own scientific discipline and other social sciences that deal with the present (political science and sociology). Research thus constructed allows the understanding of the direction of the shift in the assessment of the chosen problem during the interpretation of historical events, and also an understanding of current attitudes of respondents towards the examined problem, even if the research problem is formulated differently in each scientific discipline (for example, from the perspective of a historian, as a historical event - re-slovakisation, from the perspective of social psychology, as a change of the ethnic identity of a personality and its development). An example of an effective combination of historiography and social psychology was the research of a change of ethnic identity on a sample of re-slovakisants and their descendants.

The result of this cooperation was e.g. V. Bačová's publication about the formation of ethnic identity.<sup>6</sup> The particularity of the research was that the selection of the survey sample was carried out on the basis of historical archival research in the Slovak National Archives. Based on archival documents, a sample of respondents was selected, families whose members or ancestors went through a real change of ethnic identity in the Slovak-Hungarian environment in the hectic period in the first half of the 20th century. The research analysed how a particular historical event - in this case re-slovakisation - affected ethnic consciousness, ethnic attitudes and ethnic identity of the respondents, the descendants of the re-slovakised population in the villages in Slovakia and how they themselves interpreted and evaluated this historical event. The questionnaire included surveyed data on ethnic identity of the respondents and language communication in the village and in the family.

Next to the historical questionnaire, another research method used was the Identity Exploration (IDEX) of Peter Weinreich. IDEX uncovered hidden conflicts and crises of ethnic identity on a historically determined sample as interpreted by V. Bačová in the form of an attractive social-psychological method in a separate publication.<sup>7</sup>

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6 The concept of re-slovakisation is detailed for example in the study ŠUTAJ, Stefan. Changes of national identity in historical development. In Plichtova, Jana (ed.). *Minorities in Politics. Cultural and Languages Rights*. Bratislava: European Cultural Foundation, 1992.

7 BAČOVÁ, Viera. *Etnická identita a historické zmeny. Výskum obyvateľov vybraných obcí Slovenska*. Bratislava: Veda, 1996. 200 s. (na zbere dotazníkov a

Another line of research was the concept of intergenerational transmission and identity formation in Slovak society carried out within the project “Intergenerational memory as a mediator of formation of new identities in the process of the transformation of Slovak society”. From the perspective of a historian, this research provided data of how three generations, brought up in different political regimes, influenced by various social, societal and economic factors, perceived ethnicity and minorities and how they formulated their relationship to the entities, facts, events and situations offered in the questionnaire. Therefore, the result not only demonstrated intergenerational differences at the time of data collection, but also a retrospective view on past events. The Intergenerational context was determined by the evaluation of self (the respondent), the evaluation of people 20-30 years older than the respondent, the evaluation of people 20 years younger from the respondent. This indirectly determined the ideas of the tendencies of social development, based on how people attribute social identity to their predecessors and descendants.

Joint research was based on observing personal and social identities of an individual and intergenerational changes manifesting themselves in relationships and the transfer, i.e. forwarding and receiving generational experience. Research in 1998 compared the interpretation of Slovak history, ethnicity and identity of different generations (the young, the middle aged and the elderly). There are differences between historical approach to historical memory and social-psychological and sociological approaches to intergenerational memory. This is primarily due to the manner of research and its potential resource material. Historiography examines the issue on the timeline and its methods of research do not enable us to address the differences between the generations living at the same time. Different views on the issue are seen more on the basis of political affiliation, religion, and social or professional affiliation. This approach, however, may change if a part of the sources for the historian of modern history become modern social-psychological and sociological research and

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rozhovoroch s respondentmi som sa osobne zúčastnil). Results also published in works: ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Reslovakizácia. Zmena národnosti časti obyvateľstva Slovenska po II. svetovej vojne*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1991; BAČOVÁ, Viera - ŠUTAJ, Štefan. *Re-Slovakization: The Changes of Nationality and Ethnic Identity in Historical Development in Slovak-Hungarian Environment*. In *Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in an Emerging Europe*. München: Slavica Verlag dr. Anton Kovač, München, 1993, 239-243.

opinion surveys. With regard to intergenerational memory, research by social psychology and sociology examines the perspective of a problem from one point in time, as perceived by different generations living at the time. For a historian, this can present a new historical source as well as a subject of research of historical reality.<sup>8</sup> We could examine how a problem or a historical event is perceived by different generations living in the successive stages of historical development. For instance, the problem of the wartime Slovak Republic and the Slovak National Uprising was perceived differently by generations after World War II, after 1948, and in the sixties or after 1989.

In 1998, research focused on interpretations of Slovak history, ethnicity and identity by members of different generations (the young, the middle aged and the elderly). This research uncovered, in particular, qualitative differences in perception of social phenomena by different generations. The research results were interpreted against the background of instrumentalistic or constructionist approach to ethnicity, which, after 1993 and the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, significantly influenced the political tendencies in Slovak politics and was a significant factor in addressing issues related to the status of nationalities. A primordialistic understanding of national identity that prevails among the population of Slovakia and Hungary<sup>9</sup> was affected by both the Slovak and Hungarian environment and was an important ethnic identification factor influencing the relationship of citizens to currently addressed issues of ethnicity.<sup>10</sup>

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8 ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Analyse der Debatte um den ungarisch - slowakischen Grundlagenvvertrag vom März 1995. (Macht der Mythen. Geschichtsstereotypen im slowakisch - ungarischen Verhältnis). In *Südost Europa, Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsforschung*, H 9 - 10, 46 Jahrgang 1997, 471-491; ŠUTAJ, Štefan - OLEJNÍK, Milan. Law and practice of Central European countries in the field of national minorities protection (Slovak Republic) In Kranz, Jerzy (ed.). *Law and Practice of Central European Countries in the Field of National Minorities Protection After 1989*. Warszawa: Centre for International Relation. 1998, 269-321.

9 See further BAČOVÁ, Viera. The Construction of National Identity - on Primordialism and Instrumentalism. In *Human Affairs: Postdisciplinary Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly*, 1998, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 29-43; BAČOVÁ, Viera. Primordiálny versus inštrumentálny základ etnickej a národnej identity. In *Československá psychologie*, 41, 4, 1997, 303-313.

10 The results were published in collective monographies: Bačová, Viera (ed.). *Historická pamäť a identita*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1996. Bačová, Vi-

In ISS research, we ascertained the opinions of respondents from among the residents of the ethnically mixed area on the current state and prospects of Slovak-Hungarian relations. In our research, we tried to go beyond the common quantification of results. We endeavored to find out what factors contribute to the results obtained. In this study, we present the results of ISS research “Nation, nationalities and ethnic groups in the process of transformation of Slovak society” from the years 2003 - 2005, in which some of the questions pertain to Slovak-Hungarian relations.

The objects of the research were members of the majority (Slovaks living in ethnically mixed areas) and seven communities of ethnic minorities living in Slovakia: Czechs, Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Jews. The research sample included a total of 1,280 respondents, i.e. 160 respondents, representatives of the majority and each minority (a total of 8 subsets). They were the members of the intelligentsia with at least a secondary education. Respondents were given a 61-entry questionnaire. In terms of the characteristics of the set, it must be noted that it included representatives of the intelligentsia from the majority and minorities who had at least a secondary education with graduation (in case of the Roma, apprenticeship). However, university education was preferred.

While selecting the survey sample, quota selection of respondents in terms of age was applied; in the four age categories (25-34 years; 35-44 years; 45-55 years; 55 years and over) we considered the Slovak inhabitants' census results from 2001.<sup>11</sup>

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era - Kusá, Zuzana (eds.). *Identity v meniacej sa spoločnosti*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1997; HOMIŠINOVÁ, Mária. Intergeneračné zmeny identity etnicky homogénnych a heterogénnych rodín. In *Sociológia*, roč. 34, č. 2, 2002, 117-130.

- 11 The results were published in two extensive research papers: VÝROST, Jozef - HOMIŠINOVÁ, Mária (eds.). *Národ, národnosti a etnické skupiny v procese transformácie slovenskej spoločnosti*. Košice : Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, CD-ROM, 2005; ŠUTAJ, Štefan - HOMIŠINOVÁ, Mária - SÁPOSOVÁ, Zlatica - ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989 (identita a politika)*. Prešov: Universum, 2006. Other results and partial analysis were published in the collection ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku - stav výskumu po roku 1989 a jeho perspektívy*. Prešov: Universum, 2004; ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Prezidentské dekréty Edvarda Beneša v povojnovom období*. Prešov: Universum, 2004; ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na*

The objectives of sociological and social-psychological research were divided into five thematic blocks: 1. identification attributes of the person, family and home; 2. ethnic identity (awareness of ethnicity, issues of language, education and culture); 3. inter-ethnic relations (history and present); 4. human rights, minority rights, and the prospects of development of ethnic communities; 5. current issues of public, and political life.

In the structure of the questionnaire, within the framework of indicators, we focused on identifying not only the opinions and statements of the respondents “about themselves”- as representatives of the intelligentsia, but also their evaluations and opinions about ethnic community as a whole.

The questionnaire used all kinds of questions and used a variety of different scales (qualitative variables such as response variables, interval type scales and numeric ratings). According to the type of scale used a simple analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA), inter-group analysis of variance (one-way MANOVA) and frequency analysis of basic indicators were applied. They interpreted in particular statistically significant results at a minimum of 5% level of statistical significance (F-test implementation and Scheffe’s test for analysis of variance and  $\chi^2$ -chi-square in frequency analysis). Data analysis was carried out via statistical package STATISTIKA Version 5.5.

These were analyses of the relevant indicator in relation to relevant demographic indicators (gender and age). We were interested in determining whether a specific gender and age determine the results of the researched areas and, if they do, what the impact is. We conducted analyses to determine the correlation between the indicators within the given subject area. We aimed to uncover the facts that are in some way related, or not related to opinions, attitudes, and positions of the respondents. The advantages of the historian in this case is that he can confront the answers of the respondents with established schemes of perception of nation and ethnicity in sociological, social-psychological and cultural-anthropological theories, for example, on the scheme of primordialism versus instrumentalism and particularism versus universalism. Similarly, the responses of respondents were examined by means of statistical analysis on multi-level analyses, which resulted in tables demonstrating, with the help of statistical indicators, whether the examined phenomena are linked, what the level of their

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*Slovensku v transformujúcej sa spoločnosti - vzťahy a konflikty.* Prešov: Univerzum, 2005; ŠUTAJ, Štefan (ed.). *Národnostná politika Slovenskej republiky po roku 1989.* Prešov: Univerzum, 2005.

relationship is, and whether the results are statistically significant or not.

For the purposes of this paper, we selected an extract related to the so-called Beneš Decrees<sup>12</sup>, which are, in the spirit of the well-established, even if incorrect characteristics, considered to be the whole complex of measures taken against the Hungarian minority, regardless of whether they were issued by Edvard Beneš, the Parliament, the Slovak National Council or were based on international legal agreements or decisions. According to public opinions, the Beneš Decrees as a symbol of measures is taken against the Germans and Hungarians, although many of these measures were not carried out by the Beneš Decrees, but by the Decrees of the Slovak National Council. Decrees of President E. Beneš addressed not only the Germans and Hungarians, but also many other problems in Czechoslovak society. We also paid attention to the events that preceded the adoption of anti-Hungarian, anti-German and anti-Nazi measures in Czechoslovakia. For comparison, we confronted the issue of the Beneš Decrees with opinions on the issue of the Vienna Arbitration.<sup>13</sup> Response variations were formulated as they are discussed and perceived in Slovak society. Questions were distributed among respondents of different nationalities. However, in this paper we will discuss only the Slovaks and Hungarians.

A significantly different responses from Slovak and Hungarian respondents tell us that the responses to the questions were clearly influenced by ethnicity. One of the important factors that affected the responses was the age of the respondents. The division into age groups allowed us to analyse the issue in an intergenerational context. In this case, we analysed how the various age categories of the respondents were influenced by the period in which they lived. For instance, the generation over 55 years lived most of their active life in the communist period or in the war or post-war period, while the respondents in the

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12 See ČIERNA-LANTAYOVÁ, Dagmar - ŠTEFANOVIČ, Milan - ŠUTAJ, Štefan - ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal - ZAVACKÁ, Katarína. *Slovakia and Decrees of President of the Czechoslovak Republic Edvard Beneš in the Context of Regulation of the Slovak National Council*. Bratislava: Veda, 2006.

13 See: Šutaj, Štefan. Magyar minority in Slovakia before and after the Second world war. In Teich, Mikuláš - Kováč, Dušan - Brown, Martin D. (eds.). *Slovakia in History*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 269-284; BAKA, Igor. Slovak-Hungarian relations in the years 1938 - 1945. In Šutaj, Š. et al. *Key Issues of Slovak and Hungarian History (A View of Slovak Historians)*. Prešov: Universum, 2011, 213-227.

age group up to 34 years lived after 1989, and were thus influenced by different circumstances, at school as well as in society and in families. The results of the research indicated that the age of respondents, in case of these “historical” questions, played an important role.

Table No. 1.

Opinions of ethnic Hungarians on the Beneš Decrees depending on the age of respondents. Data are presented in %.

Age categories	1		2	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Up to 34 y.	82,93	17,07	10,26	89,74
35-44 y.	71,43	28,57	23,53	76,49
45-55 y.	46,51	53,49	20,93	79,07
Over 55 y.	88,89	11,11	25,00	75,00

Legend:

- 1 Slovaks should apologize to Hungarians and Germans for the Beneš Decrees
- 2 Hungarians should apologize to Slovaks for the Vienna Arbitration of 1938

While more than 80% of the oldest and youngest generations of ethnic Hungarians believed that Slovaks should apologize for the Beneš Decrees, only 46.51% of respondents in the age group between 45-55. For respondents in the youngest age group, the percentage of positive responses was closer to those above 55 years.

In case of the evaluation of the Vienna Arbitration, age did not play such an important role, although the highest percentage of negative or positive responses was obtained surprisingly from the respondents under 34 years of age and not from the older respondents. Results of the analysis of respondents' responses depending on their age showed us that in case of the youngest generation of ethnic Hungarians who completed school after 1989, there was no convergence with the views of Slovak respondents, although they significantly converged, and in the case of opinions on the Vienna Arbitration also exceeded, with the evaluation of the respondents over 55 years. This did not happen in the case of the Slovak respondents, even in cases where, in our opinion on this issue, Slovak respondents should have come closer to the opinions of Hungarian respondents (e.g. acknowledgment of the unfair nature of some legislative norms, which were based on the principle of collective guilt).



Within the project “The Hungarian minority in Slovakia in the process of social transformation after 1989”, we carried out a representative questionnaire survey in relation to the Hungarian minority, in which we also paid attention to the problem of perception of history.<sup>14</sup> 800 respondents of Hungarian nationality took part in the research.

Using the experience from previous research, we wanted to confirm or disprove the accuracy of research findings and also uncover what external factors influenced the responses of the respondents of Hungarian nationality.

The respondents answered by means of a seven-point interval scale, where individual numerical values mean: 1 - definitely no; 2 - no; 3 - probably no; 4 - I do not know; 5 - probably yes; 6 - yes; 7 - definitely yes.

The question was: “*If you were to express your opinion on reconciliation between the Slovaks and Hungarians, would you say that*”:

A -Hungarians should apologize to Slovaks for the Vienna Arbitration: the average score of 3.39 - i.e., between probably no and I don't know

B -Slovaks should apologize to Hungarians for the Beneš Decrees: the average score 5.07 - i.e., probably yes

C - Apology of Slovaks and Hungarians for the wrongs of the past should be mutual: average score 4.66 - i.e. between probably yes and I don't know

D -There is no need for apologies, it is necessary to come to terms with the past: the average score 4.22 - i.e. between I don't know and probably yes

E -The apology is the matter of the Hungarian minority and Slovak national representation: average score 3.78 - i.e. probably not to I don't know

F -The apology is the matter of Hungary and Slovakia: average score - 4.53 - i.e. probably yes and I don't know

It must be noted that in contrast to previous research, the question was worded so that the respondent knew that we were interested in differently per-

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14 The results were published e.g. in: ŠUTAJOVÁ, Jana - ĎURKOVSKÁ, Mária (eds.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie. (Historické, politologické a právne súvislosti.)*. Prešov: Universum, 2007; ŠUTAJ, Štefan a kol. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2008, 217 s.; Sápsová, Zlatica - Šutaj, Štefan. *Starostlivosť o krajanov v zahraničí v politike Slovenska a Maďarska*. Košice : Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 2008, 141 s.; ŠUTAJ, Štefan. Relations Between Slovaks and Hungarians in Slovakia and their Prospects. In Dobiáš, Daniel - Gbúrová, Marcela - Mattová, Irina (eds.). *Intercultural dialogue. Current Status - Context - Perspectives*. Prešov: PU, 2009, 279-295.

ceived aspects of history in the context of a possible reconciliation. It can be considered characteristic that, in the statements which should in some way affect the respondents themselves and their affiliation to the Hungarian minority or mark this minority or the Hungarian nation as the subject that should apologise, the respondents chose as a modal response the alternative, I don't know. This is how the respondents answered the question whether the Hungarians should apologise to Slovaks for the Vienna Arbitration and whether the question of apology is the matter of the Hungarian minority and Slovak representation. Some questions show that respondents have different answers to them. When asked whether it was necessary to come to terms with the past, 34.5% of respondents answered in the negative range, 20.7% could not answer and 44.8% of the respondents answered in the positive range. Similarly, only with a smaller number of responses in the positive range and the preferred response I don't know, the respondents also answered the question of whether an apology is the matter of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Slovak representation. 33.9% of respondents answered in the negative range, 41.4% did not know and 22.4% answered in the positive range.

Ethnic Hungarians responded in the definitely positive range to the questions whether the Slovaks should apologize for the Beneš Decrees (63.9%), that the apology for wrongs should be mutual (56.2%) and that the mutual apology is the matter of Slovak Republic and the Hungarian Republic (51.5%).

With regard to the apology of the Slovaks for the Beneš Decrees, the modal response was the answer yes (29.1%), and only 12.8% of respondents disagreed with the apology.

In this paper, we will try to show how the answers of respondents were affected by their age. Compared to previous research, we limited the lowest age limit at 20, and moved the upper age limit in the last group to over 64 years, therefore we clearly obtained an age group whose views were shaped in the post-war period.

The differences in the results were at the highest level of significance ( $p = 0.000$ ).<sup>15</sup> Clearly in the negative range were the responses to statement A (Hungarians should apologize to Slovaks for the Vienna Arbitration). Opinions of respondents over 64 years were significantly different from all other age groups. Unlike in previous research, it was shown that the age group under 34 years,

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15 We interpret statistically significant results here, at least 5% level of statistical significance. Statistical significance is determined as  $p$ .

refused the apology for the Vienna Arbitration. The reason could be that they considered it an act of international politics, a solution that was made by an international treaty, and therefore saw no reason for the apology. The second possible explanation could be that they considered it to be a consequence of how the borders were designated after World War I and as a correction of the wrongs that were caused by the Peace Treaty of Trianon. This means that they do not perceive it as unfair. However, a large majority of respondents of Hungarian nationality, assumed that the Slovaks should apologize to the Hungarians for the Beneš Decrees (statement B), i.e. for the events that occurred after World War II, which significantly affected the fate of Slovak Hungarians. In terms of age, significant statistical differences occurred in this statement. We can say that the higher the age of the respondent, the higher the degree with which the respondent demanded an apology from the Slovaks for the Beneš Decrees. Compared to research from 2003 - 2005, which was based on a smaller sample of respondents, there is a definite shift. We can say that the younger generation asked for an apology from the Slovaks to a lesser extent than the oldest generation. The research results were clearly affected by the fact that we increased the age limit of the fourth group in this representative research to over 64 years.

Statistically significant differences, in terms of age, were also identified in option D - There is no need for apologies, it is necessary to come to terms with the past ( $F = 2.71$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Only respondents over 64 years answered in the negative range, the most significant were the responses of respondents aged 20-34 in the positive range. Therefore, the younger generation prefers to end discussions about historical trauma and atrocities and build a new relationship between Slovaks and Hungarians not influenced by past events. No statistically significant differences depending on the age of respondents were demonstrated when evaluating other statements.

## **Conclusion**

An interdisciplinary (transdisciplinary) approach is necessary for grasping problems in history. It is impossible to examine them without accepting knowledge of other disciplines. Close cooperation not only with the sciences traditionally perceived as auxiliary historical sciences, but also with sociology, ethnography, political science, linguistics, social psychology and other social science disciplines is inescapable. In terms of the working methods of a historian, close

cooperation with these scientific disciplines is necessary. Among the sources of historians studying “the history of the present time” are definitely, for example, complex and extensive sociological, social-political research or opinion polls. However, interdisciplinarity is currently and in our conditions the subject of theoretical consideration. Still, there are attempts at interdisciplinary research results not to exist only side by side with collected files of material, but as a direct research potential prepared in collaboration with historians. Currently, however, they remain unrecognized and they are looked upon as a diversion, rather than as a normal working method of a historian.