

# Hungarian minority in Slovakia

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Image 1. Front page, C.E. European Informant

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## Executive summary

In a country like Slovakia, there are many differences between national minorities, and therefore the country has to implement a mixed approach to the cultural interests and needs of the minorities. The largest minority in Slovakia is the Hungarian minority, with a total of 458,467 people, which is a total of 8.5% of the total population. According the 2011 census, the total percentage of ethnic national minorities in Slovakia is 19.3%,

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Hungarians are the largest minority living in Slovakia. Most Hungarians live in the south near the border of Hungary, this region is one of the poorest regions of Slovakia. Of some Hungarians it can be said that they have lived in six different countries without leaving their birth place. From 1887 till 1993, the region has had many names. These include the following: the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the First Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak State, Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic, Czechoslovak Federal state, and since 1993 the Slovak Republic or better known as Slovakia.

The Hungarian minority in Slovakia faced many difficulties. Over the past twenty years, they have been discriminated and violated, simply because they were seen as the previous suppressors. Hungarians had culturally and politically dominated the Slovak population for 1000s of years, most recently in the form of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which existed until 1918. Since the end of Communism in 1989, and the split up of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Slovak authorities have been very nationalistic. Vladimír Mečiar, Robert Fico and Ján Slota are the leaders of the socialistic and nationalistic parties in Slovakia and they will do everything in their ability to suppress the, in particular, Hungarian minority. It is very difficult for the Hungarian minority to present their vote and rights. The Party for the Hungarian Coalition in Slovakia had been part of the parliament from 1998 to 2002, and was re-elected in 2002 to 2006. During these periods, the situation for the Hungarian minority improved a little, but the Party was mainly busy defending the minority.

Besides the Hungarian minority, there are many other minority groups living in Slovakia. These groups are the Roma minority, the Czech minority, the Ruthenian minority, the Ukrainian minority, the German minority, the Polish minority, the Jewish minority, the Moravian minority, and the Bulgarian minority. According to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, people belonging to ethnic groups or national minorities have the same freedoms and human rights as the Slovakian majority. In Article 12 of the Constitution it is written that no discrimination is allowed. All individuals have to right to

choose their nationality. Every attempt to deprive a person's original nationality is prohibited. The full development of all minority groups is guaranteed by the Slovak Republic.

Luckily for the Hungarian minority, they are supported by the Hungarian government. Hungary passed a new Nationality Law in May 2010, which gives all ethnic Hungarians who do not live in Hungary, but do believe he/she has the Hungarian identity, the ability to apply for Hungarian citizenship. This Nationality Law speeds up the procedure to obtain the Hungarian citizenship. It is important to know that only Hungarians who have a residential address in Hungary have the right to vote in Hungary. Besides the fact that the Hungarian government supports its minorities in neighbouring countries, the Slovak government supports the Hungarian minority in Slovakia as well. The Slovak authorities provide and allow the minorities to have their own universities, broadcasting department of the Slovak Radio, which is based in Kosiče, magazines, and news and discussion programmes on the Slovak television.

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## Introduction

The Hungarian minority living in Slovakia is a subject that is unknown in Western European countries, people know very little about this population group. The objective of this paper is to create awareness about this group. To create this awareness, it is of great importance to know the history of the Hungarian minority and other minorities living in post communist Slovakia.

First of all, it is important to know why the Hungarians became such a large minority in many European countries and especially in Slovakia. A lot has happened in Eastern and Central European countries over the past century. World War I was started by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914, and World War II started as a result of the Treaty of Trianon which was signed after World War I. More information on these subjects is given in chapter 1, section 1.1. After World War II, Slovakia once fell under Communist regime which is an important aspect when it comes to the situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia over the past twenty years. It is only 20 years ago that Communism existed, and therefore it is still fresh in the memories of the citizens of Slovakia. In chapter 1, the answer to the first sub question is given, namely ‘How did the Hungarians become a minority in post communist Slovakia?’.

Secondly, Czechoslovakia is mentioned many times in this paper. This is because Slovakia and the Czech Republic used to be merged into one country: Czechoslovakia. After 1993, Czechoslovakia was split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In the first chapter, Communism and how the split up was realised will be discussed. Furthermore, the political landscape of Slovakia will be discussed and the current situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia will become more clear. The second sub question, ‘What is the current situation of the Hungarian minority when it comes to discrimination?’ will be answered in chapter 2. Ethnic Hungarians are not the only minority living in Slovakia. A clearer view will be given on what other minorities live in Slovakia and what their rights are by answering the third sub-question in chapter 3: ‘What other minorities live in Slovakia and are they discriminated?’.

For a national minority such as the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, it is important that they are supported by authorities and organisations. In chapter four, information will be given concerning the support of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The answer on the last sub-question is given in chapter 4: ‘What does the Hungarian government do to support its citizens living in Slovakia?’

In addition to this paper, the author commissioned Dr. N.E. Kattenberg to interview two Hungarian-Hungarian couples and one Slovakian-Hungarian couple. Although the author wanted to interview these couples herself, she knew she would not receive as much detailed information as Dr. Kattenberg would receive from these people as Dr. Kattenberg built up a relationship of trust with them over the past 25 years. Luckily, Dr. Kattenberg had planned a trip to Slovakia already and was willing to interview the couples. The reason that the author would not receive as much information as the interviewer is because Eastern European citizens are still afraid and reluctant to tell their story and history as they have been suppressed for so many years. The couples are good friends of Dr. Kattenberg and they trust her to tell their story. Furthermore, these couples represent three generations of Hungarians living in Slovakia.

Dr. Kattenberg asked the couples about the political situation in Slovakia after World War II and whether they feel discriminated or not. It is important to know that the interviewed families are religious and two of them are ministers of a reformed church. During Communism, religion was forbidden and Bibles were burned. Finally, in the concluding chapter of this paper the answer to the main question is given on the basis of the information given in the previous chapters. The main question is: ‘What can be done to improve the living conditions of the Hungarian minority in post communist Slovakia?’

## **1. An introduction to Hungary and Hungarians through the century**

This chapter gives an overview of what happened with Hungary and Hungarians from 1914 till 1994. It will become clear why there are so many Hungarians living in other countries besides Hungary and especially in Slovakia. The reason for World War I and II becomes clear, an introduction of Vladimír Mečiar is given as he was the first Prime Minister of Slovakia, and political and cultural issues concerning the Hungarian minority in Slovakia are introduced. Images of historical people mentioned in this chapter can be found in appendix 8.2.

### **1.1. From 1914 to 1939/1940**

Hungary was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1867 till 1918. The Austro-Hungarian Empire is also known as Austro-Hungary and the Dual Monarchy. The Empire ruled over almost 677 square kilometres where many different nationalities lived. Each nationality had its own district in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (“Brief history of Austria-Hungary,” n.d.). In appendix 8.1, a map of ethnic divisions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is shown. Ten million Hungarians and twelve million Germans dominated three million Romanians, twenty-three million Slavs, and many minority groups. The minority groups were true to their own traditions and languages, and therefore loyal to their own nationality group instead of to the Dual Monarchy (“Brief history of Austria-Hungary,” n.d.). In chapter 2, more information is given on the current situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

#### **1.1.1. The reason for World War I**

On 28 June 1914, the Archduke and heir to the throne of Austro-Hungary Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophia paid an official visit to the city Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1908 (Hatt, 2000). The inhabitants were Slavs, mainly Serbs, who felt that their country needed to be part of the neighbouring Slavic state Serbia. Some of the Slavs were willing to use violence to become independent from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Seven members of the Black Hand, a secret association, were planning to murder Franz Ferdinand as a part of their campaign to independence. Six of the members failed to shoot him, but the seventh shot Franz Ferdinand and his wife (Hatt, 2000). The murderer was the 19-year old Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav nationalist. The death of Franz Ferdinand and Sophia brought a political crisis to Europe and Austro-Hungary accused Serbia to have supported this terrorist assassination. Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Josef consulted the German emperor Wilhelm II to ensure Germany would



have their back when a war would break out in the Balkans (Hatt, 2000). On 23 July, Franz Josef sent an ultimatum with many demands. Serbia had to demolish all organisations that conspired against Austro-Hungary and accept the help of Austro-Hungarian officials. Although Serbia agreed with almost every demand, without fully condemning one of the demands, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had already decided a war was necessary. In the morning of 28 July 1914, a war was declared. This war is now known as the Great War or World War I (Hatt, 2000).

After World War I and the dissolving of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, Hungary shrunk. On 4 June 1920, the Treaty of Trianon was signed by the Allied Powers and Hungary in Versailles, France. The Treaty of Trianon is also known as the Treaty of Versailles and was signed in the Trianon Palace in Versailles (“The regency 1920-45,” 2012). This treaty officially ended World War I, but can also be seen as the beginning of the Second World War. The Austro-Hungarian Empire started World War I and as a consequence it was punished; the country dissolved and the borders of the neighbouring countries were changed. Hungary lost about two-thirds of its former territory and its inhabitants that was not only *Magyar*, the Hungarian word for Hungarian (“The regency 1920-45,” 2012). Parts of Hungary were given to Czechoslovakia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. Czechoslovakia received the region of Pressburg (Bratislava), Sudetenland, Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, Slovakia and other smaller places. Austria was given western Hungary (most of Burgenland). The Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats (Yugoslavia) received Croatia-Slavonia and part of Banat which had been attached to Hungary from 1779 to 1920. Romania received Transylvania and most of Banat. Fiume went to Italy. The transfers were seized without any plebiscites and Hungarians were scattered all over the region (“The regency 1920-45,” 2012). People, who have lived in the region for centuries and who have a common history, became ethnic minorities. Families were driven apart and forced to live in another country although they had not left their birth place (“Hungarian National minority,” 2011). There was no person in, nowadays known as, Central Europe from whose whole family had one and the same nationality or background (“Hungarian National minority,” 2011). In appendix 8.3, a map of Slovakia and its neighbouring countries is shown.

Shortly after the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the Slovak League, a movement to gain freedom for Slovakia, commenced with the objective of ‘Slovakising’ the Hungarians (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 141). The Hungarians disagreed with this as they were expected to give up their language and culture. Children in Hungarian schools were taught to never accept the Treaty of Trianon, or as they called it ‘Diktat of Trianon’ (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 141).

### **1.1.2. The reason for World War II**

Both Germany and Hungary disagreed with the agreements recorded in the Treaty of Trianon. They felt they had been robbed from their properties and rights. For most of WWII, Hungary fought as an ally of Germany and recovered parts of its lost region in 1939/1940 when Germany had started this war. During WWII, Hungary became occupied by the Germans as well. The reason for this will become clear in paragraph 3 of this section.

Since Sudetenland had become a part of Czechoslovakia after World War I, it did no longer belong to Germany. Adolf Hitler was determined to recover Sudetenland, as many Germans lived there. On 9 March 1939, troops occupied Slovakia, and Jozef Tiso, the Prime Minister of Slovakia, was invited to meet Hitler in Berlin to discuss the future of Slovakia (Peter Chen, 2004-2012). Hitler gave Tiso a choice: Or declare Slovakia as an autonomous state within Czechoslovakia under the protection of Germany, or Germany would allow Poland and Hungary to annex the country after Germany annexed the Czech regions of Czechoslovakia (Peter Chen, 2004-2012). On 19 March 1939, Tiso declared Slovak independence. Slovakia had become an independent state within Czechoslovakia. Until 26 October 1939, Tiso ruled Slovakia as Prime Minister, after that he became President of Slovakia (Peter Chen, 2004-2012).

As mentioned earlier in this section, Hungary became occupied by the Germans. Hungary found out what atrocities against humanity Germany was responsible for and had therefore tried to switch sides (Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 2012). This attempt failed and on 19 March 1944, the country became occupied by the German military. Hungary's defeat had far-reaching consequences for the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries (Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 2012). In the following section, more information about the consequences for these minorities is given.

## **1.2. From 1945 to 1994**

### **1.2.1. During Communism**

After World War II, Hungary and Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) retained their independence. The National Front government of 1945 in Czechoslovakia, in its Kosice Government Programme which will be explained later in this paper, summoned the principle of 'collective guilt' and requested for the expulsion of the Hungarians and Germans from Czechoslovakia (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 141). On 17 June 1946, the Czechoslovak government made a decision upon this request. The government proclaimed a decree concerning the so-called "reslovakisation" which supported the assumption that

there had never been any Hungarians in Slovakia, but only ‘Hungarianised Slovaks’ (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 141).

The Kosice Government Programme concerned several principles and targets for the near future to end the war as soon as possible. A few examples of principles and targets are the support of the Red Army, with its focus namely on logistic aid, the preparation of a referendum on possible admission of Carpathian Ruthenia to the Soviet Union, relatively market changes in the state economy, and outlined measures to punish Germans, Hungarians, traitors, and collaborators (“The Kosice Government Programme,” 2010). Hungarians and Germans were to be banished from the country, unless they showed their loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic. All offenders during the war were to be punished for their actions (“The Kosice Government Programme,” 2010). A personal history is given in chapter 5, section 5.1 by Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky, both members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

In 1946, the Communist Party became the largest party with more than 36 % of the votes and formed a coalition. With Klement Gottwald, the Communist Party committed a coup in 1948 and made Czechoslovakia a people’s republic. Opponents of the new regime were eliminated and purges took place within the party (“Tsjechië: geschiedenis,” n.d.). In 1968, reformist Alexander Dubček succeeded Gottwald as party leader and a new period of communistic liberalization began. Dubček represented ‘socialism with a human face’ where human rights and democracy were very important aspects. This period is also known as the Prague Spring (“Tsjechië: geschiedenis,” n.d.).

However, the leaders of the socialist neighbouring countries looked with great disapproval at the occurrences in Czechoslovakia, because the new period was accompanied by an abundance of cultural expressions that were no longer subject to censorship. For example, political prisoners were released, the press was given more freedom, and the emphasis was placed on producing consumer goods instead of industrial production (Sasati, 2008). In August 1968, tanks of the Warsaw Pact ended the newly acquired freedoms. On 19 January 1969, the Prague student Jan Palach committed suicide in public by burning himself on the Wenceslas square in Prague in protest against the raid on his country. He became the symbol of the suppressed people (Nieuwsdossier, 2006). Dubček got replaced by Gustáv Husák who led the country with no place for individual freedom and criticism on the Communist regime (“Tsjechië: geschiedenis,” n.d.). The attempts to improve the conditions of the Hungarian minorities came to an end. Husák and his team secured their power, and the rights of minorities were gradually narrowed. Minority education was the main target and only one year after the Prague Spring

the Czechoslovak authorities diminished the Hungarian language education facilities by redrawing administrative limitations and closing or merging rural schools (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 144).

By the end of 1976, a few Czechoslovakian writers and intellectuals, including Václav Havel, started Charter '77. Charter '77 was a petition that demanded the Communist government of Czechoslovakia to recognize some basic human rights ("The power of one life", 2001). For example, in paragraph four of the Declaration of Charter '77 the following is written:

Tens of thousands of citizens are not allowed to work in their own branches simply because they held opinions which differ from official opinions. At the same time they are frequently the object of the most varied forms of discrimination and persecution on the part of the authorities and social organisations; they are deprived of any possibility of defending themselves and are virtually becoming the victims of apartheid (Declaration of Charter '77, 1977, para. 4).

Although the document was not really radical, it was considered to be a political crime. The human rights that were in the petition were already guaranteed by the Czechoslovakian Constitution and the Helsinki Accords which the Czechoslovakian government signed. Unfortunately, not even two thousand of the fifteen million citizens of Czechoslovakia had the courage to sign the petition of Charter '77, simply because they were afraid to be arrested ("The power of one life", 2001).

Václav Havel was seen as a hero and a role figure during the Communist era in Czechoslovakia. He was a playwright, essayist, dissident, and politician (Nellis & Taylor, 2009). During the first week of the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel provided a commentary on the events on Radio Free Czechoslovakia in Libereč. Following the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, he was banned from the theatre and became more politically active. In 1989, Havel became a leading figure in the Velvet Revolution (Nellis & Taylor, 2009). The Velvet Revolution was a series of demonstrations that took place in the period from 17 November to 27 November 1989. On 17 November 1989, there was a peaceful student demonstration in Prague which was violently suppressed by the riot police. Over 500 people were injured by the riot police. This suppressed event led to a series of popular demonstrations from 19 November to late December 1989 (Nellis & Taylor, 2009). On 20 November, the number of peaceful protesters that gathered in Prague extended from 200.000 the previous day to about half a million the next day. On 27 November, a two-hour strike was held involving all citizens of Czechoslovakia (Nellis & Taylor, 2009). As mentioned above, the Velvet Revolution began on 17 November 1989. It had started because the Communist Youth Movement

organised a peaceful demonstration in Prague to remember victims of the Nazi's in the Second World War. This demonstration was brutally interrupted by the riot police who arrested and injured a great number of demonstrators ("Fluwelen Revolutie 1989," 2012).

With the collapse of other Warsaw Pact governments and the increasing street protests, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia announced on 28 November 1989 that it would resign power and dismantle the single-party state. In early December, barbed wire and other constructions were removed from the border with Austria and West Germany (Euro children, 2012). On 10 December, President Gustáv Husák elected the first largely non-communist government in Czechoslovakia since 1948, and resigned. On 28 December, Alexander Dubček was appointed speaker of the federal parliament and on 29 December 1989, Václav Havel became the 10<sup>th</sup> president of Czechoslovakia. Communism had collapsed (Euro children, 2012).

### **1.2.2. After Communism**

On 1 January 1990, the new president Václav Havel gave a New Year's speech to the citizens of Czechoslovakia. His words were:

My dear fellow citizens: For forty years you have heard from my predecessors on this day different variations of the same theme: how our country flourished, how many millions of tons of steel we produced, how happy we all were, how we trusted our government, and what bright perspectives were unfolding in front of us. I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you... We live in a contaminated moral environment. We have fallen morally ill because we became used to saying one thing and thinking another. We have learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. Notions such as love, friendship, compassion, humility, or forgiveness have lost their depth and dimensions... The previous regime... reduced man to a means of production and nature to a tool of production. Thus it attacked both their very essence and their mutual relationship. It reduced gifted and autonomous people to nuts and bolts in some monstrously huge, noisy, and stinking machine (Havel, 1990, para. 2).

A few months later Havel decided that Hungarian minorities could start their own political parties. One day after the Velvet Revolution, on 18 November 1989, the Hungarian party was created on 18 November 1989. In 1993, Czechoslovakia was split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Havel, 1990).

### 1.2.3. Vladimír Mečiar

Vladimír Mečiar is a Slovak nationalist who started his political interference as a member of the Communist Party. In 1969, he was expelled from the party because he had given a pro-reform speech to the national congress, and was added to the list of enemies of the socialist regime. In late 1989, he joined the party Public Against Violence (*VPN; Verejnosť proti násiliu*) (Kellman, 2012, para. 3). During the Prague Spring in November 1989, he backed Alexander Dubček. On 11 January 1990, new professionals were searched by the VPN to participate in the Slovakian government and Mečiar became the new Minister of Interior and Environment. Alexander Dubček had recommended him, because he was impressed by Mečiar's knowledge in all relevant fields ("Vladimír Mečiar," 2012). By the end of 1990, the party was split into two different parties: People's Party – Movement for Democratic Slovakia (*L'S-HZDS; Ľudová strana - Hnutie Za Demokratické Slovensko*), and the remaining VPN, which name was changed into Civic Democratic Union (*ODÚ; Občianska Demokratická Únia*). The People's Party – Movement for Democratic Slovakia was led by Vladimír Mečiar. ("Vladimír Mečiar," 2012, para. 2).

Mečiar has been Prime Minister of the Slovak government from 1990 to 1991, 1992 to 1994, and from 1994 to 1998. Nowadays, his leadership is associated with autocratic policies and failing economic conditions (Kellman, n.d.). With Vaclav Klaus, the Prime Minister of the Czech government in 1992, Mečiar discussed the Slovak autonomy. They agreed that Czechoslovakia should be dissolved and, as mentioned in the last paragraph of chapter 1, section 2.1, on 1 January 1993, Slovakia and the Czech Republic became two autonomous states. Mečiar became the first Prime Minister of Slovakia (Kellman, n.d.). During his first year of leadership he faced many difficulties. Besides the economic downfall, a large Hungarian minority had objections against his leadership, as Mečiar's attitude towards minorities was very arrogant (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155). On 1 September 1992, the Slovak government passed a draft constitution. Following the publication of this draft, the Hungarian deputies complained and Mečiar refused to consider the objections of the Hungarian deputies to the Slovak constitution, claiming that they were not rightful representatives of the Hungarians (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155). Mečiar was only prepared to talk to ethnic Hungarians within his own party L'S-HZDS. According to Mečiar, the minority issue was an internal affair of Slovakia and it had sufficient safeguards to protect all rights of minorities (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155). After the parliament rejected their demands for educational, cultural, and territorial autonomy, Hungarian deputies walked out. Only in regions where the Hungarian minority form at least 20% of the population, the new constitution recognized the Hungarian language as an official language ("Chronology for Hungarians in Slovakia," 2004-2012).

#### **1.2.4. Language conflict**

In the 1990s, Slovakia was very nationalistic. The Hungarian Party was mainly busy defending and protecting political and human rights. By then, these rights were not respected by the government (Jenne, 2007, p. 100). The government was promoting the Slovak culture and constraining support for Hungarian cultural and educational involvement. The Hungarian minority believed that the Slovak government tried to suppress the minority (Jenne, 2007, p. 100). More information concerning the Hungarian educational and cultural involvement is given in chapter 2, section 2.2.3.

In 1992, a language conflict between Slovaks and Hungarians began, particularly language in education, publishing and signage. An example is the order of Roman Hofbauer, the Slovak Transportation Minister from 1992 to 1994, to remove all Hungarian street signs, apparently because they infringed safety and traffic rules in 1993 (Jenne, 2007, p. 100). The Hungarians felt they had the right to refer to the original place and street names, because of the historical background. However, the Slovaks did not support this idea and thought back to their experience when they were under Hungarian supremacy (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 152).

Because of its concern over the minority policy of Slovakia, the Council of Europe has reprimanded Slovakia time and again. In 1993, the Halonen Report was presented to the Council of Europe which highlighted four main problems. One of these problems was the forced removal of Hungarian language place signs (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155). In May 1994, a poll on Hungarian signage was held under the citizens of Slovakia. Only 15 percent of the Slovaks felt that the Hungarians were completely right when it came to demanding bilingual place names and street signs (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 152). More information concerning language issues in Slovakia will be given in chapter 2, section 2.2.2.

## **2. Political landscape in Slovakia**

This chapter gives a short introduction of Slovakia as a country. Furthermore, it gives an overview of the current situation of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia when it comes to discrimination. It explains what the government of Slovakia has done for the Hungarian minority since the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Criticism of the Hungarian minority towards the Slovakian government is given in this chapter as well.

### **2.1. Short introduction to Slovakia**

Slovakia is situated in the centre of Europe and has five neighbouring countries. In the west, Slovakia borders with Austria and the Czech Republic. In the south, with the longest border, Slovakia borders with Hungary. In the east, Slovakia borders with Ukraine, having the shortest border. In the north, the country borders with Poland. Slovakia surfaces 49,035 km<sup>2</sup> and, according to the census of 2011, has 5,397,036 inhabitants (“Slovakia- little big country,” 2008-2012). As mentioned in chapter 1, section 1.1, paragraph 3, a map of Slovakia and its neighbouring countries can be found in appendix 8.3.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Slovakia became an autonomous country on 1 January 1993. The country is a parliamentary democratic republic with autonomous executive, legislative and judicial departments (“Internal politics,” 2008-2012). The Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees every citizens equality regardless of their gender, race, national origin, religion, political conviction or social status (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1999). More information on the rights of Slovakia’s citizens is given in chapter 3, section 3.2. The National Council of Slovakia is a unicameral parliament and the supreme body exercising legislative power in the republic. It is the highest legislative authority of the country (“Internal politics,” 2008-2012). The National Council has 150 members who are directly elected by the people for a four-year term of office. For a party to enter the Parliament, at least 5% of the votes is needed. The election system is proportional representation, which means that seats in Parliament are allotted by the percentage of votes the party receives in parliamentary elections (“Internal politics,” 2008-2012).

The President of Slovakia is the highest constitutional representative in the country and he/she is elected by direct elections. He/she is also called the Head-of-State. However, the function of the President is more formal, and the real governmental power is in hands of the Prime Minister and partly



in hands of the Chairman of the National Council. The Government of Slovakia is the supreme body for exercising executive power. It consists of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed and recalled by the President of Slovakia (“Internal politics,” 2008-2012). The Government is responsible to the Parliament for the exercise of governmental powers, which has the right to take a vote of no-confidence at any time. The Chairman of the National Council of Slovakia is elected or recalled by secret votes with the settlement of an absolute majority of all members of the Parliament. (“Internal politics,” 2008-2012).

## **2.2. Slovak authorities since 1994**

After the split up of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia found it difficult to find qualified, experienced personnel to handle, in particular, its international relations. The Slovaks had less knowledge of Western countries than the Czechs, and the number of Slovaks who had been involved in running Czechoslovakia decided to choose for Czech citizenship and to stay in Czech (Henderson, 2001, p.220). Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia had equal years of experience of living in a democracy, but the Czechs had much more experience of running a democratic state (Henderson, 2001, p. 210).

After 1998, Slovakia became more liberal and a free market economy with foreign investors. Slovakia wanted to be a member state of the European Union and ratified every European and international treaty. This speeded up the democratisation process (Drunen, 2006). Slovakian law prevented political parties to form electoral cartels at election times, which small parties used to overcome to 5% of electoral votes. The Party of the Hungarian Coalition (*Magyar Koalíció Pártja, MKP*) exists since 1998 and is a fusion of three Hungarian parties in Slovakia: the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (*Keresztanszkodemokratické hnutie, KDH*), the Co-existence Party (*Együttélés Pártja*), and the Hungarian Civic Party (*Magyar Polgári Pártja, MPP*), but formed a cartel from 1994 (“Party of the Hungarian Coalition,” 2012, para. 3). These parties were the liberals, conservatives and the christen-democrats. The party is very popular with the ethnic and minority groups in Slovakia. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, section 2.1, paragraph 2, a party needs at least 5% of the votes to enter the Parliament. To meet with the new law, the three parties merged to form the Party of the Hungarian Coalition. In the 1994 elections, the party won 10.2% of the votes (“Party of the Hungarian Coalition,” 2012, para. 3). In the 1998 elections, the party won 9.1% of the votes. Most votes come from the Hungarians minority, but there also a few Slovaks who vote for this party. Since the elections of 1998 and 2002, the MKP was part of the government (“Party of the Hungarian Coalition,” 2012, para. 3).

### **2.2.1. Under the current Slovak government**

The current Head-of-State is Ivan Gašparovič. In 1992, he joined the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MZDS). During Mečiar's Prime Minister administration, Gašparovič was one of the leading figures who was generally sensed authoritarian. Gašparovič was one of the authors of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in 1992 ("Ivan Gašparovič," 2012). In 2002, he disapproved the authority of Mečiar and left the party. On 17 April 2004, he was elected as President of Slovakia. Under his leadership, Slovakia became a member state of the European Union on 1 May 2004. On 1 January, 2009, Slovakia entered the European Monetary Union by accepting the euro as currency in Slovakia. On 22 March 2009, he was re-elected as President of Slovakia ("Internal politics," 2008-2012). Since 4 April 2012, Robert Fico is Prime Minister of Slovakia. Fico has been a member of the Communist Party from 1978 till 1990, and from 1990 till 1999 a member of the Party for the Democratic Left (*SDL*). In 1999, Fico founded the political party Direction-Social Democracy (*SMER*). From July 2006 to July 2010, Fico was Prime Minister of Slovakia as well ("Robert Fico," 2012). Since 8 July 2010, the Chairman of Parliament is Richard Sulík. He is the leader of the political party 'Freedom and Solidarity' (*SaS*) ("Richard Sulík," 2012). Images of the important people in the history of Slovakia can be found in appendix 8.2.

### **2.2.2. Language issues throughout the years**

The ethnic Hungarians had reacted bitterly on the breakup of Czechoslovakia, because they saw the federal government in Prague as a vital surety of their rights. In the beginning of the independence of Slovakia, the Slovak political scenery was full of nationalist parties who addressed their anger against the Czechs (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150, para. 1). As mentioned in chapter 1, section 1.2.4, paragraph 1, the Slovaks dreamt of an independent state where Slovaks would form the nation, speak their own language as an official language and the Slovak culture would prosper. The Hungarian minority viewed this upcoming nationalist ambition with increasing anxiety and was therefore, in favour of a federal system which stoked Slovak mistrust and anger (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150), para. 2). The formulation of the Slovak constitution confirmed their anguish. The constitution refers to the Slovak nation, but does not refer to all of those who live in Slovakia. It is opposed to members of ethnic and minority groups living in Slovakia (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150), para. 2). On the first line of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic is written: "We, the Slovak people" (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1999). Although the constitution includes rations for minority protection, the government seemed to do everything in its ability to intimidate the Hungarian minority (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150), para. 2). More information on these rations is given in chapter 3, section 3.2.

On 1 September 2009, Slovakia's democratic values took a major step downwards. Since July 2006, when the socialist party SMER took power and Fico became Prime Minister, Slovakia was characterised by devolved rule of law and bias. Fico made a coalition with the nationalist Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana, SNS*), led by Ján Slota, and the post-communist party *L'S-HZDS*, led by Vladimír Mečiar ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p. 1, para. 1). The government ignored domestic and international appeals to reconsider the amendments to the 1995 Slovak Language Law, which passed on 30 June 2006 ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p. 1, para. 1). The new law banned minority languages in public, but also in private spheres. Despite the attempts of the Hungarian government to dialogue, warnings of European institutions and last minute changed motions in the Slovak Parliament, the Slovak President Gašparovič signed the law on 17 July 2009 ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p. 1, para. 2). According to Gašparovič: "the language law was necessary to protect Slovaks living in southern Slovakia" ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, note 2). On 1 September 2009, Slovakia became the only country in the world that punished people for using their own language. The minority groups, mainly Hungarians, were the direct target of the internationally unequalled punishments and restrictions on native-language use ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p. 1, para. 2). The language law restricted freedom of speech and increased government control over the daily life of people. Fines would be given for the incorrect use of the Slovak language and unauthorised use of minority languages. These fines ranged from 100 and 5,000 Euros ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p.2, para. 2). Punishments would be given if, for example, a firemen responded in Hungarian to a call for help by a person in a burning building, or a conductor addressed a passenger in Hungarian on a train from Slovakia to Hungary ("Language use is policed and punished," 2009, p.2, para. 2).

However, on 27 February 2007, on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Slovakia, the Committee of Ministers already issued the 'Recommendation RecChL(2007)1' in where it recommended that, as a matter of priority, the authorities of Slovakia takes account of all the observations of the Committee of Experts, and to improve and complete the legislative framework in the light of obligations by Slovakia upon its ratifications of the Charter (Recommendation RecChL(2007)1, 2007). Furthermore, it was issued to review the requirement that minority or regional speakers should represent at least 20% of the municipal population for the undertakings in the administration to be operational, to remove restrictions on the use of minority or regional languages, guarantee women to use or adopt family names in minority or regional languages, and to improve education in minority or regional languages (Recommendation RecChL(2007)1, 2007).

On page 31 of the Report on Slovakia of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), published in May 2009, it is written:

... the rise in anti-Hungarian discourse by some political figures has created a negative public climate which has led to an increase in intolerance against the Hungarian minority in Slovakia as well as acts of racially-motivated crimes against members of this group ("Report on Slovakia," 2009, p. 31).

An example of the rise in anti-Hungarian discourse is the physical assault of ethnic Hungarian university student Hedviga Malinová by two young men after they heard her speak Hungarian. This happened in August 2006 ("Report on Slovakia," 2009, p. 31). Furthermore, in the 'Report on Slovakia' of ECRI, ECRI specifically urged the Slovak authorities to: "... take a more robust stance against negative political discourse against ethnic minorities in general, and the Hungarian minority in particular by, among others, ensuring the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code" ("Report on Slovakia," 2009, p. 32). Proceeding to the above urge, ECRI recommends that the authorities of Slovakia take measures to resolve the above-mentioned issues with the members of the Hungarian minority ("Report on Slovakia," 2009, p. 32).

### **2.2.3. Hungarian education in Slovakia**

As made clear in the previous section, Slovakia was very nationalistic in the 1990s and the Hungarian minority believed that the Slovak government tried to suppress the minority. The Communists had tried to expand bilingual education in 1978 and again in 1984, supposedly to increase the Hungarian insight of the Slovak language (Jenne, 2007, p. 100). Attempts like these were strongly resisted by Hungarians who saw an attempt of acquisition. A bill with similar objectives was submitted to the Slovak parliament in the autumn of 1990. Just like before, it met a lot of resistance and therefore it had to be withdrawn (Jenne, 2007, p. 100).

In July 1995, Eva Slavkovska, who was responsible for the education portfolio in the third cabinet of Mečiar, emitted an extensive proposal. She proposed that one out of every three teachers in 'alternative kindergartens' should be speaking Slovak, while at the level of primary school courses such as mathematics, biology and civics should be taught in Slovak (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150, para. 2). According to Cedar Rapids Community Schools 'alternative kindergarten' is: "Neither a preschool programme nor a version of half-time kindergarten. Students work on academic skills, but the main focus is social and emotional development" ("Alternative kindergarten," 1999-2005, par. 4). The scheme mentioned for primary schools would continue in alternative grammar schools, while

vocational schools would teach technical subjects in Slovak. To calm the fear of Hungarians, it specified that such schools would be created alongside existing Hungarian schools and not in place of (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150, para. 2). Besides that, it would be introduced only when local school boards and parents requested it. The Hungarian minority feared that these schools would ultimately replace Hungarian-only schools, since the proposal failed to explain how these schools would be financed (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 150, para. 2). Under increasing pressure of the minorities, Slavkovska announced that the education ministry would not introduce the schemes in the 1995-96 school year (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 1). Besides the possible introduction of bilingual schools at the expense of the Hungarian-only schools, the minorities were very concerned about the budgetary allocations to give assistance to minority cultures (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 2). They saw this as an attempt to weaken the structure of the cultural organization of Hungarians in Slovakia. Furthermore, they thought the government tried to make the preservation of their culture impossible under increasing economical restrictions (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 2).

The Hungarian minority demand for their own university in Komárom and separated departments at the University of Agriculture in Nitra stagnated repeatedly due to lack of personnel and funds (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 3). Furthermore, the creation of church-run schools which imparted education in the Hungarian language was banned as well. The adoption of the new Slovak Language Law in 1995 was the result of the constant attempt to discriminate the Hungarian language (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 3). The Slovak Language Law described the Slovak language as one of the oldest civilized languages of Europe and gave it a primacy over other minority languages (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 151, para. 3). More information concerning the Slovak Language Law is given later on in this section.

In July 1996, two senior officials from France and Germany, two important countries of the European Union, warned Slovakia that its minority policy could hinder its integration ambition to the EU (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155, para. 2). Max van der Stoep, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Human Rights High Commissioner, visited Slovakia in the same year, where he expressed his reservation about the modified penal code and the delay in passing a law enabling the use of minority language in official communication transactions (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155, para. 2). Furthermore, Van der Stoep was critical on the ratio of governmental subsidies for minority cultures noting that non-Hungarians received a financing of five times more than Hungarians (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155, para. 2).

As mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.2.2, paragraph 2, the new Slovak language law came into force in September 2009. The Hungarian minority saw this new Slovak language law as an attack on their right to speak their own language. Besides the tightened rules concerning speaking Slovak in communication with public officials, such as doctors and police officers, Hungarian-language schools were obliged to conduct their administration in Slovak. The only exceptions applied to monolinguals, who speak and write only one language, or in districts where the minority made up at least a fifth of the population of that region (“Language rows between Slovakia and Hungary,” 2009).

On the website of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports, the following is written concerning the education in minority languages:

Training and education of national minorities provided at pre-school facilities, elementary schools, secondary schools, special schools and school facilities with teaching in languages other than Slovak, including the languages of the Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and German national minority: In addition, education is provided for members of the Roma community and children from socially disadvantaged environments at schools and school facilities (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic, 2007).

This means that education is provided for all of those who live in Slovakia, native Slovak speakers, but also members of minority groups or ethnic minorities who speak their mother-tongue (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic, 2007).

Nowadays, when you ask a member of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia whether they see and notice any difference between Hungarian schools and Slovakian schools, the interviewed people all answered that the Hungarian minority is very lucky when it comes to education (Kattenberg, 2012). The reason for this is because all good universities were in the lands of the Czech Republic when Slovakia and the Czech Republic were still one country. For instance, if you wanted to study theology you had to go to Prague, the Czech Republic, or to Komárom, which is a frontier town near the Danube river, partially located in Slovakia and partially in Hungary (Kattenberg, 2012). There are still more professors from Hungary than professors from Slovakia. Hungarians in Slovakia receive a lot of help from the Hungarian organisations and government. Just like the Hungarian schools, Slovakian schools have no books, simply because there is no money. The teachers of Hungarian schools collect high quality articles in English on the Internet (Kattenberg, 2012).

#### 2.2.4. Double citizenship

From 2006 to 2010, the Slovak government consisted of a coalition of SMER, L'S-HZDS, and SNS (European Committee Human Rights Hungarians Central Europe, 2012, para. 2). In an official letter to former Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende and former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Verhagen, Miklós Tóth, secretary of the foundation '*Hongaarse Federatie in Nederland*', wrote that SNS was openly racist and xenophobe towards ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia (Tóth, 2007, para. 1). In September 2007, the Slovakian government decided to reconfirm the so-called Beneš-decrees from 1945. These decrees made the Hungarian minority secondary citizens of Slovakia who had explicitly fewer rights than others. With this, Slovakia was the only country that legally differentiated on the basis of ethnicity (Tóth, 2007, para. 1). When making the announcement that the government reaffirmed the Beneš-decrees, Ján Slotka said: "Hungarians are the cancer of the Slovak nation, without delay we need to remove them from the body of the nation". The reaffirmation of the Beneš Decrees of 1945 is, according to Tóth, "a slap in the face for everybody who respects human rights and humane society. It is a slap in the face for entire Europe. It underlined the racist fascist mentality of the current Slovak government..." (Tóth, 2007, para. 2).

In the first week of July 2010, a new law was adopted in Slovakia that said it was forbidden to have a double nationality. With this law, the Slovak government reacted on a law that was just adopted in Hungary. This Hungarian law gave all ethnic Hungarians who did not live in Hungary the right to have a Hungarian passport (TdS, 2011). The Slovak law made it possible to withdraw the Slovak passport if somebody requested a second passport for another country than Slovakia. The law was meant for the Hungarians, to prevent that the large Hungarian minority in Slovakia would become constitutional Hungarian again (TdS, 2011). Since July 2010, only twenty-five people had to hand in their Slovak passport. Under these twenty-five people there was one Dutchman, one Englishman, one Italian, eleven Germans and ten Austrians, but only one Hungarian (TdS, 2011). According to Iveta Radičová, the Prime Minister of Slovakia from 8 July 2010 to 4 April 2012, the new Slovak citizenship law caused the problem that everyone could be excluded from having a double passport and this does not correspond to the agreements Slovakia had with other countries (TdS, 2011). Radičová did not want the Slovak citizens to become the victims of this problem. Hungary threatened Slovakia with legal actions in international courts if the Slovak government would not change the law on dual citizenship (TdS, 2011). The deputy Prime Minister of Hungary proclaimed that the law discriminated Hungarians who apply and take up Hungarian citizenship. In January 2011, this law was amended so that Slovak citizens would not be deprived from their Slovak citizenship (MTI, 2012). The amendment was: the double nationality is only for those who live one year or longer in a foreign country, or in case of

marriage or after five years of study (Presseurop, 2011). This means that the Slovak citizenship law is still in force.

Ethnic Hungarian Oliver Boldoghy, who lives in Komárom, announced in late November 2011 that his Slovak citizenship has been seized under the Slovak citizenship law, after he applied for Hungarian citizenship (MTI, 2011). In response to this seizure, the Hungarian government called this matter unacceptable. Slovak ambassador Peter Weiss said that the Slovakia's citizenship act is in line with European laws and international standards (MTI, 2011). Co-chairman of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Kristóf András Kádár, proclaimed this Slovak move as absurd and outrageous, given that Slovakia and Hungary are members of the same borderless community (Hungary around the clock, 2011).



### **3. Ethnic minorities in Slovakia**

This chapter gives an overview of minorities in general in Slovakia. It gives an answer to the sub-question if there are other minorities living in Slovakia and if they are discriminated. Every ten years, the Slovakian government conducts a census (“The 2011 Population and Housing Results,” 2012). Slovakia is a country with many and a large proportion of national minorities. As mentioned in chapter 1, many population groups became a national minority in Slovakia when the Treaty of Trianon was signed as a result of World War I and II. According to the census of 1991, 2001 and 2011, the main minority group is the Hungarian minority. Besides the Hungarian minority, there is also a large number of Roma, Czech, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German and Polish people in Slovakia (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011). There are more minorities living in Slovakia, but the rates are so low that they will not be mentioned in this paper. In appendix 8.2. the table of the census by nationality is given. Information given in chapter 3.1. Population rates are obtained through the website of the Statistical Office of the Slovakian Republic (“The 2011 Population and Housing Results,” 2012).

#### **3.1. Population rates**

##### **3.1.1. Census of 1991**

The largest minority living in Slovakia is the Hungarian minority. In 1991, the census of all citizens in Slovakia was 5,274,335 people, including 4,519,335 Slovaks. The census of Hungarians was 567,296, which is 10.8%. The total percentage of the ethnic minorities in Slovakia is 14.3%, which is quite a lot. The Roma minority had a total of 75,802, which was equal to 1.4%. The Czech minority had a population of 52,884, which was equal to 1.0%. The Ruthenian minority had a population of 17,197 and the Ukrainian had a population of 13,281, both minorities contributed with 0.3% to the ethnic national minorities in Slovakia. Other minorities are German (5,414 people, 0.1%), Polish (2,659 people, 0.1%), Jewish (134 people, 0.0%), Moravian (6,037 people, 0.1%), and Bulgarian (1,400 people, 0.0%). There were also other minority groups, these are mentioned as ‘others’ and ‘unspecified’. In 1991, other minority groups had a total population of 2,732 people, which was equal to 0.1%. The unspecified minority groups had a population of 8,782 people, which was equal to 0.2%.

##### **3.1.2. Census of 2001**

In 2001, Slovakia had a total population of 5,379,455 citizens, including 4,614,854 Slovaks. The Slovak population has increased by 0.1%, which was equal to 95,526 more people than in 1991. Since

1991, the total population of Slovakia increased with 1.9%, which was equal to 105,120 people. The total percentage of ethnic national minorities in 2001 was 14.2, which is 0.1% less than the previous census. The Hungarian population had a total of 520,528 people, which was equal to 9.7%. The Roma minority had a population of 89,920 people, which was 0.3% more than in the previous census of 1991. The Czech minority has decreased by 0.2% since the census of 1991, namely from 52,884 people in 1991 to 44,620 people in 2001. In 2001, the Czech population had a percentage of 0.8. The Ruthenian minority has increased by 0.1% since the 1991 census. In 2001, this minority group had a total of 24,201 people, which was equal to 0.4%. The Ukrainian minority has decreased since 1991 with 0.1% and had a total population of 10,814 people, which was equal to 0.2%. Most of the other minorities groups increased, except for the German and Polish minority. Germans (5,405 people, 0.1%), Polish (2,602 people, 0.0%), Jewish (218 people, 0.0%), Moravian (2,348 people, 0.0%), and Bulgarian (1,179 people, 0.0%). There were also other minority groups, these are mentioned as 'others' and 'unspecified'. In 1991, other minority groups had a total population of 5,350 people, which was equal to 0.1%. The unspecified minority groups increased since 1991 and had a population of 54,502 people, which was equal to 1.0%.

### **3.1.3. Census of 2011**

In 2011, the total population of Slovakia was 5,397,036, including 4,352,775 Slovaks. The total population had increased by 0.3% since 2001, which is equal to 17,581 people. The Slovak population decreased by 5.1%, which is equal to 262,079 less people than in 2001. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia had a total of 458,467, which is 8.5%. The total percentage of ethnic national minorities in Slovakia in 2011 was 19.3, which is 5.1% more than in the previous census of 2001. The Roma population has a total of 105,738 people, which is equal to 2.0% of the total population of Slovakia. This minority group has increased by 0.3%, which is equal to 15,818 people since 2001. The Czech minority decreased from 0.8% to 0.6%. The total Czech population in Slovakia in 2011 was 30,367, which is 14,253 less people than in 2001. The Ruthenian minority has increased since the 2001 census. This minority has a total population of 33,482 people, which is equal 0.6% of the total population of Slovakia. The Ukrainian minority decreased by 0.1% since 2001. In 2001, the minority consisted of 10,814 people, the census of 2011 rates 7,430 people, which is equal to 3,384 less people.

Almost all other minority groups increased their population, except for the German and Bulgarian minority. Germans (4,690 people, 0.1%), Polish (3,084 people, 0.1%), Jewish (631 people, 0.0%), Moravian (3,286 people, 0.1%), and Bulgarian (1,051 people, 0.0%). There were also other minority groups, these are mentioned as 'others' and 'unspecified'. In 2011, other minority groups had a total

population of 9,825 people, which was equal to 0.2%. ‘Other’ minority groups increased their population by 4,475 people. The unspecified minority groups increased since 2001 and has a population of 382,493 people, which is an increase of 327,991 people and equal to 6.0% since 2001.

### **3.2. Rights of ethnic minorities**

In a country like Slovakia, there are many differences between national minorities, and therefore the country has to implement a mixed approach to the cultural interests and needs of the minorities. The largest minority in Slovakia is the Hungarian minority, followed by the Roma minority, the Czech minority, the Ruthenian minority, the Ukrainian minority, the German minority, the Polish minority, the Jewish minority, the Moravian minority, and the Bulgarian minority (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011). People belonging to ethnic groups or national minorities have the same freedoms and human rights as the Slovakian majority. No discrimination is allowed according to Article 12 of the constitution of the Slovak Republic, all individuals have to right to choose their nationality, and every attempt to deprive a person’s original nationality is prohibited (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006). The full development of all minority groups is guaranteed by the Slovak Republic. In particular the right to develop their own culture in co-operation with other group members of the minority, the right to form national clubs, the right to receive and spread information in their own languages, and the right to create and keep up cultural and educational institutions (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011). Under the conditions laid down by law, individuals belonging to ethnic groups or national minorities are guaranteed as well that they have the right to learn the Slovakian language, the right to use their language in official communications, the right to have education in their mother tongues, and the right to take part in decision-making in affairs that affect ethnic groups and national minorities (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011).

#### **3.2.1. Free and equal in dignity and rights**

Returning to Article 12 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, in Article 12.1 is written: “all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights. Their fundamental rights and freedoms are inalienable, irrevocable, and absolutely perpetual” (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1999). Furthermore, in Article 12.2 it is written that: “fundamental rights shall be guaranteed in the Slovak Republic to every person regardless of sex, race, colour, language, faith, religion, political affiliation or conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, birth or any other status, and no person shall be denied their legal rights, discriminated against or favoured on any of these grounds” (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1999). Moreover, in Article 12.3 it is written: “Every person has

the right to freely decide which national group he or she is a member of. All manner of influence or coercion that may affect or lead to a denial of a person's original nationality shall be prohibited". In Article 12.4 it is written: "No person shall be prevented from exercising his or her fundamental rights and freedoms" (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1999). At the same time, Slovakia sees minority rights as individual rights and does not see them as collective rights, which means that individuals and not groups are blessed with language rights. According to the opinion of the majority of Slovak politicians and Slovak legal experts, individual rights are rights sorted in the category of collective rights (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006).

The terms "ethnic groups" and "national minority" are used in the Slovak Constitution, but the law does not provide any definition of them and it does not name any ethnic group or national minority in particular (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006). According to the constitutional court, the new anti-discrimination law passed by the Slovak Parliament in 2004 was to be found in conflict with Article 12 of the constitution. The full name of the anti-discrimination law is "Act on equal treatment and protection against discrimination" (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006, p. 17, note 15). In Act 365/2004 it is written that discrimination on the grounds of sex, belief or religion, ethnicity or nationality, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital and family status, race, language, political opinion, social or national origin, property, gender or other status is forbidden (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006). Discrimination on all the above mentioned grounds is forbidden in employment and other similar legal relations as well as in healthcare, social security, provision of goods and services, and in education (Szabó Mihály Gramma, 2006).

As mentioned in chapter 2, Slovakia became a member state of the European Union on 1 May 2004. Since then, Slovakia has been addressed by the European Union and held accountable for its actions regarding minorities ("Internal politics," 2008-2012). In Article 20.2a of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union it is written that: "Citizens of the Union shall enjoy rights and be subjects to the duties provided for in the Treaties. They shall have, among other things: ... (b) the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals in that State" (Kluwer, 2010, p. 39).

### **3.2.2. Education for everyone**

As mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, paragraph 6, education is provided for all of those who live in Slovakia, without taking notice of their background ("National minorities in Slovakia," 2011). Education can be taught in schools where instructions are given in Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian or

German, or where the minority language is taught. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic also supports a number of programmes with the objectives to develop habits for education and school in disadvantaged groups belonging to the Roman Minority (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011).

### **3.2.3. Bilingual geographical signs**

In December 2011, the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (*MKP*) demanded that the Slovak government stick to its promise that it would amend the language law of 1995. In 1993, all street signs in the Hungarian language were removed (“Language use is policed and punished,” 2009, para. 1). After the *MKP* became part of the Slovak government in 1998 and again in 2002, the street signs, place names, etc., were placed back. When Fico, Slotka, and Mečiar form a coalition in July 2006, Hungarian signage is removed again from public places (“Language use is policed and punished,” 2009, para. 1). *MKP* stated that it is unacceptable that some 655 municipalities are displayed only in Slovak and not in the minority language of the community as well (The Staff, 2011). These 655 municipalities have Hungarian, Roma, Ruthenian and Ukrainian minorities. The *MKP* demanded that the Slovak government include this point in the agenda of the last session of the year, and that it would push the change rapidly (The Staff, 2011).

On 25 May 2011, the Slovak government amended the Act No. 318/2009, the use of languages of national minorities. Where a national minority makes up a population of at least 15% of the total population, traffic signs indicating the beginning and the end of the municipality shall be placed in the minority language (The National Council of the Slovak Republic, 2012, p. 4). The signs will be bilingual. Furthermore, railway stations, bus station, airport and port will be indicated in the minority language as well, as well as street names and other local geographical objects within its territory (The National Council of the Slovak Republic, 2012, p. 4).

## **4. Governmental support**

This chapter gives an explanation on whether and how the contemporary Hungarian government supports its citizens living in Slovakia. In the first section of this chapter, it is explained what the Hungarian government has put into force in order to safeguard the Hungarian nationality. In section 4.2., information is given of the Slovak government and a few organisations that support the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

### **4.1. Hungarian status law**

Since 1 January 2002, the Hungarian Status law is in force. The Slovak authorities, namely the populist and nationalist parties had great objections against the, in their opinion, discriminating determinations in the law and how they were achieved (Bakker, 2010, para. 1). Representatives of Slovakia's ethnic Hungarians were pleased with the new law, although they ascertained a few negative aspects as well (Bakker, 2010, para. 1). According to the law, ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries who do not belong to the European Union, have the right to work in Hungary for three months, every year. Furthermore, if the ethnic Hungarian has a special pass saying the person has the Hungarian nationality, he/ she is able to use medical and cultural facilities in Hungary (Bakker, 2010, para. 2). Discounts on train journeys, financial support for children who go to Hungarian schools, and scholarships for higher education in Hungary are included in the law (Bakker, 2010, para. 2). Finally, Hungarian educational institutions and Hungarian speaking media in neighbouring countries can count on financial support of the Hungarian government (Bakker, 2010, para. 2). One of the interviewed people by Dr. N.E. Kattenberg responded: 'We are lucky, because our Hungarian schools become a lot of support from Hungarian organisations and even from the Hungarian government' (Kattenberg, 2012)

With this law, the Hungarian government hopes to protect the cultural identity of Hungarians outside Hungary. Besides that, the law should prevent that members of the Hungarian minority groups in neighbouring countries emigrate towards Hungary. According to an investigation, almost a quarter of the ethnic Hungarians would like to emigrate to Hungary (Bakker, 2010, para. 3). The status law has to prevent a desolation of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries by giving them a special pass whereby certain European barriers can be circumnavigated (Bakker, 2010, para. 4). Slovakia was not pleased with the status law, but since they wanted to become a member state of the European Union, the country remained calm (Bakker, 2010, para. 4).

As mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.1.4, paragraph 2, the Hungarian authorities passed a nationality law in May 2010. The new nationality law gave all ethnic Hungarians who do not live in Hungary the right to have a Hungarian passport. According to Zsolt Semjén, who is responsible for national policies, the new law for double citizenship is not in line with the European rule of law (“Dubbele nationaliteit, nieuw wetsvoorstel,” 2010). Everyone who does not live in Hungary, but does believe he/she has the Hungarian identity, is able to speed up the procedure to obtain the Hungarian citizenship. Important to know is that only Hungarians who have a residential address in Hungary have the right to vote in Hungary (“Dubbele nationaliteit, nieuw wetsvoorstel,” 2010).

## **4.2. Authorities and organisations**

### **4.2.1. Hungarian authority**

The Hungarian minority in Slovakia receives support from the Hungarian authorities, as well as from several regional and non-governmental organizations such as the Human Rights Watch, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (UNHCR, 2003). The Fundamental Law of Hungary of 25 April 2011, includes an article concerning the Hungarian citizens living outside Hungary. In Article D under Foundation it is written:

Bearing in mind that there is one single Hungarian nation that belongs together, Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders, and shall facilitate the survival and development of their communities; it shall support their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity, the assertion of their individual and collective rights, the establishment of their community self-governments, and their prosperity in their native lands, and shall promote their cooperation with each other and with Hungary (“The Fundamental Law of Hungary,” 2011, p. 4).

The Fundamental Law of Hungary is signed by the President of Hungary, Dr. Pál Schmitt, and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, László Kövér. The law came into force on 1 January 2012 (“The Fundamental Law of Hungary,” 2011, p. 44).

### **4.2.2. Slovak authority**

The Slovak Ministry of Culture finances the culture of national groups through a dedicated grant programme for National Minority Culture. The programme focuses on the overall development and support of minority culture, the spreading of current artistic works, support for social and cultural

projects from which the end result is the preservation and creation of cultural heritage, and the support for periodical and non-periodical publications (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011).

#### **4.2.3. European Union**

On 2 October 1992, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the ‘European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages’ and opened it on 5 November 1992 for signature. The Charter aims to promote and protect the historical regional or minority languages of Europe, to develop and maintain the cultural traditions and heritage of Europe, and to respect the right to use a minority or regional language in public and private life (“European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages,” 1994-2003). The Charter had been under consideration since 1988. In total, 17 countries approved and signed the Charter on 23 September 2002. These countries are: United Kingdom, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia, Norway, Netherlands, Liechtenstein, Hungary, Germany, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus, Croatia, Austria, and Armenia (“European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages,” 1994-2003).

#### **4.2.4. Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

As mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, paragraph 5, Human Rights High Commissioner on National Minorities from 1993 to 2001, Max van der Stoep, visited Slovakia to express his concern about the penal code and the delay in passing a law enabling the use of minority language in official communications (Sarkar & Jha, 2002, p. 155, para. 2). Since 2007, Knut Vollebæk is the new High Commissioner on National Minorities. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the Law on Hungarian Citizenship came into force. On 18 June 2009, Vollebæk stated upon this:

‘I have not seen the text of the proposed amendments to the Hungarian Law on Citizenship... I am in touch with the Hungarian authorities and once I have had the opportunity to examine the text, I will make my assessment and get back to them with an opinion and recommendations if needed (Vollebæk, 2009).

He finished his statement by saying:

It is clear that granting citizenship *en masse* could have destabilising effect and should be discouraged. However, in all other cases bilateral consultations are encouraged. This is particularly true for Hungary and Slovakia who are partner States in the EU and NATO, and who have signed bilateral treaties. Such consultations would be in the spirit of the European Union as well as in accordance with friendly and good neighbourly relations (Vollebæk, 2009).



#### 4.3. Others

The minority languages and rights are not only supported by organisations and institutions. In 2001, many citizens of Slovakia, regardless of background, accused nationalistic politicians on both Hungarian and Slovakian sides for thrilling up trouble by playing the ‘ethnic card’ for their own political purpose (UNHCR, 2003). In 2003, the tensions were resolved and a law was approved that would allow Hungary to give economic aid to ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. The tension rose when MKP leader Pál Csáky threatened to leave the government over disagreement on a law (UNHCR, 2003).

In June 2008, concerned citizens of Hungary and Slovakia, expressed their concern regarding the situation between Slovaks and Hungarians (“Petition”, 2008). They wish to be able to live together in mutual respect and peace, regardless of background. They have signed up a petition to improve the society:

We, concerned citizens of the Slovak Republic and the Hungarian Republic, express by this appeal our wish to be able to live together in peace and mutual respect, regardless of origin. Meaningful dialogue is a precondition for normal coexistence. We are therefore committed to discussing the issues that are a cause of anxiety for one side or the other. It is in all our interest to consider what the other has to say. We call upon all our fellow citizens who care about the future of our countries, to join us by signing our petition (“Petition”, 2008).

Furthermore, the Slovak government allows minorities to have their own universities, broadcasting department of Slovak Radio, which is based in Kosiče, magazines, and news and discussion programmes on the Slovak television (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011).

## 5. Oral history

This chapter is a summary of the interviews held by Dr. N.E. Kattenberg in the summer of 2012. The information is received throughout the method of oral history. Commissioned by the author, she has had three interviews with native Hungarian families living in Slovakia. The author summarised these interviews in a story telling way. The living condition of minorities has not only to do with legislation of a country, but also with the way a minority positions itself in the country it is living in.

### 5.1. Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky

The first interview was with Daniël Kotsanszky and his wife Moniká. They live in Svinica, a village in the east of Slovakia. Daniël was born in 1929 in Michalovce as a son of a factory owner of shoes. Moniká was born in 1942 in the small village Vojany. Her family had a horse farm. Michalovce is situated in the east of Slovakia, near the border of Ukraine and near the river Laborec. Michalovce has 40.000 inhabitants (“Michalovce,” 2012). Vojany is a small community in the region of Kosice and is part of the Michalovce district. Vojany has 873 inhabitants (“Vojany,” 2011). Both their parents were native Hungarians and belonged to a wealthy medium range of society. Daniël studied theology at the University of Prague and became a magister of theology, which can be best described/ translated as master of theology. He speaks fluent Hungarian, Slovakian, Czech and Russian and he taught himself the German language. Moniká speaks Hungarian, but understands German very well (Kattenberg, 2012).

#### 5.1.1. Political situation during and after World War II

Daniël explains the political situation in Slovakia during and after World War II (WWII). During WWII, Czechoslovakia was a fascistic state. The country had the so-called *Hlinka guard*, named after Andrej Hlinka who was a Slovak politician and catholic priest (“Hlinka guard,” 2012, para. 1). The Hlinka guard can be compared with the *Hitler Guard*. Hitler demanded Sudetenland in the summer of 1938, since many Germans lived there. The United Kingdom, Italy and France tolerated the occupation in order to get peace guarantees. In 1939, dr. Jozef Tiso, who was the leader of the Hlinka Guard after Hlinka died in 1938, was sent to Berlin to meet Hitler himself for a political maintenance. The Slovaks always wanted to be an autonomous country within the Czechoslovakian Republic after the Treaty of Trianon was signed in June 1920. Hitler managed politics of divide and rule and gave Tiso a choice: Or Slovakia would belong to Hungary, or Slovakia would become an autonomous country within

Czechoslovakia. Tiso choose the last and so he became the first president of Slovakia. The first Slovakian Republic started on March 14, 1939. In 1943, Daniël's father was sent to a camp by the fascistic Slovaks, because he was Hungarian and accused to be a fascist. This happened to a lot of Hungarians from East-Slovakia (Kattenberg, 2012). Many Hungarian believers, especially preachers and pastors were banished from Slovakia to Hungary or sent to camps. The indictment to these people was as follows: 'Anti-Soviet practices, attempts to discord the people, and especially dissemination of hostile propaganda among the youth' (Kattenberg, 2001, p. 11). Daniël's young mother died one year after his imprisonment from fear and distress. Daniël was only 16 years old when his mother died. He forgot he was Hungarian and living in his native country. He joined the Russian Army and, although you had to be at least 18 years old before you could join the army, he got in. The Russians did not check anything. In 1945, he went to Auschwitz with the troops. When the troops returned to Bratislava the same year he was hit by a shell-silver, a piece of a grenade, and lost his leg. For one year, he was in a hospital in Charkov for revalidation. In 1946, he returned to Michalovce with four medals of honour from the Russian Army. After WWII, over 3 million native Hungarians living near the Hungarian borders were banished to Hungary, if they had not already fled. What happened with Daniël after 1946 is explained in paragraph 5.1.3. Daniël's father returned in 1945, shortly before the liberation.

In Czechoslovakia, all persons from 18 year and older were forced to sign a form to declare they are Slovaks, otherwise they would be banished to Hungary. The Slovaks accused the Hungarians to be fascists, but it where the Slovaks who were fascistic during WWII. Daniël hated the fascistic Slovaks and told his father not to sign the form. His father looked at him and said: "I am signing this form because of you. You were in the Russian Army and the Hungarians are suppressed by the Russians. If you are from Russia, you have no life in Hungary." Daniël continues talking: "I was 17 years old at that time and I have never signed a form being a Slovak!"

### **5.1.2. Hungarians in Slovakia after World War II**

After the war, the Slovakisation began. Hungarian schools were forbidden and children had to learn the Slovak language and history. Gradually, the children of native Hungarians would forget their birth language and history. Moniká continues, she is talking about her youth in Vojany. She went to a Slovakian school. When they said only one word in Hungarian, they had to pay 1 Crown punishment. In 1948, they got occupied by the Russian troops. She remembers a terrible fear from when she was a six year old girl. The Russian soldiers came into their courtyard and murdered all their horses. The Russian troops ruined them within a few hours. It were uncivilised, rough men without any respect for people and their properties. From that time, Communism began and all ground became state property.

The *Kolchozes* started. Moniká explains what a *Kolchoz* is: “Every village was divided into collective farms that had their own communistic leader”. The word is a composition of the Slovak words *kollektivnoje chozjajstvo*, which literally means *collective household*. Farmers worked for a share in profit and they were not employed by the state. The farms were property of groups co-operating farmers and the state, a solid income was not guaranteed. It was allowed for farmers to have, besides the *Kolchoz*, a small garden of their own where they could keep a few animals and own their own house. A *Kolchoz* had to remise a certain percentage of the production to the state at a price set by the state (“Kolchoz,” 2012). Communism was based upon the politics of internationalism which means that the people could call themselves at least Hungarian-Slovak.

In 1948, the Hungarian schools were no longer forbidden and native Hungarians had the right to go to a Hungarian school. Unfortunately, there was a big problem. All the good teachers were banished to Hungary. During Communism, children, teachers, doctors and all people who had a leading role were forbidden to go to church. Children were forbidden to have a religious education.

### 5.1.3. A beggar of society

After Daniël returned from Charkov to Michalovce, he was a young disabled boy. He finished his study at the gymnasium and decided to study theology in Prague. His father was afraid and said, “If you want to become a beggar of society, you have to become a minister”. But Daniël had no choice, he explained, “I had to do this. The Lord was using me and I had no fear”. From 1957 till 1964, he was in Vojany where he started children sermons in the church of Vojany. Unfortunately, some communistic teachers betrayed him. After this betrayal, he went to a football pitch where he began to teach religion, psalms, and hymns. Daniël was sent to the KBG (Abbreviation for the Russian name *Komitet Gossoedarestvennoj Bezopasnosti*, in English known as the Committee of State Security and the most important secret service of the Soviet Union) (“KGB,” 2012). In Trebisov, the KGB interrogated him for one day from 8.30 to 15.00 o’clock. They intimidated and threatened him by saying they would take away his medals of honour, but Daniël had no fear. He appealed to the human right of freedom of religion and told them: “You have no right, it was me who gave my blood for your ‘freedom’ in our Slovakian Republic”. At that time they let him go and Daniël Kotsanszky never stopped teaching children.

#### 5.1.4. Religion and theology in Slovakia

Dr. N.E. Kattenberg calls Daniël Kotsanszky a walking almanac as he knows so much by heart. Since religion was forbidden during Communism, Dr. N.E. Kattenberg asked Daniël how many people are religious and registered. “At this time”, Daniël explains, “there are about 5 million inhabitants in Slovakia. About 140.000 people are reformed, 450.000 people are Lutherans and almost 4 million people are Roman Catholic in name, but not practising member. Besides these groups, there are little groups of Greek Orthodox Catholics and *Pravoslaves* (Orthodox people)”.

By the time Daniël started his theology studies he had to study in Prague as Slovakia did not have a Reformed Theological Faculty. Daniël and Moniká’s son David studied theology in Prague, the Czech Republic and Bratislava, Slovakia at the Lutherans and Daniël’s son in law, Jaroslav Szeles, in Sárospatak, Hungary. Dr. N.E. Kattenberg explains to Daniël that she heard from Mező Miklós, a Hungarian minister in Trans Carpathian, that he studies theology at Komárom, a city which is partly situated in Hungary and partly in Slovakia. At this time, Daniël explains, you can study theology at the faculty of Komárom. Although we still have professors from Hungary, the Slovakian Reformed Church is developing in scientific studies. Nowadays, more and more students are finishing their master in theology studies. This means that the Slovak Reformed students do not have to learn the Hungarian language or go to Bratislava to study theology studies. The Hungarian and Slovakian Reformed churches speak different languages, but are a unity in organisation. Currently, there are speculations that the Slovak Reformed and Hungarian Reformed people will be separated, but these are only speculations.

#### 5.1.5. Optimistic though suspicious

Dr. N.E. Kattenberg asked the elderly couple if there is evidence of discrimination towards the Hungarian-Slovaks in their country. The couple explains that they are moderate optimistic though on the other side suspicious. “At this moment”, Daniël explains, “we have a social democratic president. Besides that, we are part of the European Union. It depends on which people are in the government. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of anti-Hungarian feelings in Slovakia”. Daniël gives an example: The best of their Hungarian agricultural land is in the east of Slovakia and it is used by the government for nuclear power stations. Big cities arise, overcrowded with Slovakian people. Daniël concludes with: “Why don’t they use their own rivers in the west of our country? I see it as an incorporation of the best of our land!”.

## **5.2. Bény and Béa Kotsanszky**

The second interview is with Bény and Béa Kotsanszky. Bény is the youngest son of Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky. They live in Bystré, a village in the east of Slovakia. Bystré is situated in the Presov region and has 2669 inhabitants (“Bystré, Vranov nad Topľou District,” 2012, para. 1). Bény is self-employed and is owner of a snack bar in the middle of Kosice. He used to be the owner of a restaurant. Bény is 40 years old and a very independent person. As son of a Reformed minister in communistic times, he had less opportunities for study. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Christians were highly discriminated during Communism. He became a carpenter and went to the Netherlands to work there as a foreign labour for a few years, together with two brothers. He built his own house and married Béa, a solid working and independent women. Bény’s wife Béa is physiotherapist and works at a hospital in Kosice. Béa is from the very east of Slovakia, near the border of Hungary where her parents had a vineyard, making the famous wine of Tokay. Bény and Béa have two sons in the age of 19 and 17 years old. Bény speaks the Dutch language because of his employment in the Netherlands. Béa has taught herself the Dutch language.

### **5.2.1. We live in a democratic country**

To the question if there is any form of discrimination between Slovaks and Hungarians in Slovakia they both react surprised. They are both telling that they do not feel any form of discrimination between Hungarian-Slovaks and native Slovaks. “Every country has extreme nationalists”, they explain, “but we are member of the European Union and we live in a democratic country”.

### **5.2.2. Hungarian and Slovakian schools**

Both their sons go the Hungarian-speaking schools. Mark, 19 years, is going to a Technical School where he learns to become a hairstylist and Bény junior (jr), 17 years studies International Management and ICT at a College of Higher Education.

Bény jr comes home and Dr. N.E. Kattenberg asks him about his school education. He explains that in the three years he is studying International Management he has had no books. He and his fellow-students get their information and knowledge by reading articles on the internet. To the question if there are many differences between Slovakian schools and Hungarian schools, Bény jr Explains: “No, in the contrary. We are lucky, because our Hungarian schools receive a lot of support from Hungarian organisations and even from the Hungarian government. The Slovakian schools have no books either,

simply because there is not enough money. That is why our teachers are collecting high quality English articles”.

### **5.2.3. Suspicion has everything to do with the past**

In 5.1.5. it is explained that Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky are moderately optimistic though a bit suspicious concerning the Slovak Nationalism. Bény responds: “My parents are old, my dad is 83 years and my mum is 69 years. They know everything about the old situation. We were born in communistic times as Hungarians in Slovakia. Slovakia is our country, even if we are Hungarians by birth”. They grew up and still live there, have their own social life and so on. They do not feel discriminated at all and that their parents are suspicious has everything to do with the past. “Let us hope history does not repeat itself”, Bény says.

## **5.3. Jaroslav and Suzanna Szeles**

Suzanna is the oldest daughter of Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky and is married to a Slovakian man named Jaroslav. Both are from Reformed origin. They live in Kosice, the second-largest city in Slovakia. Kosice has over 300.000 inhabitants. After their marriage in 1990, Jaroslav decided to study theology studies in Sárospatak, Hungary. At that time, Komárom was low qualified and more a Bible school than a theological university. As a Slovak, he had to learn Hungarian and all students at that time had to learn a new way of looking at history. This was because at communistic times their view of history was a big lie. It took a whole year before he could study theology. A Dutch church sponsored him and his family at that time.

### **5.3.1. A Hungarian-Slovak couple**

Although Jaroslav is Slovakian by birth and Suzanna Hungarian by birth, they do not feel and see the difference between for instance a married Hungarian-Hungarian couple and a married Slovak-Slovak couple. They are free to do whatever they want to. Jaroslav talks about his work at the mixed Reformed Church of Kosice. “There are services in the Hungarian language and in the Slovak language and I speak both languages, and most other ministers are speaking both languages fluently. At this moment, I am busy building a Slovakian Reformed Church in Kosice.” They need more space and therefore they have decided to build a new church. Jaroslav: “It goes without saying that the old Hungarian church in Kosice remains the church of the Hungarian speaking members. This way our

new church will become the Slovakian Reformed Church where I will be the minister”. It is a long-standing project, since they are dependent on gifts.

### **5.3.2. This kind of discrimination is forbidden**

To the question if Jaroslav notices any kind of discrimination against the Hungarian-Slovaks, he explains that every country has nationalistic people with extreme ideas. “Look at the attempt to forbid the Hungarian language in public. We are member of the European Union and this kind of discrimination is forbidden, fortunately”. Both Suzanna and Jaroslav feel themselves free in their democratic language. “Our country is developing. We were oppressed till 1989 by the communistic view of life. We have to change our way of living in a more capitalistic way of thinking and even more important, in a democratic way of thinking. This change is the same for all inhabitants of Slovakia since 1989”.



## 6. Conclusion

Within politics, ethnic minorities are and will always be a subject that needles discussion. This is also the matter of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Hungarians are the largest minority living in Slovakia. Most Hungarians live in the south near the border of Hungary, this region is one of the poorest regions of Slovakia. Of some Hungarians it can be said that they have lived in six different countries without leaving their birth place. From 1887 till 1993, the region has had many names. These include the following: the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the First Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak State, Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic, Czechoslovak Federal state, and since 1993 the Slovak Republic or better known as Slovakia. Because the region has been part of so many different states, the elderly people speak three languages, namely: Hungarian, German and Slovak.

Since the split up of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the country faced many difficulties in becoming a democratic state. The first Slovak authorities was very nationalist and fixated on their own language in culture instead of to co-operate with all citizens in Slovakia to become a successful state and economy. Since the country is governed by Slovaks mainly, it is difficult for the Hungarian minority to present their vote and rights as political rights are at the basis of improving their situation. It becomes clear that when the Party for the Hungarian Coalition would be in the Parliament, the situation for the Hungarian minority improves and remains steady. However, the Party was mainly busy defending the minority instead of adding new positive acts for the minority groups, simply because it had not enough power. Discriminating language laws came into force and for many years, minorities were not allowed to speak their mother-tongue in public, not even at school or in private spheres. After Slovakia entered the European Union, many good things have happened for the minorities. Language laws were amended and minorities were able to speak their own languages and go to their own minority schools.

There are many other minorities living in Slovakia, besides the Hungarians. However, the Hungarians form the largest group with 8.5% of the total population. Other minorities, such as Roma, Czech, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, and Polish people live in Slovakia as well. Together with the Hungarians and other smaller ethnic groups, they form 19.3% of the total population of Slovakia. According to the European Charter for Regional or National Languages, which was approved and signed by Slovakia in 2002, minorities have the right to follow education in their mother-tongue, to develop and maintain their cultural traditions, and to use their minority or regional language in public and private spheres. Besides governmental support, the Hungarian minority receives support from

many other organisations such as the European Union. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter for Regional or National Languages, which is described above. Furthermore, it is clear that the Hungarian minority in Slovakia receives much support from the Hungarian government. Ethnic Hungarians who go to Hungarian schools receive funding and are allowed to follow higher education in Hungary.

It is important to bear in mind that the Hungarian minority in Slovakia receives much support from authorities and organisations. Currently, many has already been done to let the minority groups feel at home. Governmental support comes from the Slovakian government by providing and allowing the minorities to have their own universities, broadcasting department of the Slovak Radio, which is based in Kosiče, magazines, and news and discussion programmes on the Slovak television (“National minorities in Slovakia,” 2011). By reading the interviews Dr. Kattenberg had with the Hungarian couples living in Slovakia, it becomes clear that they feel privileged by the many support they receive.

To conclude this paper, it is clear that the current conditions regarding the ‘integration’ of the Hungarian minority are working well, and therefore nothing has to be done to improve the living conditions of this minority group. Though, it is important that the nationalist party of Ján Slota, *SNS*, will never rule on its own, since Slota is openly racist and xenophobe towards ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. As long as the *SNS* does not rule on its own, there is hope for the minority groups in Slovakia.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 8.1. Ethnic divisions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Source ("Ethnic divisions in Austria-Hungary, 2004)



## Appendix 8.2. Important people in the history of Slovakia

The images of the people below are actually mentioned in this paper.



Image 2. Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophia, Find a Grave



Image 3. Gavrilo Princip, A Nagy Haboru



Image 4. Franz Josef, Kings Academy



Image 5. Wilhelm II, Kings Academy



Image 6. Jozef Tiso, Go2War2



Image 7. Klement Gottwald, Radio Praha



Image 8. Alexander Dubček, Ontdek Tsjechië

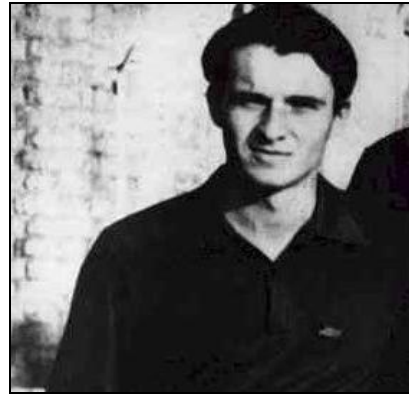


Image 9. Jan Palach, Republikaanse



Image 10. Gustáv Husák, Slovensky Portal



Image 11. Václav Havel, Babelio



Image 12. Vladimír Mečiar, Demagog



### Appendix 8.3. Map of Slovakia and neighbouring countries

Source (“Map of Slovakia and neighbouring countries,” 2011-2012)



## Appendix 8.4. Census by nationality

Source (“The 2011 Population and Housing Results,” 2012)

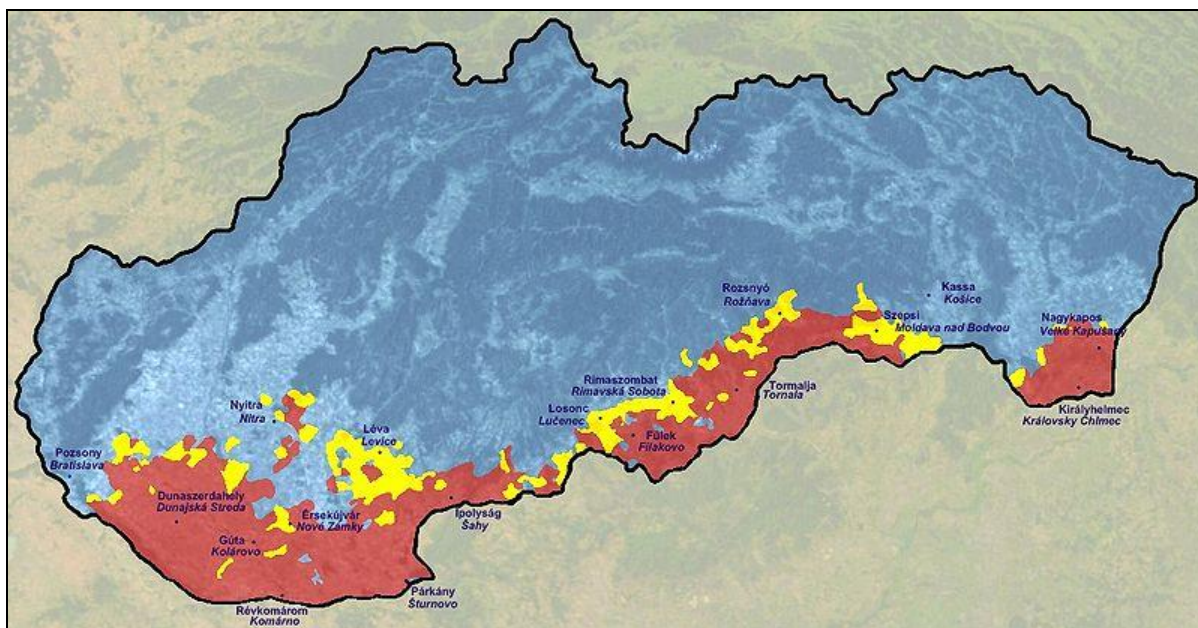
| Total resident population | Slovak republic |       |           |       |           |       |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
|                           | 2011            |       | 2001      |       | 1991      |       |
|                           | abs.            | in %  | abs.      | in %  | abs.      | in %  |
|                           | 5 397 036       | 100,0 | 5 379 455 | 100,0 | 5 274 335 | 100,0 |
| <b>Nationality</b>        |                 |       |           |       |           |       |
| Slovak                    | 4 352 775       | 80,7  | 4 614 854 | 85,8  | 4 519 328 | 85,7  |
| Hungarian                 | 458 467         | 8,5   | 520 528   | 9,7   | 567 296   | 10,8  |
| Roma                      | 105 738         | 2,0   | 89 920    | 1,7   | 75 802    | 1,4   |
| Czech                     | 30 367          | 0,6   | 44 620    | 0,8   | 52 884    | 1,0   |
| Ruthenian                 | 33 482          | 0,6   | 24 201    | 0,4   | 17 197    | 0,3   |
| Ukrainian                 | 7 430           | 0,1   | 10 814    | 0,2   | 13 281    | 0,3   |
| German                    | 4 690           | 0,1   | 5 405     | 0,1   | 5 414     | 0,1   |
| Polish                    | 3 084           | 0,1   | 2 602     | 0,0   | 2 659     | 0,1   |
| Croatian                  | 1 022           | 0,0   | 890       | 0,0   | x         | x     |
| Serbian                   | 698             | 0,0   | 434       | 0,0   | x         | x     |
| Russian                   | 1 997           | 0,0   | 1 590     | 0,0   | 1 389     | 0,0   |
| Jewish                    | 631             | 0,0   | 218       | 0,0   | 134       | 0,0   |
| Moravian                  | 3 286           | 0,1   | 2 348     | 0,0   | 6 037     | 0,1   |
| Bulgarian                 | 1 051           | 0,0   | 1 179     | 0,0   | 1 400     | 0,0   |
| others                    | 9 825           | 0,2   | 5 350     | 0,1   | 2 732     | 0,1   |
| not specified             | 382 493         | 7,0   | 54 502    | 1,0   | 8 782     | 0,2   |

x – the entry is not possible for logical reasons

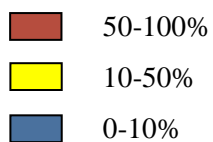


## Appendix 8.5. Hungarians in Slovakia

Source (“Hungarians in Slovakia (1),” 2012)



Hungarians in Slovakia (census 2001)



## **Appendix 8.6. Interviews by Dr. N.E. Kattenberg**

### **Information throughout the method of oral history**

Interview with Daniel Kotsanszky and his wife Moniká

Done by Dr. N.E. Kattenberg

Sunday June 17, 2012 in Svinica, a village in the east of Slovakia.

Daniël Kotsanszky was born in 1929 in Michalovce as a son of a factory owner of shoes. His father and mother were native Hungarians. Moniká was born in 1942 in Vojany as daughter of native Hungarians. Her family had a horse farm. Both Daniël and Moniká belonged to a wealthy medium range of society. Daniël Kotsanszky studied theology at the university of Prague and became magister in theology, speaking fluently Hungarian, Slovakian, Czech and Russian language. He learned himself German.

#### **1. Can you tell me about the political situation at the time after the Second World War?**

*Daniël is talking in German and sometimes interrupted by Moniká, who understands German but speaks Hungarian.*

After World War II, there was a politic of Slovakisation. Hungarian schools were forbidden. Children were learning the Slovakian language and history. That means that gradually the children of native Hungarians should forgotten their native language and history. Czechoslovakia was a fascistic state at World War II. In Czechoslovakia we had the so-called “Hlinka jugend”, to compare with the “Hitler jugend”. In 1939 dr. Jozef Tisó was sent for Berlin for a political maintenance with Hitler himself. The Slovakian always wanted to be a autonomous country within the Czechoslovakian Republic after Trianon. Hitler managed politics of divide and rule and gave Tisó the choice between: 1. or belonging to Hungary; 2. or becoming a autonomous country. So became dr. Jozef Tisó the first Slovakian president. The first Slovakian Republic started 14 March 1939. My father was sent to a camp by the fascistic Slovaks, because he was Hungarian and accused being a fascist. My young beautiful mother died by fear and sorrow a year after his confinement. This happened with a lot of Hungarians from East-Slovakia.

At that time, when I was 16 years old, and my mum died. I forgot I was Hungarian and living in my native country, being a faithful Christian of the Reformed Hungarian Church. I joined the Russian Army. Officially you had to be 18 years old, but the Russians did not control anything. In 1945 I was with the Russian troops back from “Auschwitz” and in Ostrava I was hit by a piece of shrapnel and lost my left leg. For a year I was in a hospital at Charkov for revalidation. In 1946 I returned to Michalovce with four medals of honour from the Russian Army. At that time around the borders of Hungarian over 3.000.000 of native Hungarians were banished to Hungary or running away from their country, like a lot of Hungarians from Trans Carpathian.. In Czechoslovakia all persons from 18 years old were forced to sign a form being Slovakian, otherwise they would be banished to Hungary. They accused Hungarians being fascists, but it were the Slovaks who were fascistic in the World War II.

I hated the fascistic Slovaks and told my father not to sign. My father looked at me and told me: “I sign this form because of you. You were in the Russian Army and the Hungarians are occupied by the Russians. If you are coming from Russia, we have no living in Hungary.” Daniël told further: “I was at time seventeen, I never have signed a form being a Slovak.”

## **2. What happened with the Hungarians in Slovakia after the World War II?**

Moniká is telling about her youth in Vojany. I went to a Slovakian school. When we were talking only one word in our Hungarian language, we had to pay 1 Crone punishment. It was in 1948 that we were occupied by the Russian troops. I remember me a terrible fear. I was at that time a little girl of six years old. The Russian soldiers came into our court and murdered all our horses. They ruined us within a few hours. It were uncivilised rough men, without any respect for people and their properties. From that time came Communism and all ground became state property. The “Kolchozen” started. That means that every village was divided in collective farms, with a communistic leader.

Communism had a Politic of Internationalism. We good call ourselves at least Hungarian-Slovak. From 1948 we good started again with Hungarian schools. But there was a big problem. All good teachers were send to Hungary in banishment. At the time of Communism children, teachers, doctors and all people who had a leading function were forbidden to go to church. Children were forbidden to have religious education. ( "Daniël Kotsanszky is telling about his period as a “lelkipastor”, a minister in Vojany, the place where he met his wife", explanation NEK).

**3. By the way, can you tell me what happened with you after your return from Russia?**

After my return from Charkov, I was an invalid young boy. I finished my study at the “gymnasium”. I decided to study theology in “Praha” (Prague). My father was scared. He said: “When you want to be a beggar of society, you have to become a minister”. But I had no choice, I had to do this. The Lord was using me. I had no fear. I was in Vojany from 1957 till 1964 and I started children sermons in the church of Vojany. Of course some communistic teachers were betraying me. After this betrayal we went to the football pitch and over there I was teaching religion and I learned them our psalms and hymns. I was sent for the KGB at Trebisov and they were interrogating me one day from 8.30 hour till 15.00 hour. They were intimidating and threatening me that they should take away my medals of honour. But I had no fear. I appeal to the human right of religion freedom and I told them: You have no right, it was me who gave my blood for your “freedom” in our Slovakian Republic.” At that time they let him go and Daniël Kotsanszky never stopped with teaching children.

**4. Can you tell me something about the Hungarian Reformed Church and the connection with the Slovakian Reformed Church? How many Slovaks are there in Slovakia. How many are Reformed, how many are Lutherans and how many are Roman Catholic?**

Daniël Kotsanszky is a walking almanac. At this time there are about 5.000.000 citizens in Slovakia. 140.000 citizens are Reformed, 450.000 are Lutherans and almost 4.000.000 citizens are in name (after Communism 1989) Roman Catholic. Beside there are little groups of Greek Catholics and Pravoslaves (Orthodox people).

**5. Is there already a Slovakian university with a Reformed Theological Faculty? Because you were studying theology at the time after World War II in Prague. Your son David in Prague and Bratislava at the Lutherans and your son in law in Sárospatak in Hungary? I heard from Mező Miklós, a Hungarian vicar in Trans Carpathian, that he is studying theology at Komárom. (\* Komárom is situated in East-Slovakia at the border of Hungary).**

At this time you can study theology at the faculty of Komárom. We still have professors from Hungary, but the Slovakian Reformed Church is in development concerning scientific study. More and more students are finishing their master in theology.

**6. That means that also the Slovakian Reformed students has to learn Hungarian language or have to go to Bratislava?**

The Hungarian and Slovakian Reformed Churches speaks different languages, but are an unity in organisation. That means there is a National Synode, with a bishop at the top, with a under bishop and from every classis a dean.

At this moment there are voices coming into minds for separation of the Slovakian speaking reformed people and the Hungarian speaking reformed people. But only voices.

**7. It is three ours further and I noticed that the old couple is getting tired. My last question. Is there any reason of discrimination of the Hungarian-Slovakian people in your country?**

Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky are moderate optimistic and on the other side suspicious. At this moment we have a social democratic president. Besides we are in the European Union. It depends which people are in the government. There are still a lot of anti-Hungarian feelings.

**8. Can you give an example?**

Look, the best of our Hungarian agricultural land in the east of Slovakia is using by the government for nuclear power stations. Big cities arise overcrowded with Slovakian people.

**That means in your opinion..?**

Why don't they use their own rivers in the west of our country? I see it as an incorporation of the best of our land.

**Interview with Bény (Benjamin) and Béa Kotsanszky**

Done by Dr. N.E. Kattenberg

17 Jun 2012 in Byster, a village in the east of Slovakia.

Bény is self-employed. Owner of a snack bar in the middle of Kosice and ex-owner of a restaurant. He is 40 years old and a very independent person. As son of a reformed minister in communistic times he had less opportunities for study (discrimination of Christians in communism). He became a carpenter and went for years to the Netherlands as foreign labour, together with two brothers. He built his own house and married a woman, like independent and solid working as himself. Their home is very luxury and you can see that they are well-being and very hospitable. I know him from September 1989. His wife Béa is physiotherapist and she is working at the hospital of Kosice. She comes from the very east of Slovakia, at the border of Hungary and her parents had a big vineyard, making the famous wine of Tokay. Together they have two sons of 19 and 17 years old.

*Preparing a barbeque, sitting in a nice garden I started my interview. Benjamin is speaking the Dutch language and Béa taught herself Dutch as well.*

1. **What are your feelings as Hungarians by birth in Slovakia? Is there any discrimination between these two groups? Do you have the same possibilities as Hungarians in comparison with the Slovaks?**

They are looking a little bit surprised? Both are telling me the same. They don't feel any form of discrimination between Hungarian-Slovaks and Slovaks by birth.

2. **And what about the situation a few years ago that Hungarians were not allowed to speak the Hungarian language?**

They react very laconic. Yes, there are such people, extreme nationalists, like in every country. But we are member of the European Union. We live in a democratic country.

3. **What about the situation of schools, work, social services?**

Our sons are going to Hungarian-speaking schools. Mark is going to a Technical School learning for hairstylist and Bény is following a College of Higher Education for being an international manager and ICT for four years.

*At that moment Bény is coming in and I am asking him about his school education. (He is speaking English). He told me that in the three years he is studying International Management he had no books. He and his fellow-students get their information and knowledge from articles through internet.*

**4. Is there any difference between Slovakian schools and Hungarian schools?**

No, on the contrary. We are lucky, because our Hungarian schools become a lot of support from Hungarian organisations and even from the Hungarian government. The Slovakian schools either have no books; there is not enough money for it. So our teachers are collecting high quality English articles. ("That 's why you are speaking so good English!", I told him).

**5. I'm asking in generally: "Can you explain the difference between the suspicious feelings of your parents and the optimistic way of looking at the future of yourself?"**

*I told them a little bit of the interview with Daniël and Moniká Kotsanszky, about their feelings and sometimes suspicious thoughts about Slovakian Nationalism.*

Look, they are old people. My dad is 83 years old and my mum 69. They knew everything about the old situation. We were born in communistic times as Hungarians in Slovakia. Slovakia is our country, even we are by birth Hungarians. Here we are living and growing up, having our social life and so on. We don't feel any discrimination. That our old parents are suspicious has everything to do with the past. Let's hope history doesn't repeat itself.

**Interview with Jaroslav and Suzanna Szeles**

Done by Dr. N. E. Kattenberg

16 Jun 2012 in Kosiče. Kosice is a big city with over 300.000 inhabitants.

Suzanna is Hungarian by birth and she married a Slovakian man named Jaroslav. Both are from Reformed Origin. After their marriage in 1990, Jaroslav decided to study Theology in Sárospatak in Hungary. At that time Komárom was low qualified, more a Bible school than a Theological University. As a Slovak he had to learn Hungarian and all students at that time had to learn a new way of looking at history, because at communistic times their view of history was a big lie. It took a whole year before he actually could study theology. A Dutch Church was sponsoring him and his family at that time. (We are talking in German).

**1. Can you tell me something about your way of living at this time in Kosice? You are a Slovak by birth and Suzanna a Hungarian women by birth. How is it to be a mixed couple?**

They told me that there is no difference between for instance two Hungarian - and two Slovakian married couples. They are free to do whatever they want to do. Jaroslav is telling me about his work in the mixed Reformed Church of Kosice. There are services in the Hungarian language and in the Slovakian language and I speak both of them and all other ministers mostly are speaking both languages fluently. At this moment I am busy with building a Slovakian Reformed Church in Kosice.

**Why, I asked.**

We need more space, therefore we decided to build a new church. And it speaks for itself that the old Hungarian church in Kosice is staying the church of the Hungarian speaking members. So our new church becomes the Slovakian Reformed Church and I am the minister.

**What about the money. Do you have any sponsors?**

No, nothing. It is a long-standing process. We are depending on gifts and self-activation.



**2. You are a Slovak by birth, do you notice any kind of discrimination between the Hungarians and Slovaks?**

Of course there are extreme nationalistic people in our country. Look at the attempt to forbid the Hungarian language in public. But we are member of the European Union and this kind of discrimination is forbidden, fortunately. He looks at his wife Suzanna. Both feel themselves free in their democratic language. Our country is in development. We were oppressed till 1989 by a communistic view of life. We had to change our way of life more in a capitalistic way of thinking and even more important in a democratic way of thinking. This change is the same for all inhabitants of Slovakia after 1989.