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*Balázs Kiss*

## **Nitra and the change of state between 1918 and 1923.**

### **Abstract**

*The essay investigates the process of change of statehood in the town of Nitra through the changes occurring in its local institutions and politics between October 1918 and the year of 1923. At the end of World War I. the city management was taken over by the Hungarian National Council. In December 1918 the Czechoslovakian legions marched in and the power was handed over to the Slovakian National Council. In the first years of post-war changes Slovakian civil servants became the managers of the city who had been well versed in Hungarian legislature and culture being educated during the time of dualism. Most of them came to the county town from Szakolca, a small town in the northern part of County Nitra. The civil servants of the transitory period remained in office till 1923. That year the town was downgraded to the status of small town resulting in extensive changes in the personnel, Czech nationals being given preference.*

In Nitra, the town at the foot of Mount Zobor the first signs of changes following the the four years of war appeared at the end of October 1918 when the Czechoslovakian Republic was declared. The Hungarian office holders of Nitra regarded the town as continuing to be a part of Hungary while the Slovak inhabitants regarded the town as the cradle of all Slavs which was once upon a time the centre of the Great Moravian Empire. There were important events happening at the time: the October revolution in Hungary and the declaration of the Czechoslovakian state in Prague. The political representatives of the Slovaks made a statement in support of the new state.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kováč, Dusan: *Szlovákia története*. Kalligram, Pozsony, 2001. 166-179. [History of Slovakia]

Later in October the civil servants of Hungarian nationality convened against the foundation of Czechoslovakian Republic; the local revolutionary movement also set down its own requirements against Czechs and the Czechoslovakian state. The leaders of the town declared in favour of the integrity of Hungary at a secret meeting held on the 24th October 1918. Kálmán Szmdida provost-parson, Gyürky city notary and Palásty judge of the High Court were joined by the leaders of local economic life.<sup>2</sup> Kálmán Szmdida was the first to speak explaining the mission of the church, that its task was to campaign among Hungarian as well as Slovak congregations. He urged the publication of papers written in both the Hungarian and the Slovak languages in support of the unity of St. Stephen's country and rejecting Czech aspirations. He also found it important that the church should organize meetings and other movements. Several participants of the meeting seconded Szmdida's suggestions and at the county meeting held a week later, the drafting of a common decision about the preservation of integrity of the Hunarian state was accepted.<sup>3</sup>

On the 28th of October, which was also the date of the declaration of the Czechoslovakian Republic, the representatives of Nitra had another meeting discussing the Prague decesions too. Szmdida hailed the event as important that the Slav past was negotiating with the world; the question was how that would effect the inhabitants who wished to remain the 'children of the Hungarian mother country at the end of a terrible war'.<sup>4</sup>

Several of the speakers hoped that the Czechs and Slovaks would consider the Wilsonian ideas when delineating the new state borders. The slovakian delegates were all for national self-determination in 15 counties – the Co. Nitra among them – instead of the preservation of the integrity of the region and the Hungarian state. The City representatives were of the opinion that the Slovak national movement could not be successful in Nitra thanks to the public and cultural activity of the Hungarian Cultural Society of the Upper

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<sup>2</sup> Mrva, Ján: *Paberky k dejinám štátneho prevratu v Nitre*. Matica Slovenska, 1933. 9-14.

<sup>3</sup> MRVA (1933) 9-14.

<sup>4</sup> MRVA (1933) 14-20.

Region<sup>5</sup> the city became a Hungarian speaking area. The data of the 1910 census seemed to have supported the belief, giving 60% of the population as Hungarian, 30% Slovak and 10% German.<sup>6</sup> According to contemporary reports, Slovak was the language of the older generation consisting mostly of workers and day labourers who had come to the city for their living.

In Túrócszentmárton the Slovaks had expressed their wish of secession; though the news had reached Nitra by the time of the city meeting, the representatives could not imagine the possibility of the disintegration of the 1000 year old Hungarian state. They believed that under Czech rule the contact to the mother tongue, historic past and culture, so vital to national existence, would be endangered.<sup>7</sup>

On the 31st of October 1918 Mihály Károlyi was appointed prime Minister of Hungary in Budapest; it was known in Nitra the same day as the heads of all the counties were informed by telegrammes asking their assistance in public matters. The Hungarian National Council (HNC) whose organizations made up the new government ordered all the county and town offices to form independent National Councils within their legal authorities. Since Mayor Thúróczy came down with the flu rampant in the city, the editor in chief of the local newspaper *Nyitrai Lapok*, the notary and the delegate of the Social Democratic party together with Viktor Magyar, a lawyer, held a conference at the sick-bed of the mayor. They decided upon complying to the wish of the HNC to form a local National Council (INC), however, there could not be any decision made about the delegates at this limited forum.<sup>8</sup> Next day, on the 1st of November, there was a joint meeting of the city's and county's assembly where the notary explained the current events and the telegramme received from the Hungarian people's government requiring the organization of the National Council (NC). There was a heated debate about jurisdiction of the NC. Szatmáry, the county notary was against wider rights for the NC than the maintenance of public order, others wanted a much wider

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<sup>5</sup> Felvidéki Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület, founded in Nitra in 1883. Organizing kindergartens, apprentice schools, reading circles and popular libraries in ten counties.

<sup>6</sup> Zajonc, Juraj: *Prečo je Nitra staroslovne mesto*. In: *Mýty naše slovenské*. Zost.: Krekovič – Mannová – Krekovičová 134-149.

<sup>7</sup> Mrva (1933) 14-20

<sup>8</sup> Mrva (1933) 21.

sphere of authority; thus voting was adjourned.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime the Hungarian government appointed city notary Gyürky as head of the the local NC by telegramme. Rumours had it that János Hock, member of the Budapest government phoned him personally to invite Gyürky to the post but later it was hotly denied. The members of the Nitra NC were unanimously elected.<sup>10</sup> The new Council had beside Social Democratic majority also Christian Democratic members. The inner structure of the Council was also deliberated, consisting of three independent committees: for public order, public supply and one for complaints. There was also a special five member committee responsible for the supply of military troops stationed in the city; immediate steps were necessary due to food shortage and political instability. However, political rivalry between the council members greatly hindered quick decisions.<sup>11</sup>

### Political rivalry

In Nitra there were two major political tendencies at the end of 1918: Social Democratic and Christian Democratic ones. Both were importantly present in the NC, though in different proportions. Membership in the new NC meant gaining city councillor positions for the political parties. The council consisted of appointed and elected members but without the consent of the population as there were no actual public elections. The National Council aimed at an active role in the political life of the city. On the 2nd of November the local Hungarian Social Democratic Party was created with 500 members, Jenő Dugesz watchmaker was elected its president who automatically became a member of the HNC. Though the Christian Democrats had a strong organization in the ecclesiastical center it was only in December that they could gain important influence<sup>12</sup>; till then the city was under Social Democratic leadership. The line which branched off from the Catholic Popular Party was active in the lower social strata of the population demanding the righting out of social deficiencies. It lent a hand to the founding of the Regional National Catholic Council

<sup>9</sup> Mrva (1933) 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> *Nyitrai Lapok* 1918. november 11.

<sup>11</sup> Mrva (1933) 24-26.

<sup>12</sup> *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 2002/2. Elbeszélt történelem. Lelley János.

with the aim of strengthening the work of the clergy. Heads of the association were Jozef Tiso professor of theology and Eugen Filkorn secondary school teacher, himself a Catholic priest.<sup>13</sup>

### Party debates

On the 13th of November the HNC had a meeting in Nitra to discuss their opinion on Hungary in the formation. The Budapest HNC suggested 'Hungarian People's Republic' as its name, the regional Christian Socialists were in favour of 'Hungarian Popular Democratic Republic' for the name. The city delegation led by the Social Democrats went to Budapest to support the proclamation of the Hungarian Popular Republic.<sup>14</sup> This meant a change of statehood, from kingdom to republic. On the 17th November, there was a meeting of the Social Democrats with the participation of one Budapest delegate who appraised the Social Democrats' merit in the changes. László Matyuga, the delegate of the Communist Party was in favour of a world revolution and demanded the clerical elements to step down.

The Christian Democratic representatives in the HNC were Eugen Filkorn and Jozef Tiso who in November started a radical bi-lingual – Hungarian and Slovak – weekly *Nyitra – Nitra* in which they gave sound to their criticism of the Social Democrats and their differing views. There were also antisemitic writings published in which they agitated against Jews and elements who in their opinion were the cause of the war, against military institutions and coffee-houses in Nitra.<sup>15</sup>

The situation between the opposing sides aggravated to such an extent by the end of November that the outbreak of a pogrom threatened. In November the local branch of the National Radical Party, on the 1st of October that of Károlyi were organized in Nitra; however, the changes in the local political life were not reflected in the membership of the HNC. The 1st December issue of *Nyitramegyei Szemle* – a periodical with Christian Social tendencies – foresaw the dissembling of the NC and urged for new representation by new elections.<sup>16</sup> It

<sup>13</sup> Mrva (1933) 28-34.

<sup>14</sup> Mrva (1933) 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918. november 24.

<sup>16</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1918. december 1

was, however, in Budapest where it was decided how local policy was to change. The Central Hungarian National Council ruled that new members had to be delegated by the parties to the local councils with the exclusion of independent representatives.

In the second half of October Slovak National Councils were also organized in several Uppland towns. In Nitra Slovak interests were represented by Viktor Magyar, Štefan Bertovic and Viliam Paška within the Nitra HNC.<sup>17</sup> 2nd of December was the date of the HNC elections in the assembly hall of the city with the participation of 28 political and professional organizations with 126 nominees.<sup>18</sup> Christian Democrats considerably increased the number of their delegates in the new HNC.<sup>19</sup> During its short lived activity second HNC tried to keep order in the city with the help of the parties' militiamen and made a bloodless transition possible. Barely a week later the Czech legions marched in Nitra and the Slovak National Council (SNC) took over power.

Filkorn and Tiso became the two leaders of the local Slovaks in November. During the war both served as army chaplains and had got into touch with Czech soldiers thus had been informed about the Czechoslovakian resistance abroad. Though the declaration of the Czechoslovakian independence was final, the borders of the new state had not yet been delineated, they, however, were certain that Nitra would belong to it. At the time Filkorn and Tiso had returned back from the front Nitra gave the impression of a Hungarian city. Already in October they started secretly campaigning among local Slovaks. On the 10th of November the formation of Slovak National Council was suggested but on Tiso's advice who believed it still to be too early the decision was postponed. The two young priests, Filkorn and Tiso were agile leaders of the association and were of the opinion that their opponents could only be overcome through a mass movement, through the organization of Christian Socialism. In order to support their aims they started an independent periodical *Nyitra – Nitra* with Filkorn as publisher and Tiso the editor. The first issue published on the 17th of November did not mention Slovak national matters yet, but explained *Rerum Novarum*, the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

<sup>17</sup> Mrva (1933) 39-43.

<sup>18</sup> Mrva (1933) 44-47.

<sup>19</sup> Mrva (1933) 47-50.

on Christian Socialism as a programme to be followed irrespective of nationality.<sup>20</sup> The second issue had the title *Slováci, plesajme!*<sup>21</sup> urging to abandon the feeling of shame to be Slovaks since they are not second rate citizens and Slovakia is their cradle. He pointed out the importance of using the Slovak language in every situation of public life. In the 1st December issue Tiso published an article with the title *Slováci hore s hlavou* which he concluded with a citation by Vajansky: 'I am proud because I am Slovak'. As is apparent from the content of the publication the Slovak national programme was introduced by the theologians of the Nitra seminary on Christian social basis and they kept stressing the issue week by week in increasing length. Before the elections of the second HNC the Slovak anthem *Hej Slováci* was recited during the meeting of the Christian Socialists thus uniting religious and national traditions. The fourth issue Tiso published an article with the title *Christianity Has Already Risen* where he wrote about the history of the events.<sup>22</sup>

### The Czech legionaries in Nitra

At the beginning of December there were contradictory news about the possible demarcation lines between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. At the end of November there was looting all over the city, the parties own militiamen were not able to maintain peace and order, even the military hospital was plundered. The Hungarian government abandoned the plan to build an airport at Nitra; this fact was analysed by Slovak journalists that the Hungarian government had accepted Nitra to be annexed to Czechoslovakia.

At the middle of November the Czech army moved into Szokolca, a small town at the western part of County Nitra bordering Moravia. The provisional government led by Vavro Šrobár chose it as their headquarters. The army occupied the northern part of the county in November, reached the valley of the River Vág in December where their aim was to seize the main railway line connecting Nagyszombat – Pöstyén – Trenčín – Zsolna. The Hungarians counter attacked at

<sup>20</sup> G. Kovács László: Jozef Tiso. *Archépek Kettős Tükörben*. Nap Kiadó, Dunaszerdahely, 1997. [J.T. Portrait in double mirrors].

<sup>21</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918 november 24

<sup>22</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918. december 8.

Galgóc, but the Czech troops led by Neumann stopped their march and with the help of the Czech artillery arriving the Hungarian troops were made to retire, thus the Hungarian offensive was stopped. Now the Czech troops had an open road to Nitra.<sup>23</sup> Due to the military situation, Dreiszler, the Hungarian city commander of Nitra informed Mayor Gyürky about the plan of the military evacuation of the city.<sup>24</sup>

The mayor called an extraordinary meeting to inform the representatives of the general and military situation and to ask the corporation's advice on what to do. Kálmán Szmidá provost urged for resistance against the legionaries. It was decided to organize resistance. Viliam Pašek, a Slovak lawyer left the meeting to inform the Slovak leaders as well as Bohumil Neumann, the commandant of the Czech troops of the political and general situation of the city. Since the idea of resistance was most eagerly accepted by the Jewish inhabitants of the city, Tiso in several antisemitic papers pointed out the Jews as the perpetrators of resistance, though there were no such actions.

On 9th November a delegation of the city met Neumann in Felsőcserény to negotiate about surrendering the city.<sup>25</sup> They agreed that there would be no pillage, the city would provide for the occupying Czech soldiers, the city militia would be disbanded and their weapons collected, the local police force completed strong with 50 Czech soldiers.

The HNC and the city needed the agreement – and the military assistance – to be able to keep peace and order, and still maintained the hope that the Czech occupation would not influence the final decision which state Nitra would belong to. On the 10th of December the inhabitants of Nitra watched the arrival of the Czech legion of 800 strong led by Colonel Neumann from the station to the city hall with mixed feelings. At the city hall the city council formally objected against the occupation of the city.<sup>26</sup> Neumann as the commander of the military forces had the widening of the supremacy of the Czechoslovakian state in mind. He ordered the formation of the Slovak National Council (SNC) with 15 members which took over

<sup>23</sup> Mrva (1933) 77.

<sup>24</sup> Szomolányi (1931) 27-31.

<sup>25</sup> *Nyitra – Nitra* 1918 december 15.

<sup>26</sup> Medvecký, Karola A: Slovenský Prevrat. sv.III. Spolok sv. Vojtecha, Trnava, 1931. 103-109.

the authority from HNC. Knowledge of the Slovak language was a precondition of membership in the SNC. Jozef Tiso became the notary of the new body;<sup>27</sup> he published an article in the 29 December issue of *Nyitra – Nitra* with the title *Učtujeme!*<sup>28</sup> in which stressed that countries and regimes changed the old system was over, and the new situation had to be soberly received. From this date the periodical ceased to be bi-lingual, it was published as two separate publications with different content.

The first task of the SNC was to provide the city with sugar being the pre-Christmas period; it was successfully carried out by bartering for flour with Nagyszombat. This popular step as well as the early closing time of the pubs and their restricted licensing did not allow any opportunity for resistance.<sup>29</sup>

Ludovit Okánik became the new Lord Lieutenant of the region and one of his first measures was to reorganize SNC into a municipal corporation and asked István Bertovics to organize the public administration. Soon a nine member city council was also appointed, Jozef Tiso among them.

Changes quickest happened in the political life of Nitra. The HNC was replaced by the newly organized SNC to help keeping contact with the Czech troops. The Slovak ministry led by Vavro Šrobár regulated the steps to be taken in the interim. Thus Hungarian laws and regulations lost their power, all the earlier legal and municipal bodies were dissolved, their power taken over by the SNC. Civil servants could keep their posts if sworn to the Czechoslovakian Republic. The regulation also appointed Slovak as official language.<sup>30</sup>

The rapid change had, however, soon hampered by the lack of qualified civil servants with knowledge of the Slovak language as can be judged by the great number of advertisements offering posts.<sup>31</sup> While at the head of administration was quickly reorganized, there was a lack of civil servants at the lower levels. The Christian Social Association organized Slovak language courses for civil servants and

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<sup>27</sup> Mrva (1933) 96-97.

<sup>28</sup> G. Kovács László 1997

<sup>29</sup> *Nyitra – Nitra* 1918 december 29.

<sup>30</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918 december 29. 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918. december 29.

also was active in replacing civil servants without the knowledge of the Slovak language.<sup>32</sup>

Szokolca, a small town at the northern part of County Nitra was the place which sent most of the participants of Nitra's public life at the early time of the change; it can be stated that the importance of its taking part in political life was in reverse order to the size of its population. The person coming from Szokolca were undoubtedly of Slovakian origin, well versed in Hungarian language and culture, experienced in municipal practice; they occupied the most important positions of Nitra's civil life. Kálmán Czobori, former mayor of Szokolca was appointed to mayor of Nitra.

The old system of counties was dissolved; Ludovit Okánik became the head of the new Nitra district whose brother-in-law, Pavel Blaho, was the agricultural commissioner of Šrobár. In Szokolca Okánik and Blaho edited a political periodical *Hlas*, in which they had propagated the Czechoslovakian cooperation well before the beginning of the war.<sup>33</sup> Okanik was inaugurated as Lord Lieutenant in June 1919. In his speech he claimed land reform the most important task. He wanted to give war veterans land from the confiscated estates.<sup>34</sup> Since Okánik was a clergyman, thus his secretary Ivan Štefánek substituted him in his secular duties. Changes were there only at the posts of the county notary and public persecutor.<sup>35</sup>

People from Szokolca took over in the sphere of education too. Jozef Rozim teacher of religion became the headmaster of the secondary school from the beginning of school year in 1919.<sup>36</sup> According to the ruling of the minister of education, in January that year the pupils returning from a month long winter recess were allowed to continue their studies in Hungarian, with the exclusion of Hungarian literature and history in the secondary school named after St. Ladislav in Nitra. The Slovak language became compulsory but lacking competent teachers and adequate textbooks teaching faltered. There was a decrease in the number of pupils, however, some private pupils joined from neighbouring towns where Slovak became the language

<sup>32</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1918. december 15.

<sup>33</sup> Szalatnai Rezső: *Juhász Gyula hatszáz napja*. Magvető, Budapest, 1962.

<sup>34</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1919. január 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Nyitra-Nitra* 1919 január 12.

<sup>36</sup> Szalatnai (1962).

of instruction. By the beginning of the schoolyear of 1922 almost all the teaching staff had left; the school became a state school and was renamed Tomáš Červena.<sup>37</sup> In March school inspectors were also replaced.<sup>38</sup> Ján Mrva was appointed to chief of police also from Szokolca. The reason why so many new office-holder were hailed from Szokolca might be due to the shortage of experts, as indicated by the number of advertisements of jobs and unlike later practice when people were coopted from Czech land, such people were employed who already had some experience in the organization of public life.

### The new bishop

At the end of the war Vilmos Batthyány was the bishop of the Nitra diocese. He was suffragan from 1904 and became bishop in 1911 following Imre Bende after the latter's death. At the time of the change he was still widely active, he lent his car to the city's delegates to the negotiations in Felsőrécsény. From December onward the Czech troops left, only Boriani an Italian general remained in his company, and was not hindered in his movements.<sup>39</sup> In march he forbade the priests of the diocese to participate at a meeting to Zsolna in an episcopal circular;<sup>40</sup> and later disqualified the decisions made there. The Czechoslovakian authorities forced him to leave his office, giving as reasons his ban on the Zsolna conference, his insistence on corresponding in Hungarian in the diocese as well as his connections to the Hungarian government. Batthyány rejected the charges read out to him; and he was demanded to leave Czechoslovakia within 24 hours. He left the office in the hands of an episcopal vicar Alajos Jeszenky, and went to his relation, László Batthyány-Strattman, to Köpcsény. The Czechoslovakian government appointed a committee to control the properties of the bishopric. The episcopal representative protested against the activities of the commissioners.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Vyročná Zpráva. Cs. Štátneho Rl. Gymnázia Tomáša Červena v Nitre. Za Školský Rok 1922-1923. obsah: Zprávy školské

<sup>38</sup> Mátrai (1919)

<sup>39</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1919. január 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1919. március 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1919. március 13.

Karol Kmeťko became the new bishop consecrated on the 13th of February 1921.<sup>42</sup> He instructed Jozef Tiso, the spiritual of the Seminary in Nitra, to produce the pope his bull addressed to the cathedral chapter of Nitra as well as the one which informed János Csernoh, the Hungarian archbishop of Esztergom about the appointment, who still had the authority over the bishopric of Nitra.<sup>43</sup> During the inauguration mass the new bishop greeted the congregation both in Latin and Slovak languages and received the bishop mitre from the papal legate of Prague. There was also a military mass celebrated in Slovak with the participation of the troops and many of the civil servants. According to a papal regulation it was possible to use not only Latin but another language to celebrate mass in the ancient liturgical places of Czechoslovakia, thus also in Nitra, twice a year. Šrobár was keen on the appointment of Kmeťko as he believed it would strengthen disciplin among the clergy and the order and peace of the new state would be extended to the Catholic church too.<sup>44</sup>

### **The transformation of symbolic places**

The change of state was accompanied by the transformation of symbolic places in several steps. The SNC of Nitra renamed the streets in a regulation accepted the 27th of December. All the names representing the memory of the Hungarian state and its illustrious persons had been replaced by ones of the Slovak national pantheon.<sup>45</sup> In 1896 there were monuments erected in several points of Hungary to commemorate the millenium of the Hungarian conquest, one of them being on the top of Mount Zobor above Nitra.<sup>46</sup> In 1818 just it was damaged just before Christmas: the head of the turul, a mythical bird, was broken and the arms of the nation also destroyed. Jan Hofmann who was responsible for the historical monuments of Slovakia was of the opinion that there are no esthetic objections against the remaining column which could be transformed into a

<sup>42</sup> J.E. Dr. Karol Kmeťko 25 rokov biskupom v Nitre. Spolok sv. Vojtecha, Trnava, 1946.

<sup>43</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1921. január 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Nyitramegyei Szemle* 1919. november 13.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Rákóczi út > Ludovita Šturova ulica, Szent László tér > Sv. Cyrillové námestie, Vármegeház tér > Sv. Methodové námestie, Millenniumi Emlékút > Svätoplukova cesta. *Nitrianske Noviny* 1919. január 7.

<sup>46</sup> Lipták, Lubomir: *Száz évnél hosszabb évszázad*. Kalligram, Pozsony, 2000.

symbol of Slovakian freedom at a more appropriate place.<sup>47</sup> The SNC agreed with the verdict and suggested a citation to be carved into the monument.<sup>48</sup> However, the bronze turul remained at its original place till it was blown to pieces on the 9th of February 1921.<sup>49</sup>

The example of the turul justifies Lubomir Lipták's remark that the policy of the change of monuments was carried out in several stages;<sup>50</sup> the first was just after the seizing of the power, and later, in 1921 all the monuments representing the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had been replaced.

### State administration

Those civil servants who had taken the oath could remain in their office. Due to lack of experts there were only minor changes among the higher rank of personnel, and those which occur were mostly relocations from other parts of the county. Czech officials also arrived; since there came enough people from Szokolca their role was not significant. Mass pensioning of civil servants started in April 1921 when county officials became state officials. The pensions were reckoned according to pre-changes salaries disregarding the considerable inflation;<sup>51</sup> the persons involved protested against the discrimination at Pozsony.

### Conclusion

The paper investigated the steps taken to change the statehood in Nitra between October 1918 and the beginning of 1923. At the end of the war the old administration was replaced by the Hungarian National Council for a while with the participation several persons who had earlier had no important political role. The short period of pluralism was ended by the arrival of the Czech legions. With the foundation of the Slovak National Council such civil servants managed the city who had had experience in the earlier Hungarian

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<sup>47</sup> Lipták, Lubomir: *Száz évnél hosszabb évszázad*. Kalligram, Pozsony, 2000:244-293..

<sup>48</sup> *Nyitra megyei Szemle* 1921. január 23.

<sup>49</sup> *Nyitra megyei Szemle* 1921. február 20.

<sup>50</sup> Lipták, Lubomir: *Száz évnél hosszabb évszázad*. Kalligram, Pozsony, 2000:244-293..

<sup>51</sup> *Nyitra megyei Szemle* 1921. április 17.

public organizations. With their knowledge of Hungarian they served as transition in the multi language city. Most of the civil servants arrived from Szakolca, the place which counted as the cradle of the Czechoslovak ideas in the Upperland. The transitional period lasted about till 1923, when Nitra was downgraded to township. With the introduction of the new public administration the old officials were pensioned off. Hungarian remained as the official language at the post office, railway station and in legislation till 1923, when all civil servants were required to sit for Slovak language examinations.<sup>52</sup> In the diocese the first period lasted till the death of Bishop Batthyány in 1923. At the head of the county Okánik was followed by Ján Jesensky also in 1923. The new zupan claimed to follow with liberal mind the rights of the minorities, but would take care of the Slovak country be Slovak.<sup>53</sup> Jesensky must have based his remark on the results of the 1921 census, when Nitra was the fifth largest town in Slovensko and almost 70% of the inhabitants claimed to be Slovaks and only 11% Hungarian.<sup>54</sup> The change of statehood could only mean one of the reasons of the massive ethnic change in the 11 years. It is possible that thanks to the important organizing activity of FEMKE and the role it played in the public life of the city many people claimed to be Hungarian in 1910; the change of statehood was important to the Slovaks and as a result of the developments of years had changed the ethnic picture of Nitra by the mid-1920s.

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<sup>52</sup> Zajonc, Juraj: *Prečo je Nitra staroslavne mesto*. 138.

<sup>53</sup> *Nyitrai Lapok* 1923. január 10.

<sup>54</sup> Of the total of 19.107 inhabitants: 13.505 Slovak, 2.118 Hungarian, 1.590 Czech, 1.076 Jewish, 744 German, 74 other. Zubácka, Ida: *Nitra za prvej Československej republiky*. Univerzita Konštantína. Nitra, 1997. 10-15.

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