

SLOVENSKO V 20. STOROČÍ. By *L'ubomír Lipták*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1968. 365 pp. English summary. Kčs. 22.

Dr. Lipták is Slovakia's leading authority on contemporary history. In his recent work he has tried to present the Slovak reader with an up-to-date synthesis of the modern history of his country.

During the seven decades of our century Slovakia participated in all the vicissitudes of the European annals. In the last years of the millennium-long Magyar supremacy the Slovaks could boast of only limited achievements. Their national consciousness sank to a low level, and they were inexperienced in exercising political prerogatives. Little wonder that even with changed conditions, under the Czechoslovak Republic, the Slovak statesmen did not cut much of a figure. As nationalism eventually took hold in the country, and found its most extreme spokesman in Father Andrej Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, Prague substituted for Budapest in several ways. The Second World War saw one of its strangest alliances when Father Jozef Tiso became the caretaker for Hitler in Slovakia. The pro-Nazi regime of Hlinka's party faced opposition from followers of both Moscow and London. The democratically minded soldiers and civilians joined with the Communists to stage a short-lived uprising in 1944, and the country was subsequently occupied by Russian troops. The happy days of liberation passed soon, and after the coup d'état of 1948 harsh Stalinism clamped down on the population. The death of the Soviet dictator brought only temporary relief, since the Czechoslovak pupils managed to imitate the deceased leader. Slovakia again witnessed a long period of national oppression. On the surface, there seemed to be little difference between Budapest, Prague, Berlin, and Moscow.

Lipták describes with considerable boldness the changing fate of his fatherland. He points to the widespread renegadism of his countrymen during the Hungarian days, and to their advancement in Czechoslovakia. Hlinka and his party have finally gained recognition at the hand of a Communist historian. Lipták does not hesitate to tell of Slovakia's positive achievements during the Second World War, although his description of that period leaves much to be desired. One can scarcely learn from Lipták about the parochialism and hypocrisy of Bratislava's wartime masters. Instead, he has made a great effort to show the Slovak contribution to the victory over fascism. With the role of the non-Communist underground diminished, the Slovak Communists loom singularly large. In strong colors, honestly and frankly, Lipták presents the unhappy days of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." He discloses the shame of the "cult of personality" no less than the coarseness of Czechoslovak socialism. On the other hand, the positive record of the Third Czechoslovak Republic is dutifully revealed, while its price is questioned. It should be said that Lipták labored hard, and with a great deal of success, to present truthfully the revolving fortunes of his homeland. He has opened a new page in Slovak historiography, and not a few of his concepts will serve as guidelines for future writers. His ideas are fresh and constitute a serious reappraisal of the modern history of Slovakia. Published during the last days of the Third Republic, the work bears the stamp of the Czechoslovak spring. Unfortunately, in Eastern Europe the winter comes immediately after the spring.

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