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## Prekmurje – separation from Hungary and connection to Slovenia (1919 – 1920)

**Summary:** the issue of the presented article is a continuation of the author's reflections concerning Central Europe in recent history. The main attention in this article was focused on a small, in terms of area and population, the historical-geographical region, which is Prekmurje. Till World War I it belonged to two western Hungarian administrative units of Vas and Zala, and together with the adjoining Porabje were called Vendvidék. Despite this fact the Slavic population of Prekmurje did not succumb to the Hungarian influences, which was the result of persisting in Prekmurje and neighboring lands of the cult of Saints Cyril and Methodius. A great importance in preserving the identification of the Slovenian population of Prekmurje was the role which played the Slovenian population in the security system called „Gyepű” and „Őrség” (guard). Citations from publications of Hungarian authors, who admit that the Hungarians learned from the Avars to treat the Slavic population as a bulwark on the frontier taking the first blow of the enemy, are presented in the text. Therefore, the first villages of Prekmurje inhabited by the Hungarian population are separated at least several kilometers. An important role in the history, culture and shaping the national consciousness of the Slovenian population of Prekmurje played Prekmurje dialect of the Slovak language. Prekmurščina has four dialects known as Pannonia or Prekmurje. They are considered the closest to the roots of the old common Slavic language.

**Keywords:** Prekmurje, Hungary, Slovenia, Vendvidék, dialect of the Slovak language

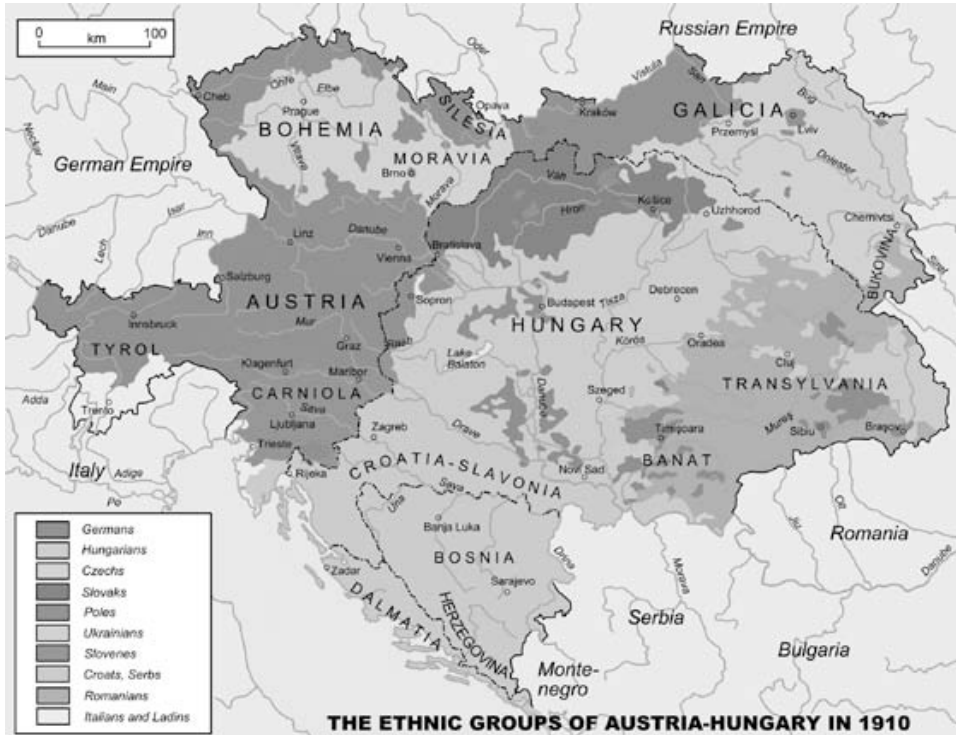
In the Country of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (PSHS)<sup>1</sup> formed after World War I, the territory of Slovenia was initially made up of only the Slovenian historical-geographical lands<sup>2</sup> which previously constituted the Austrian part of the Habsburg

1 In Slovenian: Država Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov, Croatian: Država Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba, Serbian: Држава Словенаца, Хрвата и Срба/Država Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba. PSHS was created by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs who previously resided in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. It existed from 28th October to 1st December 1918 when it joined Serbia forming the Kingdom of SHS: in Slovenian: Kraljevina Srbov, Hrvatov i Slovencev, in Serbo-Croatian: Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, Краљевина Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца. From 1929 it was officially the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

2 Slovenian historical-geographical lands have their own names in the Polish language.

Monarchy. As a result of action taken by the Kingdom of SHS (Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia) established on December 1st 1918, in 1919 the most westerly part of the Pannonian Plain, which previously was within the borders of former Kingdom of Hungary – Prekmurje<sup>3</sup> was annexed by Slovenia.

Map 1. Austria-Hungary 1910.



Source: file: Austro-Hungary ethnics, svg., author: Andrei Nacu (common property), upload. [wikimedia.org/commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/). Based on "Distribution of Races in Austria – Hungary" from the Historical Atlas by William R. Shepherd, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> The Hungarians named the territory of Prekmurje and Porabje, which remained within the borders of Hungary after World War I, Vendvidék, rarely Tótságnak (Slovenska Krajina). Prekmurje, translated literally means Murántúl in Hungarian but Hungarians use the name Muravidék. Looking from Hungary's side, in Slovenian this region of Slovenia is Prekmurje or Prekomurje (because it is situated before the River Mur), however, looking from Ljubljana and Maribor it is called Pomurje because it is beyond the River Mur. Prekmurje situated on the left bank of the river was joined to the districts situated on the right bank of the Mur which constituted the area jointly called Prlekija (the name came from the district Gornja Radgona situated by the border with Austria, and jutomer by the border with Croatia). They formed the "statistical region of – Pomurje" (Pomurska statistična regija) – one of twelve such regions in Slovenia.

Map 2. Historical-geographical lands of Slovenia.



Source: Survey: *Kakšno razdelitev na pokrajine si Slovenci želimo?* "Večer" 18th May 2008.

Prekmurje was formed from the union of two former Hungarian counties: Murska Sobota (Muraszombat) from the administrative unit of Vas and Lendava (Alsólendava járás) from Zala. It comprised 947 km<sup>2</sup> (21,2 % of Slovenia's territory).

Fully independent since 1991, Slovenia, which had borders from the period of its formation as a part of Yugoslavia, is a small but very diverse country. Prekmurje, constituting one of its historical-geographical lands, has so far maintained a visible centuries old cultural distinction in comparison with other Slovenian lands which were situated within the borders of Austria and bordered with Italy. Prekmurje is a strategic if little known location in Europe. One could even say it lies forgotten in Slavic history of the early Middle Ages and the thousand-year history of the Kingdom of Hungary. Four countries and nations meet in Slovenia and Prekmurje – Slovenians, Austrians, Hungarians and Croats. Even more importantly, it is a cultural cross-roads where north meets south and east meets west for that is where the cultures of Central, Western, Southern and Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The fifth pan-European transport highway goes through Slovenia and Prekmurje. It starts in Barcelona and ends in Kiev. On December 16th 1996 Slovenia signed a protocol with Italy, Croatia,

The number of Hungarians residing in Prekmurje who became a national minority in Slovenia after World War I is small, especially in comparison with the countries constituting Yugoslavia – Croatia, Serbia and other countries neighbouring Hungary. The issue of Prekmurje should be looked at separately even in the period of Slovenia's connection to Yugoslavia. Županije with the capital cities of Čakovec and Varaždin, joined Croatia and Serb Voivodina which was formed out of part of Banat, Bačka, Šrem and Baranija, requires separate analysis, especially because the number of Hungarians was much higher. In order to avoid simplification, it might be helpful if the reader were to familiarise himself at least to a very rudimentary degree with the peculiarities and historical factual material regarding particular former Hungarian areas before and after their union with what was to become SHS.

### Historical background of people of Prekmurje

An analysis of the demographic situation in Prekmurje in the 20th century requires becoming acquainted with the history of a wider area of the Danube valley, which was seized by the Slavs in the early Middle Ages.

Next to valuable contributions to the subject literature by Polish medievalists, a significant place assumed more recently by scholars from Warsaw<sup>5</sup> and Krakow: Witold Chrzanowski<sup>6</sup>, Krzysztof Polk<sup>7</sup> and Jerzy Rajman.<sup>8</sup> It is also necessary to compare these studies with the published Slovenian<sup>9</sup>, Croatian<sup>10</sup>, Slovakian, Czech, Austrian and Hungarian sources.

The works of Polish medievalists finish with a simplified conclusion which informs that the areas by the middle course of Danube, after they had been taken by Hungary, in the next centuries underwent full Magyarization. This generalization needs to be defined more precisely because the Slavic people residing in the Hungarian Vendvidék (Porabje, Prekmurje) and Međimurju from the 10th to the 20th century survived and in the 20th century they expressed willingness to unite with their mother nations, notably Slovenia and Croatia. Without getting acquainted with the latest history of the western extremity of the Pannonian Plain, a medievalist is not able to tell which events in the early Middle Ages had the most significant lasting effect on the

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Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine on the realisation of its sections in those countries. *20 let samostojnej Slovenije – kronologija*, Ljubljana 8 junija 2001, STA.

5 J. Skowronek, M. Tanty, T. Wasilewski, *Słowianie południowi i zachodni VI – XX wiek*, Warsaw 2005, *Książka i Wiedza*.

6 W. Chrzanowski, *Świętopętk i Wielki król Wielkomorawski [ok. 844 – 894]*, Krakow 2008, Avalon.

7 K. Polek, *Frankowie a ziemie nad środkowym Dunajem. Przemiany polityczne i etniczne w okresie merowińskim i wczesnkarolińskim (do poł. IX w.)*, Krakow 2007, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego.

8 J. Rajman, *Encyklopedia średniowiecza*, Krakow 2006, publishing house Zielona Sowa.

9 *Gradivo za zgodovino Slovencev v srednjem veku*, ur. J. Mal, Ljubljana 1920; *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, ur. M. Kos; B. Grafenauer, *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda*, I. (3 Izdaja), Ljubljana 1978.

10 F. Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara*. Zagreb 1902, Nakladni zavod matice Hrvatske; I. Mužić, *Hrvatska povijest devotog stoljeća*, Split 2006, Naklada Bošković.

historical process in those centuries. Similarly, historians concentrated on the latest history of that area are not always able to answer many questions without getting acquainted with their causes which may have their direct causes in events that may have occurred over a thousand years ago. This obvious methodological principle was the reason for carrying out an in-depth inquiry, before writing this article, the aim of which was to get familiarised not only with the early Medieval past of the area, but also the strategy and tactics used by Hungarians towards the people living in the Carpathian Basin which they seized in the 10th century.

The point of reference in discussing 20th century Prekmurje must be the fact that it is only a small part of the Slavic principality which was captured by Hungary in 899 – 900 A.D., and was the only part of that principality not to revive after World War I. It was the Slovenian Principality of Lower Pannonia<sup>11</sup> created after the collapse of Avar Khanate and its withdrawal from the Carpathian Basin at the beginning of the 8th century.<sup>12</sup> Lower Pannonia (Spodnja Panonja) had its seat in Blatnogrod where the Keszthely (Blatensky Kostel)<sup>13</sup> was situated. North of this principality, Upper Pannonia (Zgornija Panonja)<sup>14</sup> was also created. These two Pannonian principalities filled the middle area between the two already existing Slavic principalities: that of Bohemia, Moravia, Nitra and Carniola in the north, and the southern Slavic principality occupying the territory of present day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

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11 In Slovene historical literature the name Blatenské kniežatstvo is used. The western part of the Principality of Lower Pannonia constituted the territory of present-day Prekmurje and Porabje as well as Croatian župani in Varaždina and Čakovec.

12 *Awaren, Franken und Slaven in Karantaniem und Niederpannonien und die frankische und byzantinische Mission*, Celovec 1966, Carinthia I.

13 Slovenian name is Blatnograd, Slovak: Blatnohrad. Currently: Zalavar, a village in Hungary 9 km on the south-west from Lake Balaton.

14 Today it is mostly the territory of Burgenland.

Map 3. Slavic Principalities constituting the Kingdom of Carantania (the year 880)<sup>15</sup>

Source: file: Regnum Carantanum.png, [upload.wikimedia.org/Wikimedia/Commons/8/8c/Regnum-Carantanum](https://upload.wikimedia.org/Wikimedia/Commons/8/8c/Regnum-Carantanum).

At the time of Prince Pribina<sup>16</sup> and his son Kocel, the border of Lower Pannonia ran along the rivers Mur and Drava, to Ptuj. The Drava was its southern border (to its point of confluence with the Danube) and connected with “the old” Lower Pannonia – the Croatian Pannonia.<sup>17</sup> The Danube was Lower Pannonia’s northern and eastern borders with the principalities of Moravia and Nitra lying across the river, and in the south-east it bordered the strong Bulgarian domains spread over the area in the fork of the rivers Danube and Tisa. The roads connecting the Slavic principalities between the Carpathian and Sudeten Mountains and the Adriatic Sea, which were the western approaches of Carantania and Carneola, Bavaria and Furland to Rome, intersected in Blatnogrod and Blatensky Kostel. Lower Pannonia was not an independent principality. Throughout the 9th century there were repeated wars between Great Moravia and Carantania, which until the first half of the 8th century had been the fiefdoms of Bavaria and East Frank Reich.

<sup>15</sup> This map shows the transitional status. In 884 A.D., a military expedition of Sviatopolk, the Great Moravian duke, led to the expansion of his supremacy over the Principality of Lower Pannonia.

<sup>16</sup> In Slovenian studies, Pribina is called the voivode (F. Kos, *Gradivo za zgodovino Slovencev*, 2. knjiga, p. 212, Ljubljana 1906) or the duke (F. Grivec, *Slovenski knez Kocel*, Ljubljana 1938), and even described as dux (J. Šavli, *Slovenska država Karantanija*, Institutio Sclavenica, Bilje 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Under the rule of duke Kocel and king Arnulf, Lower Pannonia, with the capital city of Blatnogrod, also constituted the north-eastern area of today Croatia situated south-west of the Mur and even the Drava.

A crucial element in forging an enduring cultural identity of the Slavic population of Western Pannonia was the consolidating effect of Christianity. In similar fashion to that which occurred earlier in Carantania, the Christian faith was spread and maintained by missionaries and priests sent by the archbishopric of Saltsburg. Invited by Rastislav, the Principality of Great Moravia was visited by Greeks born in Thessalonica,<sup>18</sup> Constantine better known as Cyril the Philosopher<sup>19</sup> and his brother Methodius. Both of them arrived from Constantinople. Before their arrival in Great Moravia they had compiled a forty-letter alphabet that was phonetically based on the Macedonian Slavs language called the glagolitic alphabet.<sup>20</sup> With time, it became known as the Old Church Slavonic language. Blatnogrod was a very important base for the missionary work of Constantine the Philosopher and Methodius. The centre of the missionary work of archbishop Methodius was Great Moravia but the centre of his archbishopric established by the Pope was Sirmium<sup>21</sup> on the river Sava. The old church liturgy being within the reach of the bishopric of Šrem was still used in the Catholic churches in that area in the 19th and even 20th century.<sup>22</sup> It was the strongest national and cultural unifying element which helped the Slovenian populations in Porabje, Prekmurje (Hungarian Vendvidék) and Croatian Međimurje (Hungarian Muraköz) preserve their separate identity.

Even nowadays, in the Catholic diocese of Šrem, a strong cult of Cyril and Methodius is maintained from before the schismatic division of Christianity into Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy,<sup>23</sup> and its central point is Saint Peter's Cathedral in Đakov, Slavonia.

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18 They might have known the Slavonic language from their Slavic neighbours, or even from their mother who probably was a Slav.

19 Taken seriously ill during his stay in Rome, he joined a monastery and took the name Cyril.

20 From the old Slavonic word glagolić (gaworić, in Polish: mówić [*speak*]).

21 Sremska Mitrovica – a city in Voivodina in Serbia by the River Sava.

22 *Żywot św. Metodego znany też jako Legenda Panońska*, translated by A. Bielowski, Sandomierz 2011. Wydawnictwo Armoryka (reprint of the issue of 1864).

23 In an encyclical of John Paul II issued on the thousandth anniversary of the archbishop of Slavs Saint Methodius we read: "The activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius is considered a model of activity free of particularism, ethnic exclusiveness, racial prejudice or national pride of the Church in its missionary work... In ng their charismatic proselytising, Cyril and Methodius contributed to building up Europe not only as a community of Christian faith but also as a national and cultural body". John Paul II, *Encyklikals with Study Tool, Slavorum Apostoli* (June 2nd 1985): ENCYKLIKA SLAVORUM APOSTOLI *Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II skierowana do biskupów i kapłanów, do rodzin zakonnych, do wszystkich, do wszystkich wierzących chrześcijan w tysiąclletnią rocznicę dzieła ewangelizacji świętych Cyryla i Metodego*.



Photography 1, 2. Saint Peter's Catholic Cathedral in Đakov: the main entrance and the altar with the statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius.



Source: Author's private collection (photographs taken by Jerzy Zawistowski, 20th August 2006)

At the end of the penultimate decade of the 9th century, the first detachments of Bulgarian warriors arrived in the territory between the Tisa and the Danube north of the areas controlled by Bulgaria. In the following years they were engaged by the East Frank Reich to fight Sviatopolk, the duke of Great Moravia, and his heir Mojmir II. These warriors invaded the eastern areas of Great Moravia for the first time in 889. The Hungarians joined in as the allies of King Arnulf. The situation was similar in 892 when Arnulf organised an expedition of his armies which swept in from the east to attack the Hungarian forces. Sviatopolk repelled the invaders but drew Arnulf's attention to the risks of engaging the Christian rulers of pagan Hungary in the conflict.

A new situation was to arise in 896. The Byzantine emperor Leon VI concluded peace with Hungary. Through Byzantium's mediation, which probably wanted to deflect Hungarian expansionism northwards, the Hungarians secured the agreement of Great Moravia to settle between the middle and upper Tisa and the Danube. In the next four years, Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin in three major groups. The first one was led by Arpad in 896, the second by Kál in 899 and the third by Kursán in 900. Until the year 900, the Hungarians were seen as allies of Great Moravia in the struggle with Bavaria. The territory between the Tisa and the Danube became too small for Hungarian tribes. They crossed the Danube and in 899-



900 A.D. they seized the territory of the Slavic Principality of Lower Pannonia.<sup>24</sup> Incited by Bavarian bishops, as from 900 A.D., they started to organise expeditions into Great Moravia.

The essential reason for the Hungarians' attack on Bavaria was the crime committed in 904. Kursán – one of the main Hungarian leaders, invited to talks to Bavaria, was assassinated with his retinue in a deceitful way. In 906, the last ruler of Great Moravia Mojmir II, died in battle with the Hungarians. In the Bavarian – Hungarian struggles at the beginning of the 10th century, the battle of Bratislava on 4-5th July 907 was of decisive importance: the Hungarian armies led by Arpad destroyed the Bavarian army led by count Luipold Bavarian.<sup>25</sup> In the following decades, Hungarian invasions ravaged western Europe. Finally, in 955, the German King Otton (from 963 emperor Otto I the Great) led German knights and Czech reinforcements to a crushing victory over a fifty thousand strong Hungarian army in the battle of the Lech near Augsburg, which put an end to Hungarian expeditions.<sup>26</sup>

The result of this battle meant that the Hungarian Conquest (in Polish: podbój, in Hungarian: hódítás, legyőzés, meghódítás) in the 9th century reached its limits. The centre of the newly- created country became the Pannonian Plain and the whole Carpathian Basin (Kárpát-medence).<sup>27</sup> The Hungarians established their western border on the Mur, descending south-eastwards from the Alps. The territory situated east of the Mur and containing the river basin of the Rába became especially important in Hungary's strategic security of the Pannonian Plain and the Carpathian Trough. Hungarians treated it as a significant buffer zone for the Kingdom of Hungary from this side; they called it "Órség" (Guard-land).<sup>28</sup> Similar safety areas were created along

24 "Noviny" Podlistek, št. 17, 24, aprila 1921. "Kratke črtice iz naše zgodovine. Gđa so Madjari prišli v krščansko Panonijo, so bili ešče poganje, zato so strašno škodo napravili svetoj Cerkvi. Vse so razrušili, kod so šli, tak ka so bavarski škofje l. 900. pisali svetomi Oči Ivani IX.: "Madjari so prišli v naše kraje, odpelali ništerne ludi v robstvo, druge spoklali, tretje z lakotov in žejov po vozaj vmorili in jih tak brez računa vničili. Plemenite može i poštene žene so odvlekli v sužnost, požgali so bože cerkvi i vse tak razrušili, ka v celoj Panoniji, v našoj najvejšoj pokrajini niti ene cerkvi več ne". Iz toga vidimo stališ krščanstva. Ki so ostali živi so se skrivali po logi i bregovji. Cerkev so Ne smeli zidati, mešnikov i očivesne bože službe ne meti, deco so na skrivnem krstili. Tak je bilo vse Delo sv. Metoda na nikoj djano.

25 R. Hiestand, *Pressburg 907*, in: *Schicksalsjahr 907. Die Schlacht bei Pressburg und das frühmittelalterliche Niederösterreich*, R. Zehetmayer (Hrsg.), NÖ Landesarchiv, St. Pölten 2007; B. Torma, *Pozsonyi csata (907 július 4-5)*. "Új honvédségi szemle", 2007. július 5. (Hozzáferés: 2009. augusztus 3); I. Bóna, *A magyarok és Európa a 9-10. században*. Budapest 2000; W. Herwig, *A magyarok és a frankbajor Ostmark*, "Történelmi Szemle", 2001/1-2.

26 P. Štich, op. cit., pp.81-82; A. Michalek, *Słowianie Zachodni. Początki Państwowości*, Warsaw 2006, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, p. 43; I. Mužić, *Hrvatska Povijest Devetog Stolječa*, Split 2006, Naklada Bošković.

27 L. Gyula, *The Magyars of Conquest-Period Hungary*, <http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no141/p3.html>.

28 Az Órseg es a Vendvidék, Kalauz turistáknak és természetbarátoknak, Második javított, bővített kiadás, B.K. L. Kiadó, Szombathely 2004 (Szerzők: Benczik Gyula, Gyöngyössy Péter, dr. Köbölkuti Katalin, Móricz Péter, Nagy Endre, dr. Nagy Zoltán, Orbán Róbert, Söptei Imre, dr. Vig Károly).

all of Hungary's borders. They were named "gyepûelve". Hungarian "Gyepû"<sup>29</sup> by the Raba and in the west connected to the Mur – stretched over a, wide uninhabited or barely inhabited area endowed with natural and artificial fortifications ("gyepûelve") which constituted a buffer zone (along the western border, under Hungarian rule); that was the most important Hungarian "Gyepû" at the time, and had no equal security system on its remaining borders comprising the entire Carpathian Trough which was understood as the living space of the Hungarian nation.<sup>30</sup> Taking the Avars as their role model, the Hungarians treated the subordinated Slavs in the peripheral areas of the newly created state as a rampart constituting an element of its security.<sup>31</sup> Such a role was supposed to be played by the ancestors of Slavs in the territory situated east of the Mur and in the river basin of the Raba. It is not a big area but due to its location it was of great strategic significance to Hungary.

A similar role was played by the entire area from the Mur to Bratislava. Burgenland (in Croatian – Gradišće, in Hungarian – Órvidék) was named after four Hungarian castles where the county authorities were placed after it was annexed by Austria.

In the history of Hungary, the River Mur not only was the river where Gyepû secured the Pannonian Plain from the west, but also the gateway through which in later years Christianity, Italian and French cultural influence in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Reformation, Baroque and the Enlightenment, were all to pour in and stimulate Hungarian minds.

When in the 11th century the Hungarian king Saint Stephen established the Kingdom of Hungary, Prekmurje became its part and remained so until 1919.<sup>32</sup> In the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary east of the Mur, over the centuries, mainly in rural areas, lived the descendants of Slavic residents of principalities of the Upper and Lower Pannonia.

## The Slovenian national revival

The birth and creation of a distinct national consciousness and identity among the Slovenes inhabiting the river basin of the Mur and the Raba in the Kingdom of Hungary was a complex process<sup>33</sup> which took a somewhat different course, and with some delay, in comparison with the Slovenes across the Mur in Styria and other

29 See: e.g. T. Karoly, *Gyepu es gyepuelve*, "Magyar Nyelv", 9 (1913), pp. 97-104, 145-152; Hungarian words such as "gyepû" and "gyepuelve" do not have equivalents in the Polish language.

30 M. Kozar, F. Mukics, *Magyarország szlovének*, Budapest 1998, Körtánc füzetek.

31 See: Z. Balas, *Dva národy v jednej domovine*, Buffalo-Toronto 2004, Editura Matthias Corvinus. In the study of Zoltan Balass published in Slovakian, on page 13 we read: "Slovakia tvorili pešactvo avarskej armády a usadili ich na periférii svojho kaganátu. Takýmto spôsobom vytvorili okolo seba živý 'obranný val' – teda Slovakia tvorili vojenskú silu v systéme trávnatých ochranných pásov -, ktorý môže zachytiť prvý nápor nepriateľa". Z. Balassa adduces to L. Götz, *Keleten kél a Nap I.*, 1994, Püski, pp. 226-27: "Za veľképe usadenie Slovanov v strede Európy sú zodpovední predovšetkým Avari".

32 *Források a Muravidék történetéhez/Viri za zgodovino Prekmurja 2*, Szombathely – Zalaegerszeg 2008.

33 M. Fujs, *Oblikovanje narodne identitete pri prekmuskih Slovencih (A nemzeti tudat alakulása a murántúli szlovénoknál)*, in: *Ljudje ob Muri – Népek a Mura menton – Völker der Mur – Ljudi uz*

Slovenian lands belonging to Austria, which were ruled by the Habsburgs until 1278 when the German king Rudolph I Habsburg passed it on to his sons after the extinction of the Babenberg dynasty.

The Slovenian awareness of their distinct national identity in Austria, began to germinate in the 18th century. The essential aspect was the language. The foundations of written Slovenian were laid during the Reformation by Primož Trubar<sup>34</sup>, Adam Bohorič and Jurij Dalmatin. They faced a difficult task because the Slovenian language comprising seven different regional dialects: Carinthian, Littoral, Rovte, Upper Carniolan, Lower Carniolan, Styrian and Pannonian. The literary language created by them was based on the Lower Carniolan dialect slightly tinged with the Upper Carniolan dialect. Jernej Kopitar had great influence on the revival of the language and Slovenian national consciousness. Born in 1780 in Repniah of Šmarno goro, he was an outstanding early 19th century philologist, publicist, librarian<sup>35</sup> and researcher in classical literature. By the end of his life he belonged to all of Europe's noteworthy academies and learned societies. In his works, he paid a lot of attention to Slavic languages and for this reason he is called a Slavist even though he only wrote in Latin and German. To Slovenes, his most remarkable work, written in German, is *Grammatik der slavischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steiermark* (*Slovnica slovanskega jezika na Kranjskem, Koroškem in Štajerskem*), published in Vienna in 1809.

Kopitar supported the idea of unification of all Slavs. He believed that the Russians and Eastern Orthodox Slavs were less advanced in their cultural development and for this reason he saw possibilities of Slavic development in Austria with Vienna as a cultural and educational centre. That idea acquired the name of Austroslavism.<sup>36</sup> Even Slovenes who were critical of this idea, recognised Kopitar's huge contribution not only to the development of Slavic studies, but also to their national consciousness and culture. His enthusiasm in systematising the language, publishing Slovenian dictionaries, course books, and in collecting valuable information and legends, the works of folk writers, folk songs etc. greatly influenced the upcoming generations of Slovenes.

Of the seven dialects, the Pannonian ones constituted a separate group. Four groups of dialects belong to it: Slovenskogoške (or Goričanske), Prekmurske, Prleške and Haloške. The Mur was not an unsurpassable border for the Pannonian

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Muru, Zbornik referatov, Slovenian edition: Murska Sobota, Pokrajinski muzej 1996, Hungarian edition: Zalaegerszeg, muzeum Göcseji 1996.

34 He was born on 10th June 1508 in Raščici near Turak. Died in 1568.

35 He worked in the Vienna Court Library. He was promoted to the position of first custodian and advisor of the Court.

36 The project of Austroslavism was presented by Czech national activists at the Slavica convention in Prague in 1848. It was contrary to Pan-Slavism which assumed the solution of the issue of liberation of the Slavs based on Russia. Austroslavism took a more specific form of a concept which assumed the transformation of the Dual Monarchy into a triple Austrian-Hungarian-Slavic one. Prague was to be the capital city of the Slavic part. Austroslavism had its supporters also among Croats and Slovenes.

dialects because Preškije occurs in right bank districts and is called Prlekija either side of the river; it was merged with Pomurje. What can be seen is the linguistic convergence of this border region with the western border of the Principality of Pannonia of the 9th century. Till the 14th century the group of Pannonian dialects developed together with the south Styrian<sup>37</sup> Slovenian dialects. In the 18th century the rules of Prekmurje grammar were set by Števan Küzmič<sup>38</sup> and Mikloš Küzmič<sup>39</sup>. In the 19th century, Božidar Raič, while staying among Hungarian Slovenes, described Prekmurje as the most classical Slovenian land of all.<sup>40</sup>

The remarkable dialectician prof. Zinka Zorko, has said of Prekmurje that “there is nowhere in Slovenia with such a rich dialect” and “it must be a miracle that such dialect survived.”<sup>41</sup> This language used by the residents of Prekmurje and Porabje proves their authentic Slavic roots.<sup>42</sup> Prekmurščina is sometimes named Pannonian Slovenščina. It is used by 60-70 thousand people mainly on the left bank of the Mur in Slovenia, in Porabje in Hungary, in Austria, and by members of the Slovenian immigrant community in the United States etc. Till 1920, Prekmurje was taught in schools and till 1946 in churches.

The reaction of the Austrians to the Slovenes as a group with its own national identity was based on German theories about the origins of some Slavic nations from the Veneti and the Vandals. Indeed, in the 18th century, the Austrians actually did start to propagate the notion that the ancestors of the theoretically Slavic people of Carantania and Styria were the Veneti and the Vandals.<sup>43</sup> On the basis of

37 Among many other publications on this topic to 1945. Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša (ZRC SAZU) published: V. Novak, *Slovar stare knjižne prekmurščine*, Ljubljana 2006, Redakcija Milena Hajnšek – Holz, Založba ZRC.

38 F. Šebjanič, Štefan Küzmič in njegovo delo (dopolnjena razprava iz “Zbornika Štefana Küzmiča”), Murska Sobota 1976, Pomurska založba.

39 F. Šebjanič, *Protestantsko gibanje panonskih Slovencev od 16. do konca 18. Stoletja*, „Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje” Letn. 7 (XLII), št. 2/1971, pp. 159-164.

40 In his account in prekmurščina he wrote: “Od Radgone ... tri četrt ure hoda proti vzhodu stopiš na zemljo, ki je našemu jeziku zares klasična. Neka sveta groza obide človeka, ki je Prekmurce in njihov krasni jezik že poprej poznal, kedar se njegova noga prvič dotakne tal, koder so že od nekdanji naši slovenski dedje in pradedje orali mastno zemljo, kopali gorice, prepevali starinske pesmi, mirno pripovedovali okoli ognjišča povesti svojih blagih prednikov. Njihova domovina nikakor ni odludna od našega Slovenskega; ne loči nas Mura, nego veže nas”. M. Slavič, *Prekmurje*, Ljubljana 1921, Slovenska krščansko-socialna zveza, pp. 26-34.

41 N. Grab, Zinka Zorko: Prekmurščina ima največ ohranjenih “starin”, [http://pomurec.pro-ing.si/vsebina/3550/\(Pomurec.com – nov pomurski spletni portal\)](http://pomurec.pro-ing.si/vsebina/3550/(Pomurec.com – nov pomurski spletni portal))

42 Prekmurščina is – in my opinion – a Slovenian dialect closest to the core of all Slavic languages. This may be confirmed by reading in Prekmurje dialect the text of the most popular Christian prayer (it should be read with the rules of pronunciation similar to the Hungarian “sz” which is pronounced “s” and the “s” as “sz”, and “cs” as the English “ch”). Goszpodnova molitev. Ocsa nas, ki szi v nebeszah! Szveti sze Ime tvoje. Pridi kralesztvo tvoje. Bojdi vola tvoja, kak na nebi, tak i na zemli. Krüha nasega vszakdanesnjeja daj nam ga dnez. I odpüszi nam duge nase, kak i mi odpüscsamo duzsnikom nasim. I ne vpelaj nasz vu szküsavanje. Nego odszlobodi nasz od hüdogä. Amen.

43 R. Steinacher, Wenden, Slawen, Vandalen: Eine frühmittelalterliche pseudologische Gleichsetzung und ihr Nachleben bis ins 18. Jahrhundert, in: Auf der Suche nach den Ursprüngen: Von der Bedeutung

the developing Hungarian nationalism and a tendency to assimilate non-Magyar nations, the theory about Veneti and Vandals as the ancestors of Slovenes from Prekmurje was also adopted by Hungary.<sup>44</sup>

The first Slovene from Prekmurje and Porabje, who deeply cared about the welfare of his countrymen and wrote about their lives and culture was Jožef Košič in the 18th century.<sup>45</sup> He was a pastor in Beltnice and Lower Senik, later the rector in Upper Senik, a writer, ethnologist and historian. Košič assumed that Prekmurščina is a Veneti or even a Vandal language.<sup>46</sup> This issue is interpreted in *Vannak e Magyar Országbon Vandalusok* which Košič wrote in Hungarian and published anonymously in 1824 in the Hungarian magazine “Kedveskedő” which was issued in Vienna. In 1828, János Csaplovics published it in Budapest in the collection “Tudományos gyűjtemén”. A year later, this thesis was published in German and in 1833 in Slovenian. The title was changed to *O vendskih – totih na Madžarskem* (in Hungarian: *AMagyar Országgi Vendus – Tótokról 1824-28*).<sup>47</sup>

Accepting the theory on the Veneti or Vandal origins of Slavic people residing by the Raba and the Mur, enabled Košič to freely emphasise their national distinctiveness, to dabble in linguistic and ethnographic research without unwelcome obstruction, and fearlessly publish his findings. Slovenian researchers highlight Košič influence on the development of the Slovenian language, and ethnological research into the creation of an independent national identity in Prekmurje in the period of nascent Hungarian nationalism and stronger Magyarization pressure. Košič's theory about the Vandal origins of the Slavic residents of Prekmurje was criticised by the more vociferous contemporary supporters of the Illyrian movement; e.g. Stanko Vraz<sup>48</sup> ridiculed it in his satire.

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des frühen Mittelalters, ur. W. Pohl, „Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters”, 8. Vienna 2004, pp. 329-353; P. Štih, Avtohtonistične in podobne teorije pri Slovencih in na Slovenskem, in: Karantanien-Ostarrichi: 1001 Mythos, ur. A. Moritsch, Klagenfurt/Celovec, Ljubljana/Vienna 1997, pp. 47-49; M. Šašel Kos, Ethnic Manipulations with Ancient Veneti and Illyrians, in: *Le Identità Difficili: Archeologia, potere, propaganda nei Balcani*, ur. S. Magnani in C. Marcaccini, Firenze 2007, pp. 11-18; J. Šavli, Veneti – naši davni predniki?, Dunaj/Vienna 1985; Venetovanje: prispevki k razmerju Veneti-Slovani, ur. M. M. atičetov, Ljubljana 1990; Z. Skrbiš, “The First Europeans’ Fantasy of Slovenian Venetologists: Emotions and Nationalist Imaginings, in: *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions*, ur. M. Svasek, Oxford, New York 2006.

44 L. Lisjak Gabrijelčič, *The Dissolution of the Slavic Identity of the Slovenes in the 1980s: The Case of the Venetic Theory*, Budapest 2008; Tom M. S. Priestli, *Vandali, Veneti, Vindišarji: pasti amaterske historične lingvistike, „Slavistična revija”* 49 (2001), pp. 275-303.

45 Košič se je močno zanimal za življenje in preteklost svojih slovenskih rojakov. On je bil prvi slovenec, ki je sestavno opisal ljudsko življenje in kulturo Dela svojega naroda, <http://kossicsiskola.gportal.hu/>

46 “Vandalszki jezik, Vandalszka vüszta”. For more see: J. Košič (Hungarian: *Kossics Jozsef*), *A Magyar Országgi Vendus-Tótokról 1824-28*; J. Vugrinec, *Jubilejni Košičevi dnevi*, v *Slovenski koledar*, 2004; F. Mukič in M. Kozar, *Slovensko Porabje*, Celje 1982; M. Kozar, *Etnološki slovar Slovencev na Madžarskem*, Monošter- Szombathely 1996.

47 Translated into Polish: *O Vendijskich Słowianach na Węgrzech [English: Veneti Slavs in Hungary]*.

48 M. Zdziechowski, *Odrodzenie Chorwacji w wieku XIX: Illiryzm. Stanko Vraz. Iwan Mažuranič. Piotr Preredović*, “Przegląd Polski” 1902. Kujawsko-Pomorska Biblioteka Cyfrowa (<http://kpbk.umk.pl/>).

At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, Prekmurje's national development was largely the work of a group of Catholic priests<sup>49</sup>, i.e. Ferenc (Kodila) Ivanoci, Jožef Borovnjak, Števan Kuhar and Jožef Klekl who, in December 1904, started to publish in the Prekmurje language the Catholic monthly magazine "Marijin list" and from 1913, the weekly "Novine". In both those magazines, next to its religious content, one could read about social and national issues. Jožef Klekl cooperated with Joška Godino, Ivan Jeriča, Jožef Čarič, Jožef Sakovič and Ivan Baša. The group was connected with the Slovenian People's Party in Hungary and initially was for Prekmurje's autonomy in Hungary. In 1919, in the magazines edited by Jožef Klekl, a programme aiming at the unification of Prekmurje with an independent Slovenia within the borders of one common country with the Croats and Serbs was launched.<sup>50</sup> Contacts with Slovenian activists were maintained, e.g. with Anton Korošc from Maribor, who from 1907 was the minister of the National Assembly in Vienna.<sup>51</sup>

### The connection of Prekmurje to Slovenia within the borders of the Kingdom of SHS (Yugoslavia)

The French marshal Louis Félix Marie François Franchet d'Espérey, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in the Balkans dictated a demarcation line beyond which the Hungarian army was to withdraw, to the delegation of Michalya Karoly's government that travelled to Belgrade on 9th November 1918. This provision was incorporated in the truce between the victorious Entente and Hungary that was signed four days later. The agreement signed in Belgrade on 13th November left Prekmurje within the borders of Hungary. It was not expected to connect Prekmurje to the newly-created country of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (PSHS).<sup>52</sup> The issue of Styrian independence, was not resolved at that time. The Austrians strove to keep Styria with Maribor within their borders.<sup>53</sup> The situation in Styria changed in favour of the Slovenes by action taken by the Slovenian general Rudolf Maister-Vojanov<sup>54</sup> in November 1918. He formed the Maribor Infantry Regiment out of 4000 volun-

49 A. Trstenjak, *Slovinci na Ogrskem*, Narodopisna in književna črtica, Maribor 2006, Objava Arhivskih Virov; *Slovenski biografski leksikon 1925-1991*, Ljubljana 2009, SAZU, Elektronska izdaja.

50 *Források a Muravidék Történetéhez (Viri za zgodovino Prekmurja)* 2. kötet, Szerkesztette: Mayer Laszlo es Molnar Andras, Szloven fordítás: Magda Berden, Szombathely-Zalaegerszeg 2008.

51 J. Cvirn, *Razvoj ustavnosti in parlamentarizma v Habsburški monarhiji: Dunajski državni zbor in Slovenci (1848-1918)*, Ljubljana 2006; F. J. Bister, Anton Korošec, državnozborski poslanec na Dunaju: življenje in delo: 1872-1918, Ljubljana 1992.

52 Decision to create the Country PSHS was accepted on October 28th 1918 and the next day it was formally proclaimed in Ljubljana and Zagreb. On October 31st the National Council of the Country SHS started its activity. A Slovene – Anton Korzec became the President (in 1929 he was the prime minister of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

53 J. Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitve v letu 1918: študija o slovenski državnosti v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov*, Ljubljana 1998.

54 Rudolf Maister – Vojanov was promoted from major in the Austrian army to general on November 1st 1918 based on the National Council of Styria's decision.



teers in a very short space of time, which by the end of November seized the whole of southern Styria, and the Slovenian military unit formed in Celje, which was sent there, seized Mežiška Dolina and even some towns in Carinthia with Velkovec and Pliberk (Bleiburg)<sup>55</sup>.

Lieutenant-General Sherman Miles headed a U.S. delegation which arrived in Maribor on 27th November 1918 to take stock of the situation directly on the ground. The talks with the Entente's delegates that were held then and there had direct and most significant bearing on the shape of Slovenia's north-western border.

The delegation sent to the peace conference in Paris by the newly-formed government of SHS (from 1st December 1918 the Kingdom of SHS), consisted of prof. Matija Slavič, the spokesman of Slovenes from Prekmurje. He prepared a few valuable studies<sup>56</sup> that were attached to the project proposing the incorporation of not only Prekmurje but also Porabje in SHS. They would create a Slovenian Land as a small western part of Slovenian territory of the Principality of Lower Pannonia that had been annexed in the years 899-900 by Hungary in the course of its conquest of the Pannonian Plain. Matija Slavič supported his proposal with historical and demographic arguments, proving that despite the persistent age-old policy of Magyarization, in this western piece of the Pannonian Plain, the Slavic population survived and it constituted the majority in many of the region's towns. He indicated that the population of Prekmurje and Porabje was conscious of its community with the Slovenes residing on the right bank of the Mur.<sup>57</sup>

After month-long consultations in the committees and working groups, the issue of Slovenia's borders was discussed at a plenary session of the Peace Conference for the first time on 18th February 1919. Three months later, on 20th May – in the period of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, the representative of the United States, major Johnson proposed moving the Slovenian-Hungarian border north of the Mur<sup>58</sup> and make it run along the Mur and Raba watershed line.

Two circumstances influenced the Paris conference's decision to join Prekmurje to the Kingdom of SHS before signing the peace treaty with Hungary. Firstly, one was the necessary to solve the territorial issues in the Austrian-Slovenian-Hungarian border regions in anticipation of imposing peace terms on Austria. Secondly, the self-proclaimed Republic of Mur was established in Prekamurje on 29th May 1919, which cut itself off from the communist Hungarian Soviet Republic proclaimed

55 A. Arih, *Spomenik Maistru – velikanu naše zgodovine in prelomni čas 1990*, "Slovenska vojska" št. 15/2000.

56 I.e.: *Carte ethnographique de Prekmurje*, Paris 1919; *De la Statistique du Prekmurje. La Question du Prekmurje, de la Styrie et de la Carinthie eruditee et presentee par M. Slavic*, Paris 1919, p. 23; *Le Prekmurje. La Question du Prekmurje, de la Styrie et de la Carinthie. Etudiee et presentee par M. Slavic*, Paris 1919, p. 19, in: *Naše Prekmurje: zbrane razprave in članki*. Zbral, uredil in avtorjevo delo predstavljal Viktor Vrbnjak, Murska Sobota 1999, Pomurska založba, p. 348 (Zbirka Monumenta Pannonica).

57 Matija Slavič was born in the village Bučečevce located 2 kilometres from the Mur in the region Prekljia which used prleški dialect. Slavič's grandmother came from Hungarian (at that time) Prekmurje.

58 A. Ružič, *Kako so potegnili mejo v Prekmurju?*, [www.os-gpetrovci.si/](http://www.os-gpetrovci.si/) (accessed on 26th August 2011).



in Budapest on 23rd March 1919. The proclamation of the separatist Republic of Mur provoked an immediate reaction in Budapest with orders given to crush such insubordination.

The first attempt to separate Prekmurje from Hungary after World War I, made by the would-be founders of the Republic of Mur, was very spectacular in character. The establishment of the Republic of Mur was announced on 29th May by Vilmoš Tkalec (Tkálecz Vilmos), the deputy county commissioner of the communist Hungarian Soviet Republic in Murska Sobota. On 3rd June 1919, its independence was annulled by Hungarian units sent there by the Bolshevik authorities in Budapest.<sup>59</sup>

The Republic of Mur comprised the territory of the county Murska Sobota belonging to the regional administrative unit of Vas and the northern part of the county of Alsólendva of the Zala region. The republic was to be economically inter-connected with Yugoslavia and Austria.

The Hungarian Bolshevik authorities in Budapest ordered six infantry battalions into Prekmurje on 31st May 1919, to crush the separatist movement. On 2nd June, these battalions entered Prekmurje from four sides. The 4th battalion of 18th brigade, which marched along the Mur had the strategic goal of separating the Republic of Mur from Austrian and Slovenian Styria. The promptly mobilised armed forces of the Republic of Mur, organised and led by captain Eugene Pernetzky (Perneczky Jenő), did not stand a chance of stopping the far stronger Hungarian units.

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59 *Murska Republika*, <http://www.murskarepublika.com>

Map 4. Porabje (Szentgotthárd county) and Prekmurje marking out the territory of the Republic of Mur.



Source: File: *Vendvidéki Köztársaság*, hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vendvidéki\_Köztársaság, upload.wikimedia.org. (Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Author: Doncsecz, August 2008).

It is not easy to determine the political character of the Republic of Mur. Its creators first and foremost announced solving agrarian issues in a revolutionary way. Most of the farmland in Prekmurje belonged to great landowners of Hungarian nationality (approx. 5000 ha) which was cultivated by Slovenian agricultural labourers. Perhaps that was not the intention of Vilmoš Tkalc<sup>60</sup> but the most important effect of the turbulence in Prekmurje was that it drew the attention of the peacemakers in Paris to this region and accelerated the decision to unite it with the Kingdom of SHS.

In his article on Vilmoš Tkalc and the republic he created, Matija Slavič refers to him indulgently as “Prekmurje’s Bolshevik plenipotentiary and anti Bolshevik commander.”<sup>61</sup> Hungarian historians accentuate, for obvious reasons, the revolu-

60 Vilmoš Tkalc’s mother and wife were German. After the collapse of the Republic of Mur he escaped to Austria. After his return to Lendava he was arrested but after a few days he escaped to Hungary where he worked in the village Nagykarácsony in Fejér county.

61 Slavič, *Prekmurje*, Ljubljana 1921, Slovenska krščansko-socialna zveza, pp. 47-55. Slavič wrote about Tkalc as: „vojevrstnem prekmurskem boljševiškem protiboljševiškem voditelju, ki je pred vojsko

tionary and Bolshevik character of the Republic of Mur and tend to take a very dim view of Vilmoš Tkalc.<sup>62</sup>

Some significant decisions were taken in the summer of 1919. On 9th July 1919, the Supreme Council of the Paris conference decided that the border of the Kingdom of SHS with Hungary in the north-east should coincide with the watershed line of the Mur and Raba river valleys. On 16th July, the SHS delegation appealed to the chairman of the conference Georges Clemenceau for permission to fill Prekmurje with SHS military units. On 1st August this request was accepted. This decision coincided in time with the collapse of the communist revolution in Hungary.<sup>63</sup> With the permission of the Paris peace conference, SHS military units under the command of gen. Krste Smiljanić, together with supporting units of the Voluntary Legion from Prekmurje, Littoral and even Croatia, entered Prekmurje on 12th August.<sup>64</sup> A committee sent by the Entente arrived at Murska Sobota the same day to observe and supervise the course of occupation of Prekmurje by the Kingdom of SHS. The occupation of the whole territory started on 13th August. Military units entered Prekmurje from a few directions. The units entering from Radgona were under the command of colonel Vladimir Uzorinac. The leading army units were accompanied by members of the Voluntary Legion who spoke Hungarian. They were translators who informed the Hungarian military and civil authorities in the seized towns about the occupied area of Prekmurje by the Kingdom of SHS. Hungarian military units had withdrawn before the armies of the Kingdom of SHS entered the territory so there were no incidents between them.

Celebrations occasioned by the liberation of Prekmurje from Hungary and its unification with Slovenia were held on Sunday, 17th August, in Beltinci, situated south of Murska Sobota. Over twenty thousand people arrived even from distant towns expressing their spontaneous joy at this historic event. Srečko Lajnšič, who was

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skupno z narodnim voditeljem prekmurskih Slovencev, Jožefom Kleklom starejšim, vršil službo božjo v prostrani črensovski lepi cerkvi: Klekl pri altarju, Tkalec na orgljah”.

62 L. Goncz, Muravidek 1919. A proletárdiktatura időszaka a Mura menten es a videk elcsatolasa, “Vasi Szemle” 2/2001, (also: “Hozzáférés ideje” 27th September 2008).

63 A major factor in the collapse of the communist authorities in Budapest was the victorious counteroffensive of the Romanian army after the attack on the Tisa of Hungarian Armed Forces of the Soviet Republic on 20th July 1919. Soon after, eastern and central Hungary was occupied by Romania. Budapest was occupied from August 4th even though the Romanian army did not have a mandate from the Entente to do so. Thefts and confiscations carried out by the Romanian army could be stopped slightly by a special mission led by the four allied generals who arrived in Budapest on 12th August (American general Harry Bandholtz, British general Reginald Gorton, French general Jean César Graziani and Italian general Ernesto Mombelli). The brave and determined attitude of general Bandholtz (armed only with a horsewhip), on the night of October 5th, stopped the loading up of trucks with the treasures of the National Museum in Budapest. More: Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary With an Introduction on Hungary and WWI*, by F. Krüger, ed. A.L. Simon, Copy of the original book courtesy of the Cleveland Public Library Reference Department, 2000, pp. 110-113.

64 V.P. Štefanec, *Prekmurje je še vedno nekakšna eksotika*, Ljubljana – MMC RTV SLO/STA, 16 avgust 2011, <http://www.rtvsllo.si/slovenija> (accessed on September 19th 2011).

appointed as the Temporary Civil Commissioner of Prekmurje. Srečko Lajnšič and colonel Vladimir Uzorinac arrived from Radgona in a car which made slow progress over the last three kilometres for the delirious throng that lined the streets to welcome it with flowers. The Slovenians from Prekmurje, who gathered in Baltnice on 17th August 1919, welcomed Lajnšič's announcement about the unification with the motherland with unalloyed joy.<sup>65</sup> The mass participation of Prekmurje residents in this official gathering was seen as a form of spontaneous, democratic, public manifestation of support for unification.<sup>66</sup> A more exhaustive report on the celebrations was published the next day in "Noviny", edited by Jožef Klekl.

On 25th August, the National Council of Prekmurje, which was a form of parliament, followed by the Central Administration of Slovenian People's Party in Prekmurje the next day, appealed to the SHS government in Belgrade to incorporate Prekmurje into Slovenia. On 2nd September, the government made the expected decision and on 6th September, Srečko Lajnšič, who until then had his seat in Radgona, was appointed as the Civil Commissioner of Murska Sobota. This event came to be seen as the commencement of the homogenous SHS administration in Premurje.

Four days later, on 10th September 1919, the peace treaty between the victorious countries and Austria was signed in Saint Germain. This treaty was also signed by a representative of the Kingdom of SHS. Slovenians from Styria and Prekmurje were somewhat surprised to find that the Austrian border along the Mur went ten kilometres south of Radgona, leaving almost the entire city of Radgona and a few Slovenian villages: Žetnici, Dedonci, Potrna, Ženkovci, Gorica, Pridova and Ledumerje, on the Austrian side. They were to remain under Slovenian administration until 20th July 1920, and upon their handover to Austria, their place names were changed to Bad Radkersburg, Dedenitz, Laafeld, Zelting, Goritz b. Radkersburg, Pridahof, Hummersdorf and Sieldorf situated at the end of Austrian wedge along the left bank of the Mur pushing into Slovenia.<sup>67</sup>

The issue of negotiating and signing the treaty with Hungary had to be postponed until the situation in Hungary, which was in the throes of its Bolshevik revolution, stabilised and a credible Hungarian partner to talk to emerged. The Revolutionary Council, which controlled the Hungarian Soviet Republic from 21st March to 1st August 1919<sup>68</sup>, was no such a partner. A temporary counter-revolutionary regency government was formed in Hungary by admiral Miklós Horthy. By order of the

65 A. Ružič, op. cit., p. 8.

66 24th April 1997, The District Council of Beltinci adopted a resolution that 17th August will be the district's holiday to commemorate this day. Zakaj je 17. avgust občinski praznik občine Beltinci? <http://www.beltinci.si/obcina/>. After the celebrations in honour of nineteenth anniversary of Beltinci gathering with the participation of Slovenia's president Danilo Türka and the prime minister Borut Pahor, it was acknowledged that 17th August is the day of all Slovenians. A.M., *90 let od združitve premurških Slovencev z matico*, 17. August 2009, Beltinci – MMC RTV SLO/STA; A. Me., *Združitev Prekmurje z matico – praznik vseh slovenskih državljanov*, 17. avgust 2010, Murska Sobota – MMC RTV SLO/STA.

67 A. Ružič, op. cit., p. 8.

68 Sándor Garbai was the head of the Revolutionary Council but the actual dictator was Béla Kun.

Entente, the Romanian forces which had occupied Budapest and the territory between the Danube and the Tisa, withdrew on 16th November 1919. On 19th November 1919, Horthy received a request from Paris to send a delegation to represent Hungary in preparing a peace treaty.<sup>69</sup>

After months of negotiations, what was to become known as the Treaty of Trianon was finally signed in Versailles on 4th June 1920. It set the borders between the new Hungarian state and its neighbours in detail and confirmed what have already been written into the treaty with Austria on the rights of minorities regardless of race, nationality, language, religion or social status.

Photography 3. Jožef Klekl the older<sup>70</sup>, photography 4. Matija Slavič, photography 5. Sándor Mikola<sup>71</sup>.



Photographs 3-5. Source: [upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons) (all photographs: public domain).

The Treaty of Trianon was in effect a diktat that the Hungarian delegation had to accept and sign. Two Slovenians from Prekmurje were present at the signing: prof. Matija Slavič, as a member of delegation from the Kingdom of SHS and prof. Šandor Mikola<sup>72</sup>, a mathematician and physicist, as a member of the Hungarian delegation, who subscribed to in theory on the Veneti lineage of Prekmurje's population; true to the putative wishes of his putative ancestors, he was for leaving Prekmurje within the borders of Hungary.

<sup>69</sup> Hungary became an independent country on 17th February; Miklós Horthy officially seized power on March 1st 1920.

<sup>70</sup> Roman Catholic priest, the long-term rector in the Prekmurje village of Pečarovci, district Puconci; a politician, a writer, an editor and a clerk. (He had the nickname "old" to distinguish him from his nephew whose name was also Jozef Klekl – also a Catholic priest, a writer and a journalist).

<sup>71</sup> A Mikola Sándor – dij érme. The medal was struck in Hungary in 1980 on Eötvös Loránd Fizikai Társulat's initiative as a prize in a physics competition.

<sup>72</sup> L. Kovács, *Mikola Sándor (1871 – 1945)*, Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, Budapest 1991.

On 15th November 1920, the Treaty of Trianon was ratified by the Hungarian parliament.

The course of the borders between Hungary and the Kingdom of SHS was specified in Article 27.2 part III of the Treaty. The first issue to be dealt with by this article was the Hungarian-Slovenian border.<sup>73</sup> Running from Vas (Vas – vármegye – 5472 km<sup>2</sup> – with 439 671 people residing there in 1907) which was the border with Styria along the Mur, Prekmurje was united with the south-west county of Murska Sobota (Muraszombat járás). In 1907, this whole administrative unit was inhabited by 390 371 people including 197 389 (50,6 %) Hungarians, 125 526 (32,2 %) Germans, 18 197 (4,7 %) Croats and 47 080 (12%) Slovenians.<sup>74</sup> Predmurje was also united with its southern adjacent administrative unit of Zala (Zala – vármegye – 5974,62 km<sup>2</sup> – with 464 143 people residing in 1907) with the Mur marking the border with Styria and Madzimirje, and the entire administrative unit of Alsólendva (Hungarian: Alsólendva járás). The total size of this territory, known as Predmurje, which was separated from Hungary and annexed by Slovenia was 1093 km<sup>2</sup>. It contained twenty eight which were mainly inhabited by Hungarians. They were extended at the border with a narrow strip from the Austrian Bergenland to Croat Medimurje.

The north-eastern border was fixed along the watershed line between the basins of the Mur and the Raba separating Prekmurje from Porabje, which remained on the Hungarian side, even though nine villages in that area had a Slovenian majority viz.: Gornji Senik (Fesöszölnök), Dolnji Senik (Alsószölnök), Sakalovci (Szakonyfalu), Slovenska ves (Rábatótfalu), Števanovci (Apátistvánfalva), Verica-Ritkarovci (Kétvölgy), Andovci (Orfalu), and Otkovci (Balázsfalva).<sup>75</sup> Both regions,

73 Peace Treaty between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary and Protocol and Declaration signed at Trianon on 4th June 1920: PART II. FRONTIERS OF HUNGARY. ARTICLE 27. 2 With the Serb-Croat-Slovene State: From the point defined above in an easterly direction to point 313 about 10 kilometres south of Szt Gotthard, a line to be fixed on the ground following generally the watershed between the basins of the Raba on the north and of the Mur on the south thence in a southerly direction to point 295 about 16 kilometres north-east of Muraszombat, a line to be fixed on the ground passing east of Nagydolany, Orihodos with its railian station, Kapornak, Domonkosfa and Kisszerdahely, and west of Kotormany and Szomorocz, and through points 319 and 29I; thence in a south-easterly direction to point 209 about 3 kilometres west of Nemesnep, a line to be fixed on the ground following generally the watershed between the Nemesnepi on the north and the Kebele on the south; thence in a south-south-easterly direction to a point to be chosen on the Lendva south of point 265, a line to be fixed on the ground passing to the east of Kebeleszentnarton, Zsitkocz, Gonterhaza, Hidveg, Csente, Pincze and to the west of Lendva-jakabfa, Bodehaza, Gaborjanhaza, Dedes, Lendva-Ujfalu; thence in a south-easterly direction, the course of the Lendva downstream; then the course of the Mur downstream.

74 S. Borovszky, *Magyarország vármegyéi és városai. Vas vármegye*, 1898; Dr Csánki Dezső: *Magyarország Történeti Földrajza a Hunyadiak korában – Vasvármegye* 1894.

75 From the centre in Szentgotthárd (Slovensko Porabje, Hungarian Szlovén Rábavidék, Szlovenvidék or Szloven Rábamente, Vendvidék). Mukicsné Kozár Mária/Marija Kozar Mukič, *Etnološka topografija slovenskega etničnega ozemlja – 20. stoletje; Slovensko Porabje/A szlovén etnikai terület néprajzi topográfija – 20. század; Szlovénvidék, Ljubljana-Szombathely* 1984 (Az adatokat 1979 júliusá és 1983 júliusá

in the former Kingdom of Hungary were inhabited by many Slovenians. The Hungarians called this area Vendvidék<sup>76</sup>.

Map – sketch 5. Porabje – remained within the borders of Hungary (adjacent to the Austrian Burgenland in the north-west, and Prekmurje in the south).



Source: Slovenska manjšinska koordinacija (SloMaK), [www.slomak.net](http://www.slomak.net)

Hungarian statistics indicated that there were 4174 Slovenian residents in nine villages in 1869 in Porabje in Szentgotthárd (Monoštru) county. This number rose to 5361 residents by 1900 (a 22 % increase). The next census conducted in 1910 showed that the number of Slovenians residing in Szentgotthárd fell by 7.8%. Many people emigrated to the United States, other European countries or other parts of Hungary. Between the wars, until 1941 the number rose by 5.4 %.

In the north-west and north, Prekmurje bordered Styria which crossed the Mur in one place and thrust deep into Slovenian territory and Burgenland, which after World War I was separated from Hungary and transferred to Austria. In the southerly direction, the Mur separated Slovenian Prekmurje from Croatian Međimurska

katt gyűjtötték. A.tanulmányért szakmailag a szerző felelős); idem, *A magyarországi szlovének néprajzi szótára*, Monošter- Szombathely 1996; idem, *A magyarországi szlovének*, Budapest 2004, Változó Világ 56.

76 Hungarians still support the thesis on the descent of this region's population from the Veneti and the Vandals, e.g. *Az Őrség és a Vendvidék, Kalauz turistáknak és természetbarátoknak, Második javított, bővített kiadás*, B. K. L. Kiadó, Szombathely 2004 (Szerzők: Benczik Gyula, Gyöngyössi Péter, dr. Köbölkuti Katalin, Móricz Péter, Nagy Endre, dr. Nagy Zoltán, Orbán Róbert, Söptei Imre, dr. Vig Károly).



Župania (Međimurje) with the capital city of Čakovec<sup>77</sup> in the fork of the Mur and the Drava. Before World War I, this area was called Muraköz – and like the Slovenian county of Alsólendva járás – it belonged to the Hungarian Zala. Muraköz was divided into two counties: Csáktornya (Croat: Čakovec) járás and Perlak (Croat: Prelog) járás.<sup>78</sup> The Croatian administrative unit of Varasd was separated from Muraköz by the Drava.

At the north end of Prekmurje, one kilometre from the Slovenian village of Trdkova in Kuzma county, a “Tromejnik”<sup>79</sup> a trilingual obelisk, was put up at the point where Burgenland, Porabje and Prekmurje, in commemoration of the dates of signing the Treaty of Saint German (10th September 1919) and the Treaty of Trianon (4th June 1920).

Photographs 6, 7, 8. Tromejnik (Polish: Trójgranicznik, Hungarian: Hármashatárkö)



Austrian side

A Hármashatárkö osztrák oldala



Hungarian side

A Hármashatárkö magyar oldala



Slovenian side

A Hármashatárkö szlovén oldala.

Source: <http://szlovenia.fw.hu>, date: January 5th 2008, author: <http://szlovenia.fw.hu>, localisation: Felsőszolnok (<http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felsőszölnök>). His file can be distributed due to the licence Creative Commons (<http://hu.wikipedia.org/>).

<sup>77</sup> Zrinjski castle is situated in Čakovec. It belonged to one of the most famous Croat families, next to the Frankopan family. Helena Drińska, the daughter of the executed by Austrians Peter Zrinjski, was the wife of Francis I Rákóczi, after his death she married Imre Tökele, she was the mother of Francis II Rákóczi – a great commander of Hungarian uprisings against the Habsburg Monarchy.

<sup>78</sup> Međimurje was annexed by Croatia on 24th December 1918 (*o Međimurju: Povijesna kronologija*, <http://www.tzm.hr:24.prosinica.1918>, Hrvatske postroboje predvođene potpokovnikom Perkom ulaze u Čakovec, nakon što je mađarski major Györy potpisao predaju, Međimurje priključeno Hrvatskoj).

<sup>79</sup> I. Zelko, *Historična topografija Slovenije*, 1. Prekmurje od leta 1500, Murska Sobota 1982, Pomurska Založba.

It may be assumed that the Tromejnik was also to symbolise the point where different parts of Europe meet.

The area where Burgenland<sup>80</sup> and the Austrian part of Styria, Hungarian Porabje and Slovenian Prekmurje meet is complex and fascinating from the ethnic point of view. There are Croats, Slovenians, Hungarians and Austrians (the numerically dominant group in Burgenland) living next to each other. Prekmurje is separated from the remaining territory of Slovenia by the Mur.

According to the Hungarian census of 1910, there were 20 737 Hungarians (who constituted 23 % of all the region's population<sup>81</sup>) living in Prekmurje. This census also disclosed that of the 6965 residents of Murska Sobota, 1497 were Hungarians, 122 were Germans and 5196 were Slovenians.<sup>82</sup> In accordance with the rules adopted for the purposes of this census, the numerous Hungarian Jews residing in that area were classified simply as Hungarians.

The first census in Yugoslavia, conducted in 1921 revealed that Prekmurje had 92 124 residents, of whom 44 627 were men and 47 497 were women. Of these, 74 432 people declared Slovenian as their mother tongue, 14 413 spoke Hungarian, 2314 spoke German and 965 declared other languages as their first language. Lendava had 11 358 Hungarian residents, but only 3055 in Murska Sobota.<sup>83</sup>

According to religion there were: 66 602 Roman Catholics, 23 899 Protestants, 642 Jews and 52 other faiths.

80 Burgenland (Croat: Gradišće, Hungarian: Órvidék) is a strip of land extending along Austria's eastern border from Slovakia to Slovenia. Before World War I it belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary and was named by Austrians Westungarn (Western Hungary). On the basis of treaties between the victorious countries with Austria signed in Saint – Germain and with Hungary in Trianon, this territory was annexed by Austria.

81 K. Kocsis and E. Kocsis-Hodosi, *Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin*. Table 20. Change in the number and percentage of the Hungarians in Voivodina, Croatia and Slovenia (1880-1991), Sources: 1880, 1910: Hungarian census data (mother/native tongue).

82 D. Keréc, *Sobota ob koncu 19. stoletja Ali kako so nekoč živeli „pravi“ Sobočani*, M. Fujs, *Kako so Prekmurci v desetih mesecih preživeli devet zamenjav oblasti, pa vendar zaupali politiki*, B. Brumen, *Murska Sobota in Sobočani 1919-1941*, Murska Sobota 1997; A. T. rstenjak, *Slovenci na Ogrskem, narodopisna in književna črtica*, Maribor 2006, *Objava Arhivskih Virov*.

83 "Morszka krajina – Muravidék". *Vérsztveni, politicsni i kulturni tjednik*. 7 januar 1923, *Lejtnik II. 1923. Reditelsztvo i oprávnistvo v Márkisevci. Podgovornik, lasztnik i vödávník Kühar Stevan*. (In this magazine, articles were published in the Slovenian and Hungarian Prekmurje dialect; L. Göncz, *Madžarska narodna skupnost v Prekmurju od priključitve do danes in njene težave pri ohranjanju identitete*, in: *Zbornik soboškega muzeja*. Pokrajinski muzej Murska Sobota 2000; L. Göncz, *Magyarok a Muravidéken és a közösség nemzeti tudatának alakulása 1920 után*, in: *Ljudje ob Muri – Népek a Mura mentén (Tanulmánykötet)*, Murska Sobota – Zalaegerszeg 1996, pp. 120-121.

Table 1. Number of people in Prekmurje towns with the highest number of Hungarian residents classified according to mother tongue and faith.

Település	Anyanyelv (language)	Vallas (faith)						
	magyar. (Hungarian)	szlovén. (Slovenian)	német. (German)	egyéb (other)	róm. cath. (Roman Catholic)	evang. (Evangelical)	reformát	zsidó.
Csekefa	222	16	-	-	34	100	104	-
Domonkosfa	595	86	-	3	44	582	54	3
Hodos	393	76	-	2	70	300	94	7
Kapornak	235	11	-	6	52	150	50	-
Muraszombat	427	1.02.261	133	113	2.205	533	5	179
Kisfalu	101	6	-	3	3	94	13	-
Pártosfalva	298	117	13	7	127	308	-	-
Szomoroc	180	23	1	26	53	48	129	-
Szerdahely	197	5	-	7	11	70	126	2
Bánuta	132	-	-	-	132	-	-	-
Csente	715	230	-	-	905	39	-	-
Dobronak	1.362	112	4	14	1.466	14	-	12
Hosszúfalu	970	499	4	-	1.446	16	-	7
Völgyifalu	603	12	-	5	620	-	-	-
Alsólendva	1.533	840	67	89	2.136	117	-	259
Alsólakos	336	33	-	7	369	7	-	-
Göntérháza	414	3	1	1	417	2		-
Gyertyános	568	26	9	-	603	-	-	-
Felsőlakos	614	30	-	9	635	12	6	-
Josec (akkor SHS)	153	-	-	-	153	-	-	-
Kamahaza	151	9	8	-	157	3	-	
Kapca	620	107	1	9	733	4	-	7
Kot	183	54	-	-	237	-	-	-
Hidveg	247	-	1	-	248	-	-	-
Szentlászló	439	22	-	-	92	19	-	344
Petesháza	858	50	1	24	907	26	-	-
Pince	446	1	-	8	454	-	-	1
Radamos	593	11	-	1	603	2	-	-
Zsitkóc	242	39	-	15	273	23	-	-

Source: L. Göncz, *A muravidéki magyarság 1918-1941, Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet (MNMI) Lendava, Introduction* (Előszó: Göncz László monográfiájához), prof. L. Szarka, Budán, 2001 májusában.

Table 2. Number of Catholics according to mother tongue in Dobronak parish.

Település	szlov. anyany.	szerbhorvát anyany.	magyar anyany.	Egyéb
Dobronak	644	-	694	19
Göntérháza	250	-	143	-
Kámaháza	90	-	54	-
Kobilje (Kebele)	968	27	8	-
Radamos	411	-	154	-
Strehovci	395	-	-	-
Szentlászló	51	-	359	5
Zsitkóc	203	-	102	3
Összesen	3.012	27	1.514	27

Source: S. Varga, E. Pivar, *Dobronak, Göntérháza, Kót helytörténete (Kiadta a lendvai és muraszombati magyar nemzetiségi érdekközösség)*, Lendva, 1979, p. 104.

Table 3. Number of Catholics according to mother tongue in Alsólendva parish.

Település	szlov. anyany.	szerbhorvát anyany.	magyar anyany.	egyéb
Alsólendva	1.320	163	878	78
Bánuta	97	-	37	-
Csente	372	5	525	-
Hosszúfalu	957	1	42	13
Völgyifalu	135	8	15	-
Gyertyános	328	5	370	-
Hotiza (szlovén falu)	894	-	3	-
Kapca	685	-	41	-
Kót	177	-	29	-
Alsó - és Felsőlakos (együtt)	337	14	643	3
Hidvég	487	-	38	6
Petesháza	627	140	367	2
Pince	237	90	214	11
Összesen:	6.653	426	3.982	113

Source: L. Göncz, *A muravidéki magyarság 1918-1941, Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet (MNMI) Lendva, Introduction* (Előszó: Göncz László monográfiájához), prof. L. Szarka, Budán, 2001 májusában.

Table 4. Changes in number and percentage of Hungarians in Voivodina, Croatia and Slovenia (1880-1991).

Year	VOJVODINA		CROATIA		SLOVENIA		Hungarians in Transmura Region		
	Hungarians		Hungarians total		Hungarians in Baranya	Hungarians total			
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	
1880	265,29	22.6	49,560	1.9	14,740	32.9	..	17,7	
1910	425,672	28.1	119,874	3.5	20,313	40.0	..	23,0	
1921	363,450	23.8	76,346	2.3	16,638	33.8	14,489	17,7	
1931	376,176	23.2	66,040	1.7	15,717	30.2	..	16,6	
1941	465,920	28.5	64,431	..	18,585	36.4	..	20,1	
1948	428,554	26.1	51,399	1.4	16,945	31.7	10,579	10,8	
1953	435,179	25.6	47,711	1.2	16,012	31.5	11,019	11,3	
1961	442,560	23.8	42,347	1.0	15,303	27.3	10,498	11,0	
1971	423,866	21.7	35,488	0.8	13,473	23.9	9,785	10,0	
1981	385,356	18.9	25,439	0.5	9,920	18.6	9,496	9,5	
1991	339,491	16.9	22,355	0.5	8,956	16.5	8,499	8,5	

Source: *Karoly Kocsis and Eszter Kotsi s- Hodosi: Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin.*

## Conclusion

The reflections and conclusions in this article represent an attempt to combine two very interesting topics concerning the history of Central Europe in the twentieth century: the issue of Hungarian minorities after the Treaty of Trianon, and the reconstitution of a small yet strategically important Slavic country – Slovenia. In analysing the history of Hungary, one should acknowledge the live issues connected with what was to become the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination, which still rankle in the present day Hungary. These issues deserve further study. This article focused on the history of Prekmurje, its separation from Hungary and unification with Slovenia but the acquired knowledge has more general application. Having studied the Hungarian national strategy regarding other nations, it can be treated as a stabilising factor in a Central Europe consumed by internecine strife. When Hungary entered the territories of countries at war with each other, they brought peace that had not been known there for decades. They arrived from the east, like the Slavs and the majority of the Germanic tribes. All nations were in conflict with each other as they sought permanent homelands for themselves. A bishop in Salzburg wrote about the damage done by Hungarian pagans but he

did not mention the crime committed in Bavaria – the assassination of one of the Hungarian commanders invited for talks – which provoked Hungarian retribution.

An examination of the documents as reflected in this article leads to some positive conclusions concerning the Slovenian residents of Prekmurje.

It also seems that while determining the Slovenian-Hungarian borders, a compromise was reached though, as with most compromise solutions, neither party was fully satisfied and felt it had cause for grievance and criticism.