

BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

**COMMUNISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SLOVAK PUBLIC
SPACE**

BACHELOR THESIS

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**COMMUNISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SLOVAK PUBLIC
SPACE: HOW THE REGIME INFLUENCED SLOVAK
BEHAVIOR AND PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS
COMMUNIST MONUMENTS**

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Nicola Orlovská

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this bachelor's thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in References.

In Bratislava, 15 February, 2023

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Signature: _____

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ABSTRACT

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This work is concerned with making connections between communism and its influence on people's behaviors which result in varying attitudes on changing public space. The research focuses on Slovak behavioral patterns emerging from the communist regime that remain present in Slovaks today, and have an influence on people's ranging reactions about removing or maintaining communist monuments in public space. The communist regime directly affected people's identity. Specific behavioral patterns such as not taking responsibility for certain actions, collaborating with representatives of the regime, resisting, not taking action, and simply not breaking from the past all fall under a typology classification system which categorizes people into victims, perpetrators, resisters, beneficiaries, and bystanders. This work aims to investigate how these classifications remain strongly embedded within Slovak identity and in turn how they influence public space, a tool of remembrance and representation of the communist past. The research took form of open interviews and narrative analysis retrieved from news articles written during and after the fall of the regime. The possible implications and conclusions of this work will show that communism remains present in people's perception of their identity, and in their memory of the past, thus suggesting the country's stagnant state of political and social affairs reflected in its dealings with public space. Knowing this, further implications can be made about people's declining interest in democracy and continuous rise of far-right authoritarian party preferences given that the use of public space and historical narrative are strong political tools used heavily by such political parties.

Názov bakalárskej práce: Komunizmus a jeho dopad na Slovenský verejný priestor:
Ako režim pôsobil na správanie Slovákov a ich prístup ku komunistickým pamiatkam
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ABSTRAKT

Kľúčové slová: komunizmus, kolektívna pamäť, verejný priestor, pamätník, identita, Slovensko

Táto práca sa zaoberá vytváraním súvislostí medzi komunizmom a jeho vplyvom na správanie ľudí, čo má za následok rôzne postoje k zmene verejného priestoru. Výskum sa zameriava na slovenské vzorce správania spôsobené komunistickým režimom, ktoré sa u Slovákov zachovali dodnes, majú vplyv na reakcie ľudí na odstraňovanie alebo udržiavanie komunistických pomníkov vo verejnom priestore. Komunistický režim priamo ovplyvnil identitu ľudí, špecifické vzorce správania, ako je nepreberanie zodpovednosti za určité činy, spolupráca s predstaviteľmi režimu, odpor, ľahostajnosť a neschopnosť odtrhnúť sa od minulosti sú všetko črty patriace do typológie, ktorá kategorizuje ľudí na obeť, páchatel'ov, odporcov, príjemcov a tých čo sa prizeraajú. Táto práca si kladie za cieľ zistiť, ako tieto klasifikácie zostávajú pevne zakorenené v slovenskej identite a ako následne ovplyvňujú verejný priestor, nástroj pripomínania a reprezentácie komunistickej minulosti. Výskum bude prebiehať formou voľných rozhovorov a naratívnej analýzy získanej zo spravodajských článkov napísaných počas a po páde režimu. Možné implikácie a závery tejto práce ukážu, že komunizmus zostáva prítomný v identite ľudí, čo naznačuje stagnujúci stav politických a sociálnych záležitostí krajiny, ktorý sa odráža v jej narábaní s verejným priestorom. S týmto vedomím možno vyvodit' ďalšie dôsledky o klesajúcom záujme ľudí o demokraciu a neustálom náraste preferencií krajne pravicových autoritárskych strán vzhľadom na to, že využívanie verejného priestoru a historické naratívy sú silné politické nástroje, ktoré takéto politické strany vo veľkej miere využívajú

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INTRODUCTION

People walk around monuments on a daily basis but sometimes they do not even notice them. The public does not always recognize memorials as symbols of a shared memory or as something that ultimately shaped their past and has an influence on their identity even in the present. These reminders of the past also referred to as narratives, are often located on popular busy streets, in town squares, simply in spaces where they should be noticed. Nevertheless, people do not generally pay them much attention until these memorials are a subject of public discussion. Whether it is a question of removing, changing their location, or vandalizing them, people tend to become more aware of their presence and perhaps even the meaning behind them.

One of the prominent conceptual artists in Slovakia, Peter Kalmus received a two-month suspended sentence together with artist Ľuboš Lorenz for vandalizing a memorial of Vasil' Biľak—a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (TASR, 2020). The interesting aspect of this case is that the Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Immorality and Illegality of the Communist System 2020, Art.125 s.7 (SVK) stipulates that: "It is prohibited to place texts, images, and symbols glorifying, promoting or defending a regime based on communist ideology or its representatives on monuments, memorials and plaques" (Article 125, s. 7, 2020). This directly argues that communist symbolization should be prohibited in public spaces, but reality shows that Slovakia does not abide by this law. Instead, some members of the public feel a stronger inclination towards prosecuting individuals like Peter Kalmus for vandalizing these symbolizations. Such contradictory behavior begs the question of why constitutional law is overpowered by public sentiment. The relationship Slovak people have with communism and how the regime formed Slovak identity is curious, especially in relation to public space.

It is important to investigate the psychological aspects of Slovak identity—the sense of belonging, dignity, and recognition if we wish to understand this nation's stance towards its past and, consequently, the relation it has to the present state of public space. It seems that communism transpired very differently in each former Soviet Bloc state. Even in Czechoslovakia, the discrepancies in experiencing normalization between the Czechs and Slovaks are significant. There was a stronger reaction of dissatisfaction and rebellion

from the Czechs than from the Slovaks after 1968. Feelings in Slovakia were a mixture of satisfaction, ambivalence, fear, carelessness, but also dissatisfaction. The goal is to understand these mixtures of feelings to discover what should be done in unique cases where the past is very dominant in the present and whether the approach to moving on does require a change of public space.

Perhaps it might even help better clarify who should be responsible for these decisions, as the literature already often shows that such responsibility is often abused by people of power and importance. Therefore, a way to get to this goal is to answer the big question: How did communism shape people's attitudes towards communist monuments in Slovakia? The brief answer which will be further discussed throughout the thesis is: Slovakia utilizes public spaces primarily to remember the time of communism. Its volatile role created a strong hold over people's behavior and stances towards themselves and the outside world. In some ways, it is difficult for that hold to break because the regime is very much present in society today and even remembered with rosy retrospection. People have not come to terms with what happened and how they behaved during the time between 1968 and 1989. This is observable even today precisely through the public space, which rarely hits the spotlight in public discussions. There is no proper drive or representative actors who show interest in changing the narrative and overcoming the past, thus, keeping the memory of the regime very much alive and preventing Slovakia from progressing forward in matters of social and political importance.

Dealing with the past, understanding the implications it has on people's behavior in the present and what it does with society's outlook on the future is related to how people perceive public space and further state development. Some countries that have endured challenging past events such as Apartheid, genocide, or oppressive regimes tend to embark upon an extremely complex process of overcoming the past, recognizing individuals responsible for the atrocities and injustices, and moving on to ensure that such events never occur again. The events that transpired in Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989 were a whole new process of oppression, collaboration and denunciation. This thesis will focus only on the time period between 1968 and 1989.

Although communism took place in all countries of the former Soviet Union, the course was slightly different in each state. Slovakia was a particularly interesting case, and even though, back then it was still part of Czechoslovakia, the two countries had disparate approaches to overcoming the regime.

The regime caused people to behave a certain way and that way can be places on a spectrum of typologies. These typologies are categorized as perpetrators, victims, bystanders, resisters and beneficiaries (Swartz, 2016). Due to the slow or almost stagnating process of coming to terms with the past, these typologies are part of Slovaks even today. Studying this relationship will allow for an in-depth understanding of why people express either interest or ambivalence towards the changing public space, and why they often come to varying conclusions about what to do with communist monuments. It is paramount to explore the relationship between people's perception of the past and the use of public space because both concepts are closely tied to society's political affiliations and their political actions. Knowing how people perceive the past provides a better understanding of national political identity and the shifting trends in preferences for political leaders and parties. Furthermore, knowing about the society's relationship to public space helps creating a clear framework of how public space is used and abused.

THESIS STATEMENT

The remnants of communist ideology is everpresent in Slovak identity, in its historical narrative and its public space. Any nation that has experienced an oppressive regime goes through a specific social, political and identity development which in this work is based on a classification system. The typologies or social roles that emerge from the system to a large extent influence the normative narrative of a new regime. In Slovakia, the old regime left behind a population of mostly beneficiaries and bystanders, which explains the level of ambivalence towards the country's past and the symbols that emerged during that time. People were less interested in delving into their collective memory of the past regime thus leaving the public space littered with the memory of the past.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis focuses on drawing a connection between the former communist regime in Slovakia and what effects it consequently had on the attitudes of Slovak citizens towards communist monuments displayed in public space. The work draws from literature on the communist regime from a historical point of view as well as from personal interviews with experts and ordinary people who have experienced the regime first hand. Furthermore, the section regarding the attitudes of Slovak citizens is underpinned with theories on identity developed by Brubaker, Cooper, Fukuyama and further explored as a classification system based on the three typologies of people who have experienced genocide which was originally put forth by Raul Hillberg.

Later the model was adapted by other scholars including Sharlene Swartz who added two more typologies which together with the original model are utilized in this thesis as a tool of defining Slovak people's identity traits during, and after communism. These typologies which include perpetrators, beneficiaries, victims, bystanders and resisters (analyzed in depth in chapter 3.1) apply to the Slovak context quite well because the regime shaped people's behaviors that fall under this classification. Although mapping societal behaviors and approaches towards public space is complex and hard to operationalize, this specific classification of people who lived through communism is a helpful tool. Naturally nobody falls only in one category but it helps the public understand what the trends of behaviors within society were and how they connect to attitudes towards public space.

In connection to the model, the thesis consequently focuses on analyzing how these behavioral patterns shaped attitudes towards communist monuments. Because of a lack of resources, the analysis on public space is limited to the capital city of Bratislava and to one monument in particular located in Dúbravka. During the investigation of public attitudes towards public space, the focus was a field observation during which passers-by were asked a series of questions about the monument in question, the monument of Gustáv Husák. This was done in order to develop a general idea of how present the narrative actually is. A large portion of the thesis has a narrative focus because I am talking about monuments which are a narrative tool that communicate history. I only asked a handful of people but it was still enough to recognize a pattern in their answers.

The main trend in attitudes seems to be ambivalence. There have been studies conducted in Slovakia specifically connected to the level of ambivalence was measured by how important or unimportant the events tied to the fall of communism were on Likert scale. I use some of the results from these studies as a reference point for my own research and for personal understanding as to how communism influenced Slovak identity.

The validity of this work stems from the conceptualization of key phenomena including forgetting, collective memory, and identity. Furthermore, the work holds validity given the consulting with experts in the field who were interviewed for a more in depth understanding. I chose to conduct interviews with experts in order to get a better idea of what the regime really represented for the ordinary people and for a more accurate portrayal of the situation in Slovakia, given that the educational system did not provide an in-depth understanding of the former regime. Additionally, the interviews provide various spheres of life and different perspectives on public and private life in Slovakia. The interviewees have a better perspective because they have experienced communism first-hand and have fought to dismantle its oppressive nature. They have also co-written and published numerous research papers and works related to this particular topic, so their insight could be extremely informative. The interviews were semi-structured and recorded in order to have access to transcripts.

The limitations of this work are numerous. The sample of people questioned for gaining a better understanding about public attitudes towards public space was not representative because it was too small. However, it was completely random allowing for a more varied assortment of people. The focus was only on the capital city which is not an accurate depiction of overall attitudes in the state. The capital is an outlier compared to the other more conservative cities. It would have been quite useful to do an experiment in which people in the country would have been informed about a monument being removed and then asked to respond to the event. That way it would be possible to analyze how people truly feel about changing public space. Therefore, it would be conducive to future research to keep an experiment of this kind in mind.

CHAPTER 1: The Influence of Communism on the Perception of History and Memory

1.0 What is Communism

Any sort of regime where the ruling party or leader reference the need for political repression, suppression of press and speech, and other rules according to which society must abide by in order to avoid conflict with state authorities and the police is classified as an authoritative regime. Leaders of oppressive regimes are no strangers to arbitrary detention, disappearances, executions, manipulation and a lack or rule of law. These themes were all present in the communist regime which remained intact for the following forty-one years in the Soviet Union and the former Soviet Bloc. Precisely because of this extended control, the satellite states adopted policies enforced in the USSR. Thus, for the purpose of this work, the term communism is defined from a Soviet perspective and from the thoughts and ideology of the former ruler of the USSR, Joseph Stalin. Unlike Marxism, Stalinism adopted policies of a police state. Repressing the workers in order to pursue his own goals, Stalin implemented policies of collectivization, centralization of the economy, rapid industrialization, censorship, and other policies that today fall under the definition of a totalitarian government (Britannica, n.d.). These policies proved harsh on populations throughout the Soviet Bloc and carry a legacy until this day because the memory of this totalitarian regime is deeply embedded in people, in the history of the region, and displayed in public spaces. Not to mention, a nation that has not reckoned with its past prior to communism cannot be expected to overcome the legacy that this regime left behind. This is precisely the case in Slovakia.

1.1 Legacy of the Czechoslovak Republic

What the historical narratives predominantly focus on is Slovakia's position in the region and its relations with other nations which between the 11th and 19th centuries all belonged to larger empires. However, the interpretations about the nation are a matter of contemporary times. Before the second half of the 19th century, Slovakia as a concept did not exist and neither did the people. There was no idea of ethnicity or nationness and the idea of agency, representation, and language was still in the very early stages of development. When Hungary had a monopoly over Central Europe, Slovakia began its

long battle for recognition and autonomy (Britannica, n.d.). Although the people living in this region made an effort to differentiate from other groups, it did not extend to an ethnic level because the kingdoms that made up the Central European regions functioned as a large entity. Naturally, groups differentiated in language and religious beliefs but there were scarcely hints of ethnic division. The idea of a Slavic nation was linked to Great Moravia. However there was still a lack of representation on the level of aristocracy and individual classes thus, making it more challenging to build a sense of a nation and its people (Britannica, n.d.).

Furthermore, the historical context was sporadic and left a lot of what happened unsaid especially from the time when Slovakia was under the Habsburg Empire. Most of the events that transpired became connected to the symbol of Jánošík or the myths about Cyril and Methodius. During the reign of the Habsburg monarchy, Slovakia endured forced Magyarization, during which the Slovak language, together with any other form of national expression, like Slovak schooling, was prohibited (Emmert, 2018). After the fall of the Habsburg Empire, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic merged into one nation (Kováč, 1998). Czechoslovakia was a strong concept that enriched Slovak culture, its political standing, and its recognition on a global scale. The Czechs and Slovaks had a good foundation for a functional state which quickly disintegrated once Adolf Hitler came to power and forced thousands of Czechs and Slovaks out of their territory for the purpose of creating more land for the Germans (Emmert, 2018). During the Second World War, Hitler gave Jozef Tiso, the president of Slovakia during the interwar period, an ultimatum that would decide the fate of the nation (Kováč, 1998). Tiso chose to create a Slovak Republic, which, however, would be subdued by Hitler's Germany completely. Slovakia thus became a fascist state which supported the mass deportation of Slovak Jews and Roma people. The theme of being controlled by other powers and lacking agency was further reinforced by this turn of events and, of course, after The Second World War, Slovakia could not pursue a different reality because the USSR emerged as a superpower and expanded its sphere of influence. Not only is there a sense of injustice circulating among the people in Slovakia, whether those are past or present generations, there is also the problem of the nation never gaining enough agency. Lacking the sense of responsibility for itself as a nation, its social and political standing has made Slovaks less

willing to adopt historical realities. Not to make it sound dramatic, but Slovakia has had a difficult time reckoning with its past and taking responsibility for what happened on its territory, thus creating a different perception of the region's history and memory.

1.2 The Role of Communism Within Slovak Memory

The time of communism is remembered quite differently in Slovakia than it is in other satellite states especially because in Slovakia, communism marked the time of rapid economic, industrial, and social development. The “modernization processes in Slovakia accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century, characterized by a rapid drain of people out of the agricultural sector and rapid industrialization” (Marušiak, n.d.). People suddenly felt a sense of agency because they had jobs and were more equal in their community. The state ensured that the people would be taken care of, and people felt a certain stability despite not having personal freedom. It almost seems like the sense of security overpowered the need for freedom. Naturally, there was still heavy influence coming from the Czech Republic as many people traveled to Slovakia for work. Thus, Slovakia as a nation was still struggling to maintain its own idea of identity. Nevertheless, the way communism was being embedded in the minds of the Slovak people was more positive compared to the rest of the Eastern Bloc because the people were far more ambivalent towards the events happening under their noses.

The difference between Slovakia and the Czech Republic were possibly the most prominent since “the darkest years for the Czechs (1938-45 and post-1968) were the two occasions during which the Slovaks underwent periods of rapid nation-building and experienced moments of national optimism” (Lukes, n.d.). Although the two nations were considered one, their experiences made their relationship quite fragile in the upcoming years as the Soviet Union fell apart.

During the time of normalization, the communist regimes in the Soviet satellite states all followed the same pattern of political rule based on absolute power of the communist party and the secret police (Šimečka, 2017). They even utilized the same ideological language which included terms such as the proletarian dictatorship, democratic centralism, social realism and real socialism. Nevertheless, these regimes differed from

each other because individual states had their own histories and behavioral characteristics based on the past experiences. Given that Slovakia endured decades of being the underdog and staying in line with what bigger states and more powerful authorities said, the experience of communism bared a very similar trajectory despite the country being part of Czechoslovakia. It all comes back to the historical context which shows that Slovakia was a young and small agrarian state. Firstly, Slovaks obeyed the instructions of the communists because unlike the Czechs, they were thankful for communism bringing significant modernization to the country. Secondly, the Slovak communists knew that the only way they could protect the small state was to protect the small elite which in turn had to promise the communist regime obedience (Šimečka, 2017).

This was not so difficult for the Slovak population because their obedience granted them many benefits, of which the most important was safety. Obedience granted the people access to employment, their children were guaranteed a good education, and those who represented the regime were granted a high status in society. One of the experts interviewed for this thesis gave a good example of how the system worked when she said:

The benefit was that people could carry on doing their jobs. My mother and aunt were translators, who translated amazing Russian literature into Slovak. My mother didn't hand in her legitimization which took form in a Communist Party ID; she did what most of the others did. The committee did a background check, and my mother could continue to translate quality literature. My aunt, on the other hand, was banned from translating when she refused to comply to the rules of the Communists and when they imprisoned her husband. And then the only thing she could do was translate under my mother's name and the names of other translators. (Zora Bútorová, personal interview, 2022)

It seems that those who wanted to survive had to perceive the regime as black and white. If they wanted to be well off, do what they love, and remain safe, they conformed with the communist dictate. Naturally, the decision to go along with the regime was difficult, but not impossible to respect as it secured people's lives. Even today, many people remember the regime with rosy retrospection. They remember the past more positively

than the present because they think they were happier then and this brings them together. It is a collective memory for them, the time they knew they would be taken care of. Naturally, this is a strong force for a state where the sense of belonging or identity was not pertinent to its existence as a state. Moreover, that strong sense of nostalgia is not as present anymore since the world is far more polarized, divided and diversified. Many people, especially from the lower-class backgrounds feel dissatisfaction and romanticize the past because they also feel closely tied to their . Communism had a strong influence over people then and it still has an influence over how people remember their past today.

CHAPTER 2: Communism's Influence on Social Behavior and Identity

2.1 Identity

The current state of research related to identity formation as a sub-category of memory formation as well as its connection to the use of public space focuses on how past events are communicated throughout history and formed into common narratives which are then reflected in objects such as monuments, symbols, and literature (Assman, 1995). Most of the literature focused on collective memory shows that identity is emphasized by the importance of shared memories and unified images of the past. For the sake of this thesis, the focus is primarily on the relationship between identity and memory formation and the subsequent influence they have on each other. The concept of identity bears the following definition: it is the idea that a group of people share a unified and common image or perception of their past (Assman, 1995).

By sharing certain knowledge through cultural memory, people create unity and identify with each other while also being able to differentiate from those who do not share the same experiences (Assman, 1995). This allows them to create close ties and develop a shared history, and subsequently a common identity. However, the important thing that the literature shows is that constructing or reconstructing memory can only occur if it is related to knowledge of “an actual and contemporary situation” (Assman, 1995). What people go through in actual time can be related or compared to past events that resemble the present. The research conducted up to this point makes many claims about how collective memory is communicated through public space. Furthermore, the prominent theme within the literature also shows that public space can be misused and abused by politicians for their own agenda and for the purpose of changing historical and social narrative in their favor. However, all of these perceptions of individual narratives, past events and memories all depend on the people who live and remember them, as they are the ones for whom the public space was intended, thus the dependence stems from the question of national identity.

2.1 Perception of the Past as Extension of Identity

The perception of the past and the responsibility people hold for its reality seems to relate very closely to people's identity and culture. For some, the past is a concept that should be deviated from, as it serves to teach people lessons and learn from them in order to avoid mistakes in the future. For others, the past serves as a memory fondly kept and cherished. Of course, these two options also depend on what the past memory is. In some cases, the memory is a tragic event and people simply wish to move on from it. In other cases, the memory might bring back the idea of glory days or a time when people felt they had what they needed thus, they desire to relive it. Nevertheless, the amount and detail people remember directly relates to the nature of the event. As many psychoanalysts and psychotherapists have shown in the past, traumatic events often lead individuals to forgetting the event or at least forcefully keeping it away from resurfacing in their minds (Kolk, 2015). Because of this phenomenon, it is difficult to plot the exact timelines and series of events of trauma which can be anything from personal loss, to abusive relationships or manipulation.

However here the question lies more in the idea of the collective. Collective trauma is "the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society. It suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it" (Hirschberger, 2018). This trauma then transforms into a collective memory reported as a collective narrative. It is quite important for a democratic nation to create this narrative of trauma, acknowledge its presence in that particular society and understand how it influences its people in order to achieve stronger social cohesion and a more powerful societal bond (Hirschberger, 2018). In Slovakia this narrative of collective trauma did not come to fruition ultimately causing problems in the development of democratic ideals and strong social cohesion.

2.2 Communism's Influence on Identity Development

There is a common belief among the countries of the West that communist regimes were a barrier preventing states from developing into liberal democracies. However, the former Eastern bloc was not as convinced about the end of communism or the post-communist

ideology for that matter. “The development of sites, institutions and processes devoted to remembering, commemorating and working through the Communist past, such as Institutes of National Memory, History Commissions, lustration bureaus, museums and commemorative memorials, were regarded by some elites as fundamental to the democratic re-education of post-communist societies” (Mark, 2010, p. xii). Central-Eastern European countries which have overcome the communist regime and celebrated its downfall in the years 1989-1991 cannot all say they have come to terms with the collapse. The fascinating phenomenon behind this is precisely the idea that communism prevents most countries to move on to liberal democracy, thus, showing that Central and Eastern European countries that have not yet overcome communist nostalgia and sentimentality are de facto not legitimate liberal democracies. This also indicates a lot about the countries’ identities.

Slovakia seems to be somewhere in the middle but leaning towards a concept of hyperdemocracy, “a phenomenon caused both by the cultural backlash against globalization, as well as the local historical legacy of *uncare* and exclusivism that forms part of Central European national identities” (Kusá, 2021). Slovakia is quite a diverse country in its differentiation of political and social groups thus; this may be another valid reason for the people’s inability to define their identity while also leaning more towards bonding over a shared past. There is a certain cognitive dissonance because those people who felt they had a great life during the regime were victims of totalitarianism. Nevertheless, they claimed that times were easier and more stable. People knew what to expect and had a lot more security in their job, housing, and support from the state. As sociologist Zora Bútorová claims, people were taken care of as the state owned everything. Thus, nobody felt they had to compete with their friends or neighbors. Essentially, people felt more equal to each other (Bútorová, 2019).

Additionally, the fact that the regime allowed for some people to rise through the ranks and gain higher status led them to gain a certain level of dignity. As Francis Fukuyama emphasizes in his work on identity, the former is very closely tied to the idea of dignity where the role of the state is to make its people feel recognized and appreciated.

In the first place, identity so understood grows out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth or dignity. Individuals throughout human history have found themselves at odds with their societies. But only in modern times has the view taken hold that the authentic inner self is intrinsically valuable, and the outer society is systematically wrong and unfair in its valuation of the former. It is not the inner self that has to be made to conform to society's rules, but society itself that needs to change. (Fukuyama, 2018)

Furthermore, Fukuyama stipulates that "because human beings naturally crave recognition, the modern sense of identity evolves quickly into identity politics, in which individuals demand public recognition of their worth" (Fukuyama, 2018, p.18). Not only is recognition a key aspect, but so is collective or national dignity. On one side it is tied to the idea of human rights while on the other it connects to the concept of nationalism. In Slovakia, nationalism ties more closely in with collective dignity while the idea of human rights came as an external factor which the nation did not fight for as an entity, but more-so adopted from other models.

In addition to dignity, the communist regime emphasized identity through the concept of "groups" or collective action (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). This is understood as "commonality, connectedness and groupness" of one community in which people share similar characteristics and partake in the same behavior or actions (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Slovakia during the communist regime fits quite well into this definition as the majority of the population partook in the same behavior and shared similar attributes related to their attitude towards the regime, their education and employment. However, another characteristic that bonded them was in fact the experience of the regime itself.

2.4 Identity Development Based on Typology Classification

Any group that endures a totalitarian regime is bound to develop their identity based on said experience, which in this case could be interpreted as traumatic. Raul Hilberg first proposed in 1992 three typologies for classifying participants and observers of genocide. There were the perpetrators, the victims, and the bystanders (Hilberg, 1992). However,

the typology was met with some criticism mainly due to its vagueness and lack of precise classification as people's behaviors and participatory behaviors during genocide varied, so they likely belonged under more than one of the classifications. That is why two other classifications were added—helpers and beneficiaries. Later Sharlene Swartz proposed another two categories to broaden the classification. According to her typology, there are perpetrators, victims, bystanders, resisters, and beneficiaries. This classification is based on the South African context as Swartz did her research with survivors of Apartheid but it's a concept of social roles that can be adopted by anybody, even those who did not experience an oppressive regime firsthand. In those cases, the legacy of the regime carries on through family heritage and spoken experiences.

The first category, the perpetrators are those who directly committed an “illegal, criminal, violent, or evil act” (Swartz, 2016, p.152). In the context of Slovakia, these would be individuals who directly participated in the enforcing of communist policies, agendas, and who gave orders to authorities that surveilled citizens. These would be mainly the members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party between 1948 and 1989. Then there were the indirect perpetrators, which Swartz refers to as the implementers of injustice. These were the people taking orders from direct perpetrators to carry out illegal, criminal and violent actions, but also individuals who chose to collaborate with the police, and inform on their fellow citizens. Including soldiers, the police and members of the secret police, Štátna Bezpečnosť, this group would also include ordinary citizens who did not want to fall to the regime, so they became the regime.

The victim category is complicated in the sense that the word itself carries a heavy and negative connotation. Nobody likes to be called a victim, so, in some cases “the term survivor is preferred to the term victim, in order to remove this [blame the victim] association” (Swartz, p. 153). These group members are further categorized as leaders, resisters, survivors, and collaborators who went along with the actions of the communist perpetrators. This is why it is important to keep in mind that this typology is a range and the categories overlap. The most accurate definition for this group seems to be the dishonored, because these are people who were treated unjustly, their dignity was violated, and they did not receive respect or equal treatment from the regime (Swartz, p.

154). Understanding these classifications is paramount for people who are trying to come to terms with a traumatic past and who want to understand their familial and cultural heritage. It is not just an academic exercise but in fact a very effective tool used to work with memory and identity formation.

In Slovakia, those who would be referred to as the dishonored were people who were fired from their employment, their children were thrown out of schools and their reputation in society suffered because they were Christians or non-communist sympathizers. They allowed the regime to rule them and did not fight back. “This dishonor extends across generations as children inherit the physical impoverishment of their parents, missed opportunities due to poor quality education, and low levels of social and cultural capital” (p. 154). The interesting aspect of this category is that most of these people could also be considered as harmed or damaged but the same goes for the perpetrators in cases where their involvement was forced.

Those labeled as bystanders according to Hilberg are the people who often feel too powerless or insignificant to say something when they witnessed a crime or violent act being committed thus, they say nothing instead. They are silent or avoid the conflict at all. Swartz refers to these people as ostriches because it is as if they are burying their heads in the sand “to avoid what is going on around them” (p. 154).

Unlike the victims, the resisters are those who implicated an active participation in going against the regime. They made the effort to show that they are more than the regime and that they want to see change. In Czechoslovakia, these would be the dissidents, vocal critics of the regime and those who followed them, like students who organized protests explicitly disagreed with how they were taught in schools. These people became the faces of the 1989 Velvet Revolution, those who took part in the protests of 1969 after the Prague Spring, and the Candle Demonstration in Bratislava in 1988. These were people who wanted to show that communism was actively going against human rights and democratic values.

Lastly, there are the beneficiaries who often arise late during the time of struggle or after an oppressive regime or genocide has occurred. These are the people who received undeserved wealth in the form of high status, property, good education and strategic employment. They also receive “unearned privilege and a baseless sense of superiority” (p. 156). Beneficiaries during communism did not have to lift a finger to get where they or their children are today, because they literally benefited from doing nothing. They did not get imprisoned, they did not perpetrate crimes, and most importantly, they remained “ignorant or did not care to know from where your property, wealth, job and education came” (p. 156). In many cases, the beneficiaries are more present today than active resisters, victims or perpetrators because they tend to be the children of the other categories already mentioned. They may enjoy the riches that the previous generations were able to accumulate by being part of the regime and gaining more for themselves. These people may have nice apartments and other property that they otherwise would not be able to afford today. They may have also received a high level of education which in turn allowed them to reach high ranking positions in their employment.

CHAPTER 3: Transferring Identity onto Future Generations

3.1 Transferring Formed Identities onto Future Generations

At the breaking point or generational divide, it becomes difficult to define the correct means of dealing with the past. As James Booth (1999) states in his article, “sameness of the country across time is grounded in its institutional and constitutional-normative continuity. Regime forms that break with that continuity also thereby cease to be "ours." They are not part of what "we" were and so are not the objects of public remembrance, of our collective memory of ourselves as we were... Most fundamentally, because we are not one with the perpetrators, because we do not share with them a political identity, we are not accountable for their injustices” (p. 250). Thus, when scholars speak about collective identity, we have to keep in mind that even the authoritarian regimes which had control are part of a state’s continuous political identity, so the memory of their actions cannot simply be thrown onto them but remembered as a part of a state’s past and its identity.

Naturally, states move on from one political regime to another, and such political regime also carry their own political identity. However, this political identity spans over other dimensions including one that is territorial, ethnic, and one that is constitutional. While all three have an influence over the level or responsibility a new regime has for the past, in the case of Slovakia, the focus can be shifted more towards the constitutional dimension. The Law of the National Council of the Slovak Republic stipulates under article 125, section 7 that any symbol or representation of communism which celebrates or further propagates the regime and is displayed in public spaces is illegal:

"It is prohibited to place texts, images and symbols glorifying, promoting or defending a regime based on communist ideology or its representatives on monuments, memorials and plaques" (Article 125, s. 7, 2020).

In addition, the 2005 Criminal Code penalizes the support of parties and movements aimed at supporting fundamental rights and freedoms (Blaščák, 2017). The legislature in Slovakia suggests that the current regime has taken responsibility for actions which transpired during the past. Some would argue that staying in the same “territorial and

ethnic range indicates that a political identity is still the same even when a new regime ensues, thus making that regime responsible for the past that has occurred in the region” (Booth, 1999). However, others would argue that once a regime adopts a “new constitutional framework and the people who previously adopted one political identity now have a new political framework are not responsible for the past” (Booth, 1999).

Here is where Slovakia becomes a unique case, because it seems to follow both premises. On the one hand, the legislative framework indicates that the state feels responsible for the past deeds of the communist regime. However, on the other hand, it seems that people who still identify with the past regime disregard past events, forget the crimes that have been committed, and go as far as wishing for the regime’s return. Perhaps the ideal situation would be one where the political community a country is centered in is treated as a continuous phenomenon which goes through various stages, but is still the “subject of attribution, responsible for the past, which belongs to it, and accountable for a future that is also its” (Booth, 1999, p. 249). For Slovakia the questions remains whether the feeling of responsibility for the past will be introduced to the people and in the end, how it will be reflected in the use of public space.

For that to happen, it is important to understand that people behave and say certain things depending on what group of people they are surrounded by (i.e., superiors, equals, subordinates). Therefore, it is crucial to understand certain hidden and public transcripts that decode and analyze the reason behind public defiance and resistance to domination. It is important to mention that even though the communist regime was authoritarian in nature and often threatened people with force or resorting to force, the representatives of the regime “maintained social peace over several decades” (Blaive, 2013, 75). People were, in a sense, willing to collaborate or accommodate the regime (Blaive, 2013). Studying these phenomena is best done through oral history.

The communists were able to legitimize their power through dominant discourse. Because of how the system was set out, what was said publicly by those in power was universal. Prior to 1989, the history of totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia stressed “coercion at the cost of consent as the foundation of dictatorial regimes” (Kolář &

Kopeček 2007, p. 220). All the historical reports focused on describing the people of the regime as victims and the victims themselves perceived themselves as such. The Czechs' use of the word *totalita* "is understood as implying that Communist Party members and Secret Police collaborators were all guilty, and the rest of us were all innocent victims" (Blaive, 2013, p.77). It is important to distinguish the word totalitarianism from the word "totalita" as the latter is used by those who existed under the communist regime, not any other tyrannical or totalitarian political system. However, in contemporary history, the two words are used interchangeably even though *totalita* "has little in common with Hannah Arendt's theory...especially as regards the population's participation in the domination scheme" (Blaive, 2013, 78). This goes to show that using the word *totalita* is in support of people under the rule of communism not taking responsibility for their own actions and blaming the regime itself. It was easier to blame the communist regime for interjecting in the Czech efforts to pursue a "national democratic identity" than to claim that communism was a very concrete part of Czech and Slovak history (Kolář & Kopeček 2007, p. 176). However, this is a gross simplification of the problem as a division of people into perpetrators and victims is inaccurate in all periods of communism whether that was the Stalinist, post-Stalinist era, the Prague Spring or normalization.

Nevertheless, people were collaborating on a daily basis with the secret police (ŠtB) and denouncing their own neighbors in order to keep themselves safe and gain more by secretly surveilling those around them (Blaive, 2013). They adapted to the term James Scott coined public transcript and negotiated with the authorities to get what they wanted if they conformed to the regime. In a sense, these people were no longer a mere part of the system because they had become pillars on which the system could function. They were simply becoming the regime (Scott, 1990). This made existence for regular people all the more complicated, because it was no longer about oppression from above like from the police or militia. Oppression became a practice among the people themselves as they spied and denounced each other for the sake of saving themselves and their family interests. These ordinary people were simply policing each other (Blaive, 2013). This likely had a strong impact on people's psychology as they were stuck between existing as a collaborator and a resistor at the same time. However, there were perhaps even more roles at stake during the regime. Sharlene Swartz, in her publication *Another Country*

introduces five typologies of people who take part in an oppressive regime. She bases it on black and white citizens of South Africa during and after Apartheid when the narratives were unclear and people could not distinguish between who was responsible for what actions. As mentioned in the introduction these five typologies include perpetrators, victims, bystanders, resisters and beneficiaries. Although communism had a differing trajectory than the South African apartheid, both regimes molded people who fit into these five groups. These five labels became the people's psychological identifiers, the definition of who they were, the way they spoke and behaved.

The city of Komárno was an interesting case in that the communist regime was received quite positively. In fact, many Slovak regions experienced communism in a different light than other states in the Soviet Union. In the example of Komárno, people saw the regime as a neutralizer between Hungarians and Slovaks because both countries were under the same political system. Anything negative that happened to either side of the border was blamed on the neighbors, not the regime and thus, having a resenting or loving relationship towards communism was not really apparent. Nevertheless, the memory of communism is remembered deeply:

It doesn't only apply to the older generation which has the past rooted inside them due to the lived experiences, but also the following generations which to a certain extent also received a mark from socialism—whether that was through intentional passing of information in the family and community or even as a result of avoiding this topic and leaving an open space for people interpreting or better yet misinterpreting the myths about socialism. (Bútorová, 2019)

CHAPTER 4: Social Response to Public Space

4.1 Identity Shaping Through Public Space

Many scholars have delved into the topic of public space, its underlying meaning for history, culture and politics, and its implications for memory building. Public space can be utilized for political interest and manipulation of public narrative as is the case in many authoritarian and illiberal states. Political leaders will utilize public space to alter and manipulate public memory in order to further their own agenda (Forest & Johnson, 2011). By building monuments and memorials which represent their own ideologies, they are able to plant that same ideology in the public eye. It is a way for them to “gain symbolic capital—the prestige, legitimacy, and influence derived from being associated with status-bearing ideas and figures” (Forest & Johnson, 2011). It is firmly established that political figures will use the idea of forming monuments in order to gain control over the political and cultural narrative and subsequently shape national identity. However, it is also important to examine this phenomenon from the other side of the coin – national identity can also be the driving force of monument building and remembrance through the use of public space. As Jeffrey Alexander (2004) has stated, “monuments, museums and memorials are attempts to make statements and affirmations [to create] a materiality with a political, collective, public meaning [and] a physical reminder of a conflictive political past” (pp. 5-7). Thus, bringing up the notion of monument removal could be seen as an effort of erasing the past.

Many authors agree on the fact that erasing history by forceful removal is like trying to create a different history simultaneously. It is best “exemplified by the Soviet practice of airbrushing figures out of photographs when they fell from the Party’s favor. It is a top-down, imposed forgetting that serves the interests of the state or a narrow group. This type of forgetting can never be acknowledged – it relies on and enforces silence and conformity” (Forest & Johnson, 2018). There is a clear correlation drawn from these examples and that is that authoritative states are far more susceptible to such forced erasure and change of narrative. On the other hand, state functioning as a partial democracy or actual democracy are more transparent in regard to the use of public space. “The more democratic the state, the more private as opposed to official activity takes place. But second, these differences among regime types appear to be driven almost

completely by differences in material action (monument creation and alteration) rather than discursive action (proposals to build monuments or threats to change or remove them)” (Forest & Johnson, 2011). This means that proper functioning democracies are more likely to utilize public space for remembrance through building up monuments, whereas, hybrid regimes often remain in the discursive sphere, merely speaking about the possibility of building up monuments. It seems that in Slovakia there is another angle which does not receive much attention. The discursive actions often are kept to a minimum. In other words, people do not tend to talk about monuments until it comes to a point where a monument might be taken down. In addition, this conversation tends to take a turn towards negative feedback and reluctance from the side of the people who are not familiarized with the idea of taking down monuments from the communist era.

Given that Slovakia is defined as a hybrid state, in other words something between a liberal democracy and an authoritative regime, the amount of actualized monument developments or destructions are lower than in either democratic or authoritative regimes. In hybrid countries in general, there is more talk about building or taking down monuments but less realization of such actions which could be due to the idea that a hybrid regime does not have as much control over the system as a democracy or dictatorship (Forest & Johnson, 2011). Another possible explanation for less action and more theorizing in hybrid states is that the state’s identity may not be as defined or concrete as in democracies and totalitarian regimes.

Today we see that conceptual artists are being sentenced for vandalizing monuments that represented communist individuals but in other cases, the public does not pay much attention to how public space is changed and whether monuments are removed or moved to other places unlike in other former Soviet Bloc states where there were mass removals of communist memorials and monuments ever since the regime collapsed. Slovakia did engage in monument removal during and after the fall of communism, but compared to other states, it was not country-wide or permanent. It seems like people still are not unified in their decisions on what to do with communist monuments. In Eastern Slovakia, i.e. Košice, Prešov, people are far more reluctant to remove them and feel injustice when people use monuments as a form of protest and vandalize them which all comes back to the type of narrative that carries on in these regions. The use of public space is a narrative

approach to history, an approach which is most commonly controlled by the intellectual elite that is also responsible for the shaping of national identity (Bucur, 2001). The monuments in public space are telling a story, they do shape our identity, they are here for the living so the people can still see what history tells us thus, it is only natural that society has conflicting opinions on shaping public space.

Because of the unclear trajectory Slovakia is taking in regard to monument building and removal, this thesis will provide a theory as to why this is happening. As mentioned in the beginning, there has not been enough research conducted about Slovak identity and its relation to the use of public space. Therefore, this thesis will hopefully draw some conclusions and provide some insight into an issue that has been studied in countless other regions and states across the globe. The hope is to also arrive at a plausible explanation for why Slovakia never discussed the formal removal of all communist symbolism and monuments in the country, while other states of the Soviet Bloc embarked upon such a journey right after 1989. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is as follows: How did communism influence Slovak behavior and people's attitudes towards communist monuments?

DISCUSSION

The literature suggests that in Slovakia the generations that have experienced communism firsthand perceive it as a something unfinished, perhaps an era that should come back as many remember those times fondly. Referring to this time as:

A magical time. There was security in everything. People knew exactly what was going to happen the next day, the next month and even next year. People were even nicer to each other because they didn't perceive each other as competition. We didn't have a bad life then (Excerpt from field observation, female 64).

Others stated that:

We were equals in society. There weren't any fancy brands that people would fight over. Salaries were almost the same among all. People were more open towards each other" (Excerpt from field observation, male 58).

The outcry of positive memories and rosy retrospection on the time of the past regime shows that the narrative of cultural trauma was not properly acknowledged or even created. Because of the social roles that people adopted during the regimes as beneficiaries and bystanders, their outlook on what happened during the time was heavily influenced by how well they lived and by what the regime actually gave them. As was stated in the theoretical section of this thesis, for Slovakia the regime introduced significant changes and modernization processes that otherwise would not have occurred.

This positive outlook on the regime, the lack of recognition of what the regime caused within society and the adoption of social roles which dictated people's future behavior all explain how Slovakia has a ways to go in coming to terms with its past. People have not overcome it and therefore have a lacking desire to change public space in response. The responses from the public show that the narrative regarding monument removal is simply not significant enough. People do not have the drive to change public space because the emotional remnants of communism carry on inside of people to the extent where some wish to bring it back. Their ambivalence is prominent, they do not quite know how to deal with the regime or get over it because the memory of it is hard-wired. As with any memory that has not been overcome, especially one regarding an oppressive regime.

Some even wish to go back to the times of communism. The political climate has been steering towards totalitarian directions over the past three decades as a result, and people are gradually more dissatisfied with the social, political and economic climate within the state. All of this just goes to show that Slovakia is stagnating in the past.

There were some interesting trends that rose from the data including the difference in answers people gave based on their age. People who were 40 and older almost always answered correctly that the plaque depicts Gustáv Husák. Naturally, these generations are aware of the name of the most notorious instigators of communism in the state because they lived through the regime. The younger generations were not as certain as to who was displayed on the plaque saying things like, “no, I’ve never really noticed the monument before” (Field observation, male, 35), or “I am really not sure who the man is” (Field observation, female, 28). It could be argued that it is because of lacking education in the field as well varying information on the individual. However, the most interesting aspect of the field observation was that people often did not even notice what memorial I was talking about. The most frequent answer being “I didn’t even notice there was such a plaque here”. This suggests a lot about the engagement with the narrative regarding public space. People are not as engaged because they are simply ambivalent towards the topic. It seems all of these trends are a result of the historical developments that took place on Slovak territory. Because of Slovakia’s past as a region connected to other empires and other states, the people never developed a proper identity.

Another good example of this reluctance to change is well portrayed in the case of Peter Kalmus’ work which is highly controversial in the Slovak context. He has been charged with several crimes and accused of vandalism of public space. In one case against him which took place in Košice, Kalmus was sentenced to four months of jail time and in another case for two months. In the former, the judge was basing the verdict on the statement of a member of the Communist Party as Kalmus stated (Kern, 2017). According to Kalmus, the statements were false, but in the second case he did admit to throwing red paint on the statue of Vasil’ Bil’ak with the argument that portraying remnants of the old regime in public space sends a message to the public that people want the sentiment of the regime to stay present even though it should not be. His actions against the display of communist symbolism in public space is not very well received by the public itself. Many

people dismiss his protesting against the regime because they label it as vandalism which is in fact the interesting aspect. A regime that has been labeled as criminal is more excusable than the actions of an individual who is trying to comment on how society has excused the criminal actions of that precise regime.

The lack of responses from the public, and the dismissive comments about Kamus' criticism of the regime and of society are both clear indicators of how Slovakia is not prepared to face the reality of what communism meant for the country's societal and political development. There is no real social cohesion in society that would force Slovak people to admit that the majority of them benefited from the regime and not admitting means they are actively reinforcing its power over society.

CONCLUSION

The approach society takes towards public space is crucial because it provides a channel for political, social and cultural communication within that society. What is present in public space is what society communicates about itself to the outside world. Indeed, public space is a form of narrative that tells a story about the identity of a state, of its people and especially of the people's past. It's a form of speech act thus when it is changed or remains the same, it sends a message to the outside world that the political or social climate is shifting.

With Slovakia, the curious trend was the lack of change within public space. It was important to delve into the reasons why people were so reluctant to change what the space around them said about their country. It turns out the answer in theory is simple but the emotions and cognitive processes behind it are far more complicated. In simple terms, Slovakia has not been able to overcome its past, the totalitarian regime took a toll on further political and social development in the country. However, deeper underneath the surface, the research shows that people have an extremely complex relationship with their past. They feel reluctant to talk about the time they all carried out immoral or even wrong actions for the good of their family and for the sake of safety. They had to let go of the bigger picture, of achieving a democratic society, a free community because they did not have a choice. Thus, instead of achieving a greater good, people were looking out for themselves which made it even more difficult for them to overcome the regime. Experiencing a trauma as intense as an oppressive regime leaves people wondering because even during the time the regime was in place, the ways in which people behaved were a gray area.

People were more comfortable to take action in the gray area because they knew they could benefit from it. Since most of the population did this, it was far more difficult to decide which people were responsible for the regime, in other words, who were the perpetrators of the reprimandable actions. This additionally led to people forgiving and forgetting actions they would otherwise punish people for and it became all the more difficult to deal with what the regime caused because there was nobody to put the blame on. Even in the present day, people approach the past as something that they either feel

strongly connected to and want to return to or they deny anything that happened thus, making it impossible to come to a conclusive result of how to overcome the past.

Such a destiny has proven to hold Slovakia back from upholding the standards of a liberal democracy. Because the state is settled in the past, the narrative unfortunately cannot move forward. There is no real platform for change and that is keeping Slovakia from proper state development. The country's political system is heavily corrupted, and the social benefits citizens receive are behind the standard of a liberal democracy. One of the steps Slovakia could take in order to improve its people's social standing and the overall functioning of the state is to begin a dialogue about the use of public space and its deeper meaning for the social and political setting in the state. Once people have a better idea of what the public space represents, especially the monuments placed in it, they will understand the deeper meaning behind the trajectory of history and why it is important to register public space as a narrative tool. On the one hand, it is understandable that Slovaks feed their nostalgia and remain connected to what happened in the past. On the other hand, it would be conducive to Slovakia's future that people would be able to work with their nostalgia in order to limit their unwillingness to move forward and catalyze change.

RESUMÉ

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá vzťahom medzi priebehom komunizmu v Slovenskej Republike a jeho dopadom na verejný priestor. Zameriava sa na postoje ľudí voči verejnému priestoru, konkrétne voči komunistickým pamiatkam. Totižto na Slovensku sa o verejnom priestore rozpráva sporadicky ale zároveň sa vie, že ten verejný priestor spĺňa nejakú konkrétnu rolu. Tá rola je často politická ale aj sociálna lebo verejný priestor je miesto kde sa spoločnosť stretáva, rozpráva, a prezentuje isté názory. Zároveň je ten priestor využívaný aj na politické zámery, ako sú protesty, pochody, a zobrazovanie pamiatok, či symbolov, ktoré pre spoločnosť niečo znamenajú. Na základe týchto poznatkov sa aj táto práca odvíjala a zisťuje sa v nej ako bola Slovenská spoločnosť ovplyvnená bývalým režimom a ako výsledok sa postavila k verejnému priestoru celkom ambivalentne.

V prvej kapitole je rozpísaná definícia komunizmu a ako mu rozumieme v Slovenskom kontexte. Opisuje ako vznikol a ako sa odvíjal od teórie policajného štátu, ktorý bol prv nastavený v Sovietskom zväze. Ďalej sa píše o tom ako na Slovensku funguje historický naratív, a aký má dopad na kolektívnu pamäť. Keďže dejiny Slovenska sú hlboko zamerané na proces akým bolo Slovensko oslobodené, veľa sa v historickom naratíve rozpráva o krajine bez identity a vyššieho kolektívneho cieľu. Ďalej sa preto prepája podkapitola Slovenského historického naratívu s podkapitolou o komunizme a jeho dopade na kolektívnu pamäť, respektíve aj to ako si spoločnosť bývalý režim pamätá. Je to dôležitá súčasť toho ako si Slovensko nastavilo svoje kolektívne hodnoty, názory a v konečnom dôsledku aj politický systém.

V druhej kapitole je rozsiahlo opísaný proces akým sa definuje identita, a primárne identita štátu. To ako definujeme identitu sa ďalej vzťahuje na vzťah spoločnosti ku verejnému priestoru. V podkapitolách druhej kapitoly sa rieši to ako komunizmus ovplyvnil Slovenskú identitu a ďalej ako ľudí definoval v rámci jednej typológie osobností, ktorá jednotlivcov rozdeľuje na obeť, páchatel'ov, odporcov, príjemcov a tých čo sa počas režimu prizerali. Podľa tejto typológie je omnoho jednoduchšie pochopiť ako sa Slovenská identita vyvíjala a prečo jednotlivé skupiny ľudí, ktoré spadajú pod tieto klasifikácie pristupovali k režimu a následne aj k verejnému priestoru inak. Najdôležitejšie na tejto typológii je pochopiť, že ľudia nespádajú len pod jednu kategóriu.

Tento typ klasifikácie funguje na báze spektra, na ktorom sa ľudia pohybujú. Ani jeden človek nespadá len pod jednu kategóriu o čo viac zaujímavé je analyzovať ako sa ľudia v rámci toho spektra klasifikovali, ako vnímali a prežívali režim a ako sa stavajú k spoločnosti dnes.

Prirodzene, to ako dopadal režim na jednotlivcov, ktorí si ho prežili, mal dopad aj na nadchádzajúce generácie. Generácie ktoré nasledovali po komunizme sa o režime učili v škole, počúvali príbehy od rodičov a starých rodičov a prirodzene cítili istú úroveň spolupatričnosti s ich rodinami a známymi, keďže sa na Slovensku pokladal veľký dôraz na rodinné vzťahy. Samozrejme aj kvôli tomu ako sa Slovenská spoločnosť postavila k režimu po jeho páde hralo veľkú rolu v tom ako sa ďalej rozvíjal politický a sociálny systém. Ľudia sa viac sústredili na to aké boli staré časy a prechovávali v sebe silný spomienkový optimizmus. Ich túžba vrátiť sa do čias komunizmu im bránila a stále bráni v tom aby sa posunuli v rovinách politiky a sociálneho diania a teda aj v rovine verejného priestoru, ktorý sa ako výsledok túžby návratu komunizmu nemení.

Posledná kapitola sa zaoberá rolou verejného priestoru. Opis verejného priestoru sa spája s tým ako jeho zmena dopadá na spoločnosť v ktorej sú zmeny vnímané ako narušenie istého poriadku. Spoločnosť v ktorej sa dejiny neukončili alebo nespracovali je veľmi istým spôsobom komplikované prijať to že by sa vo verejnom priestore diali zmeny. Ale čo je možno na tomto procese ešte viac neobvyklé je úplný nezáujem o verejný priestor a o zmeny v ňom. Z toho čo je v literatúre známe vieme vyhodnotiť, že verejný priestor sa dá veľmi jednoducho manipulovať v prospech jednotlivých skupín, zaujatých organizácii, či politikov čo ovplyvňuje prístup k nemu. V kontexte Slovenska je toto tiež aktuálna téma ale je zaujímavé pozorovať aký je na Slovensku ten trend odlišný v porovnaní s ostatnými satelitnými štátmi bývalého Sovietskeho zväzu.

V závere a diskusnej porcii tejto práce prichádzame k uvedomeniu, že Slovenská spoločnosť je hlboko ovplyvnená svojou minulosťou, konkrétne predošlým režimom takže nie je pripravená túto minulosť spracovať a posunúť sa ďalej. Kvôli tomuto trendu sa na Slovensku málokedy rozpráva o zmene verejného priestoru v pozitívnej, či vôbec v nejakej rovine. Ľudia tak ako k vysporiadaniu sa s režimom sa k verejnému priestoru

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stavajú ľahostajne. Cítia sa previnilo, nahnevane, majú túžbu v návrat starých dobrých čias a ako výsledok týchto pocitov, stagnujú.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questions for interviewees

1. Why do you think people don't care about public space in Slovakia?
2. What does it say about what we have learned about the past regime?
3. How should we understand it?
4. What do you think should change about the perception of public space?

Appendix 2: List of interviewees

1. Zora Bútorová – sociologist
2. Fedor Blaščák – ÚPN (Ústav pamäti národa)
3. Zuzana Mistríková – film producer
4. František Mikloško – former Slovak politician
5. Peter Kalmus – Slovak artist

Appendix 3: Excerpt from interview with Zora Bútorová

N: You say the bystander's classification of people is the interesting category?

Z: In the sense that they often saw and realized the unfairness and illegality of the regime. This could be tied to the work environment. It was publicly known that people who had communist party affiliations or were part of the party, and those who didn't disparage the top representatives had better professional careers. Others would just stand by when the head of a company would choose an unskilled engineer over somebody who really had the qualifications only because they didn't fulfill the criteria I mentioned. So the bystanders just observed from the side-lines. But the bystanders and beneficiaries often go hand in hand because when you keep your mouth shut and follow along, you don't have problems. If you choose to exist peacefully in the system then you get the profit from the fact that you can lead an ordinary, predictable life without making a lot of noise. The benefit is that you won't get into trouble. If you work for a socialist company, you will get the vacation, your children will go to good school and so on. You reap the benefits from the fact that you don't complicate your life, thus you're a bystander as well as a beneficiary.

N: That's right, the categories are more of a spectrum. We can't say that each person belongs in one single category because often those who felt like victims could also be

considered perpetrators. They needed to protect themselves so they would denounce somebody else.

Z: Here we should imagine the day to day of state-owned socialist companies because it's a clear depiction of what was happening. Let's imagine the people in leadership positions who are politically aware. One of them could even be an expert in the field. Since membership in the party was so common in Slovakia, a large percentage of the people were members of the party. We can't say that leadership positions were thus, always filled by idiots and outcasts. But these people didn't have a tendency to disclaim that they are the perpetrators and think they are doing evil things. Rather, they felt as people who also didn't have much of a choice and in a way felt like victims because they could say: "if I were a doctor in Austria or Western Germany, I wouldn't have to carry out these bad things". So, if we were to apply this behavior to the political sphere, the typical thing was for political functionaries to claim, "It's not us, but we have to do it". It was more about the level of responsibility people were willing to take. Of course, the moment a person would choose to say "I am the perpetrator", they would have to move away from the belief that they were coerced into doing something bad.

It was different in the 1950' when communism was only in the beginning stages and many people believed in it. They believed they were carrying out bad things but they felt it served a bigger purpose in the name of which they had to sacrifice something. Or they would claim they didn't know the context so they would sentence some and hang others and so on, so they didn't feel what they did was wrong. However, after the Soviet invasion in 1968, in the period of normalization, it was more obvious who could and should ask themselves whether they were a perpetrator of the regime. At least if that person was intelligent enough, they would know without a shadow of a doubt that the idea of a Realist Socialism is a negative or totalitarian one. Nevertheless, people then would probably answer with internal cynicism and say: "Well if I weren't here, maybe there would be someone worse so maybe I'm actually saving something". In the end, this was the attitude of Gustav Husák who claimed he was saving the Slovak nation despite the will of the people because he knew there were worse individuals around who belonged to the absolutely dogmatic communists. He was convinced they would be even worse for the state so he would save the people from this. This made him an even stronger perpetrator. Or let's take Alexander Dubček as an example. He signed the law

which took violent measures against demonstrators who were against the regime. By doing so, he clearly showed support for the regime and its maintenance of power.

N: I guess it depends on the individual's conviction. But after the 1968 invasion, the classification of people wasn't so black and white.

Z: Right, plus a new mechanism was installed where people had to approve the idea that the invasion of 1968 wasn't an invasion but friendly help from the Soviets. This was the act where that schizophrenia really latched on to people and became the regular approach in political discourse. To use an example: In public I will give the priest everything that is proper but in private I'll know that it's all fake. The important part is that I don't lose my job. In this way, the categories and their distinguishing features are important but it seems that each person had a conflict within themselves when adopting a role in the regime. Some cases were quite interesting. When the Russians came, one of their dreams was crushed too. The dream of a regime after 1948 which they helped build but didn't want to be connected to anymore, so they left the party. They defined it precisely for themselves and said they weren't going to have anything to do with it anymore. They knew they weren't going to be beneficiaries because right after came political sanctions, but they also didn't want to be bystanders. Unfortunately, there weren't that many people of this kind. The more common thing was for people to be sent to a committee for background checks. If the committee was made up of normal people, they wouldn't even ask point blank what his intentions are and just did an extensive check on him. But the categorization of people alone was the phenomenon that made people continue behaving the way they did and tolerate the regime in the form it was in at that time. The benefit again was that people could carry on doing their jobs. My mother and aunt were translators, who translated amazing Russian literature to Slovak. My mother didn't hand in her legitimization, she did what most of the others did. The committee did a background check and my mother could continue to translate quality literature. My aunt on the other hand was banned from translating when she handed in her legitimization and when they imprisoned her husband. And then the only thing she could do was translate under my mother's name and the names of other translators. And now, how should we categorize and analyze all of this? In many cases the system was set up so that people contributed somehow to the regime even though

they didn't speak out about politics, they were just doing their jobs. By helping out my aunt, my mother was in a sense fighting against the regime but not significantly. She wasn't a resistor but she also wasn't playing by communist rules. Many people did it this way. Many even believed the regime wasn't okay and this is the way they came to terms with it.

But we're veering off topic a little bit. During this time, each street had some sort of communist monument, or plaque in it. It was a necessary part of the everyday visual that people didn't particularly put much emphasis on or even notice. They weren't angered or even bothered by it. What people in Slovakia did have more of compared to other countries was a fairly positive connection to Russian symbols. This positive inclination is even present today, perhaps less so because of Putin's actions in Ukraine. However, there are still prominent and strong sounding narratives claiming that Russians were our liberators, that we're a proper Slavic state which is heavily supported by alternative media. There wasn't that strong of a disdain or protest like in the Czech Republic. Here, even when people disparaged communists, they didn't use the label 'Bolshevik' very often like they did in the Czech Republic. There people viewed communism as a Soviet product while in Slovakia, people domesticated it in a sense. And this plays an important role. Slovakia has a much more difficult time overcoming the stories that these monuments and symbols represent because it still hasn't broken from the past two totalitarian systems. The first system being the fascist state which was also the first symbol of Slovak nationness. The second being the communist state. The Czechs didn't have this burden on them. Since we weren't able to overcome fascism, the less energy we have now to overcome the second totalitarian system. However, since normalization was less oppressive, less people were influenced by it and they were somehow able to live in it, all the less desire to abruptly break from it. Although people here claim communism was politically oppressive, on the other hand, they label it as the time when Slovakia gained more economic and social prosperity. The Czechs went through this modernization period before the introduction of communism, so they did not feel the same. The pace was slower in the Czech Republic and by the end of normalization they had a feeling the regime wasn't going anywhere economically or politically thus Czechoslovakia declined. Whereas Slovakia wanted a perestroika and believed the regime could last longer. The sentiment remained intact until today which

is supported by our research studies. When we asked respondents whether Slovakia needs a radical political change or just minor tweaks or no change at all, majority of the people claimed major change isn't necessary.

This is also visible in public space. So far, nothing much happened in it. The symbols in public space which weren't immediately removed after the fall of communism, like the statue of Klement Gottwald, will probably never be subject of significant discussion or change. The drive to change these monuments isn't present enough in the narrative. I can't imagine the country deciding to remove the five-pointed star from the hand of the soldier at the Slavin memorial. I can't imagine people making a huge change especially because I don't know who would represent the narrative, the movement and who would be the political actors pursuing change in the public space. I mean, the most extravagant monuments are gone. The heads of Lenin, the big ones are gone. Then there are those symbols which are less prominent. Until not long ago, Bratislava was the city of peace, a typical slogan from communism, but today it doesn't carry the same connotation, it's not quite about communism anymore. I can even imagine that if Bratislava the city of peace was broadcasted today, we would assure each other that: "Thank god we at least don't have a war going on here". The narrative would be completely reframed. So, I would stick to the claim that only the most extravagant monuments are important to discuss. Just like the swastika became the symbol of murdering millions of people and the Jewish star became the symbol of those who suffered. Similarly in Slovakia, the five-point star didn't only become the symbol of suffering, torture and murder but also a symbol of growing prosperity. We have to consider the idea that the star doesn't have a unified symbolization or narrative around it. It was different in Prague where they presented the tank and painted it pink. The tank belonged to the Soviets who freed the Czechs from fascism not to the Soviets who invaded in 1968, but they painted it pink anyway, because the Soviets in became occupiers, not liberators. I mean we have many symbols here. In Eastern Slovakia you still have Soviet tanks around. These were the liberators who freed us from fascism. So, what to do with these? It's not so easy. I can't imagine just erasing these symbols because there was a time when these people were part of an anti-Hitler coalition and that was the label given to them and written into national history and narrative.

N: As liberators, right...

Z: I think this is one of the reasons Slovak politicians don't want to invest their time or enthusiasm into this topic. Even people with a certain amount of political feeling sensed that the period of normalization was experienced through a blurry lens, so they won't only moralize about it. You can't put specific labels on people. In cases of Stalin exhibited in front the of the Slovak National Gallery, or Vasil Bilak, it should be clear that those monuments don't belong there. However, when these types of monuments stand in specific regions, there isn't all that much push from above to change the public space.

N: And what about the paragraph in the State Constitution which stipulates that depicting and placing communist symbols in public space is illegal? How come it is not enforced?

Z: This is a wider problem. Firstly, the Constitution together with many other important documents that we have in Slovakia were written so strongly and definitively because they were created quite quickly after the fall of communism. Many of these documents were influenced by the overall Czechoslovak narrative or climate and by the fact that we signed many international decrees and promised to protect human rights. However, that doesn't even slightly mean that our Constitution is a key document and that we abide by it. I often reference Jean-Jacques Rousseau in my lectures because he knew how to define this properly. He said that in order for people to abide by a certain set of rules, they have to believe in them, have them in their hearts and be a part of their presence in society. This didn't happen here. I think it is something we should eventually come to, but I don't think we will because this generation is facing a whole new set of obstacles. What is written is not enforced and nobody can expect it either. It's nice that Kalmus uses this line of argument, and he's right. However, expecting a huge wave of approval for it is highly unlikely.

Another problem is that the period in the 1950 when people were dragged to the gulags, and died...when these horrendous events took place, people in Slovakia didn't talk about it as much. It settled in dust during history lessons, but even our cultural

production didn't pay much attention to it. Less movies were produced; less books were written about how terrible the regime actually was especially during the first decades. There are family stories that exist in this region but they never became shared to the extent that people would be able to evaluate what the period was really like. This way, those events were never properly imbedded in our collective memory. That short period at the end of the 1960's when there was freedom of expression wasn't enough to set up the society differently.

Appendix 4: Excerpts from responses of the public

Do you know who this monument represents?

"No, I've never really noticed the monument before" (male, 35).

Do you know who this monument represents?

"Yes, Gustav Husak, he led the communist movement in Czechoslovakia and was one of the people responsible for normalization" (male, 38).

Do you think it should be displayed in public space?

"Personally, I think he was one of the more controversial representatives of the regime so perhaps it's not really good to have him displayed in public space" (male, 38).

Why do you think there is such nostalgia towards the past regime?

"The 80's were a magical time. There was security in everything. People knew exactly what was going to happen the next day, the next month and even next year. People were even nicer to each other because they didn't perceive each other as competition. We didn't have a bad life then" (female, 64).

"Young people received an apartment; they got a loan after getting married. Young people today have nothing. They have to get a loan which they then pay off for thirty years. Everything was cheaper and everybody had to work. Nobody was mooching off those who worked" (female 61).

"We were equals in society. There weren't any fancy brands that people would fight over. Salaries were almost the same among all. People were more open towards each other" (male, 58).

“I don’t know that much about it because I didn’t live through it but I heard about it from others. I heard that back then people had a better life. Life was calmer and more predictable. Today it’s different. People keep chasing money and success because that’s what life is all about now” (female, 33).

“My grandfather kept telling me that everything was cheap but it was only like that so that people would not protest against the system. The regime made people blind to what was actually happening because it gave them the feeling that they could count on the state. In reality, people didn’t have much freedom but that wasn’t something they felt they needed” (male, 28).