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# DISCUSSION PAPERS

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**The Development of the
Urban Network in Slovakia**

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# 1 Introduction

The settlement structure of Slovakia is the result of long historical development. The present-day settlement network and the emergence of the most important towns can be traced back to the Hungarian Middle Ages, especially to the 13th and 14th centuries. The development of the settlement network has been influenced by geographical location, the configurations of the terrain (the mountain range of the Carpathians), the raw materials deep in the earth (minerals, metals), the military and political situation (since this was an area sheltered from the conquering Tartars and Turks) and the changes in the administrative system (settlements gaining town status). The privileges granted by monarchs had a strong effect on the town network. The great migrations (the conquering Hungarians, Polish/Goral shepherds), organized settlements (Germans/Saxons), voluntary or less voluntary settlements (the Hussite Czechs and Habans fleeing from the Catholic monarchs and the Hungarians fleeing from the Turks) and the development and changes in the economy (the significance of mines changing with time) all determined the changes.

The development of the contemporary Slovak town network can be divided into two large eras and several small periods. The first main period took place in the age of historical Hungary. During this time several peoples with different languages, religions and attitudes to work (Hungarians, Germans, Ruthenians, Poles, Jews, Serbs, Croatians, Czechs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Italians, French, English etc.) coexisted there with an increasing number of Slavic peoples, who spoke a mixture of languages and dialects which were very different from each other. From the 17th and 18th centuries on, these peoples gradually started to become Slovaks. However, it was only after the foundation of Czechoslovakia that Slovak identity started to strengthen. Subsequent analyses underline the fact that, in the course of history, differences in language have caused fewer conflicts, and less destructive ones, than differences in religion. The peoples living in Hungary did not wage war against each other because of linguistic or ethnic differences; rather, religious conflicts were the main reasons for wars, e.g. the Hussite wars or the battles fought between reformation and counter-reformation. One of the main reasons why Hungarians and Slovaks (and all the other peoples living in that area) could coexist peacefully was the division of labour, which had been developed over centuries. The order of labour division was reflected by the society of the towns in Felvidék (earlier, Upper Hungary; since 1920, Slovakia) and also by the relations these towns had with the settlements in their environs, in other parts of the country and in other countries. The coexistence of Hungarians, Slovaks, Germans, and others was replaced by isolation, exclusion and expulsion in the 20th century, but this was not because of the ethnic composition of the towns.

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The area of contemporary Slovakia was not a regional, social, economic, administrative or linguistic unit; and therefore the different characters and separation of the areas populated by Slovaks were not reflected in the names of the age, either. In the old-Hungarian language the northern mountainous area of Hungary was called Felföld (Upland). The name Felvidék (Upper Hungary) appeared in the 19th century, denoting the high mountains mostly inhabited by ethnic minorities close to the Polish border. After that part of the country had been torn off in 1920, the name Felvidék took on a political and administrative meaning. Since then it has been used to mean the whole area of Slovakia, also including the part of the Small Hungarian Plain to the north of the Danube (*Paládi – Kovács*, 2003).

Henceforth I will use the term Felvidék (Upper Hungary) as a synonym for Slovakia, especially regarding the historical past, since the standpoint of present-day Slovak public opinion and (unfortunately) also that of Slovak researchers referring to present-day Slovakia (together with its borders and geographical and administrative names) as a thousand-year-old province, is untenable.

## 2  The towns in Felvidék (Upper Hungary) before 1918

The process of the Slovak people becoming a nation started rather late. In the case of the Germans in Bohemia and Moravia or the majority Czechs and Moravians, the separation into nations was accepted by those living there. However, in present-day Slovakia this process could not reach a political level which could also have made it possible for Hungarians to accept the separation of the areas mostly populated by the Slovak ethnic group. Since the slow development of the Slovak nation focused first of all on creating a unified Slovak language, it is only the towns that were mentioned during the linguistic disputes that make it possible for us to find out which towns were of utmost importance for them.

Slovak historical mythology first mentions Nyitra [Nitra] as the second most important centre in the east of the Great Moravian Empire. In the golden age of Hungarian history until 1526, Pozsony [Bratislava], Nagyszombat [Trnava], Kassa [Košice], Eperjes [Prešov], Bártfa [Bardejov] and the mining towns: Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica], Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] and Körmöcbánya [Kremnica] were regarded as towns in the area of contemporary Felvidék (Upper Hungary). Besides, we know that the privilege granted by King Louis (1381) made it possible for the Slavic people (according to present-day Slovak historiography: Slovak people) living in Zsolna [Žilina] to have the same rights as the Germans. The charter also granted them proportional representation in the town council. According to the Slovak historical tradition, not only Zsolna [Žilina], but also Rózsahegy [Ružomberok], Trencsén [Trenčín], Vágújhely [Nové Mesto nad Váhom], Szakolca [Skalica] and Tapolcsány [Tepličany] had

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become ethnically Slovak by the 15th century (*Kováč,* 2001, 45). In 1541 Hungarians fleeing northwards from the advancing Turks moved into the Northern Hungarian towns, which resulted in disturbances in town administration. One piece of evidence for this is the decree of Ferdinand I, which ordained that the leader of the town should be changed every year and should always be of different ethnicity, rotating among German, Slavic (Slovak) and Hungarian. In the eastern part of Felvidék the centre of the Protestant church became Szepesváralja [Spišské Podhradie] with Slavic (Slovak) leaders. From the mid-17th century, besides the German language, the western Slovak dialect started to appear in the administration records of certain towns.

At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, at the time of the renewal of the Hungarian national movement, the language movement of the Slovak nation also started. Since the Slovak language movement was organized in theological colleges, Pozsony [Bratislava] and Nagyszombat [Trnava] became the centres of both the Catholic and the Lutheran Slovak ecclesiastical intelligentsia. For similar reasons, the Slovak Reading Society was established in Pest in 1826, and the first Slovak-Czech-Latin-German-Hungarian dictionary was also published. Church schools were starting to gain importance. Apart from Pozsony [Bratislava], Lőcse [Levoča], Késmárk [Kežmarok], Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica] and Eperjes [Prešov] became such secular centres. The regional centre of the Slovak national movement did not emerge until the second half of the 19th century, which can also be seen in the fact that, according to the *Slovak Royal Memorandum* written in 1842 by some Lutheran priests, who wanted to set up the first Slovak linguistic department in Pest.

It was the leader of the Slovak national movement, Ľudovít Štúr (1815–1856), who had the central Slovak dialect accepted as the standard Slovak literary (and, on this basis, later the official) language. This was the first step to national unification. Štúr became the representative of the town Zólyom [Zvolen] in the Hungarian national assembly. On May 11th 1848 the 14 points called *The Wishes of the Slovak Nation* were accepted in Liptószentmiklós [Liptovský Mikuláš]. Among other things they demanded equality. The next scene was set in Turócszentmárton [Martin], where the memorandum entitled *The Wishes of the National Assembly of the Slavic (Slovak) People in Upper Hungary* (1861) was the first to mark out the Slovak national territory. It listed the counties in which they wanted to achieve the exclusive usage of the Slovak language (*Figure 1*).

This was the first document to lay down the Slovak demands and give the word Felvidék (Upper Hungary) a meaning from a Slovak point of view. Henceforth we will use the word Felvidék (Upper Hungary) with this meaning. Before the Peace Treaty of 1920, there were no signs of present-day Slovakia in Hungarian history, but there were regions which were populated to different extents by various ethnicities.

The areas mostly populated by the Slovak people were really the 16 counties of the 19th century Felvidék (Upper Hungary) (15 after the fusion of Abaúj and Torna). However, mainly during the period after the Turks had been expelled, they were present in the whole of historical Hungary. According to the census of 1880 there were 1,864,529 inhabitants with Slovak mother tongue registered in the whole of the Hungarian empire. Their number had increased to 2,008,744 by 1900, but then it started to decrease slightly: 1,967,970 people were registered in 1910. Of those registered, 83.62%, i.e. 1,672,228 people lived in the counties mentioned in the memorandum, with the population of the three municipal boroughs (Pozsony [Bratislava], Kassa [Košice] and Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica]) included.

Figure 1

*Important towns of Slovak national consciousness in historical Hungary*
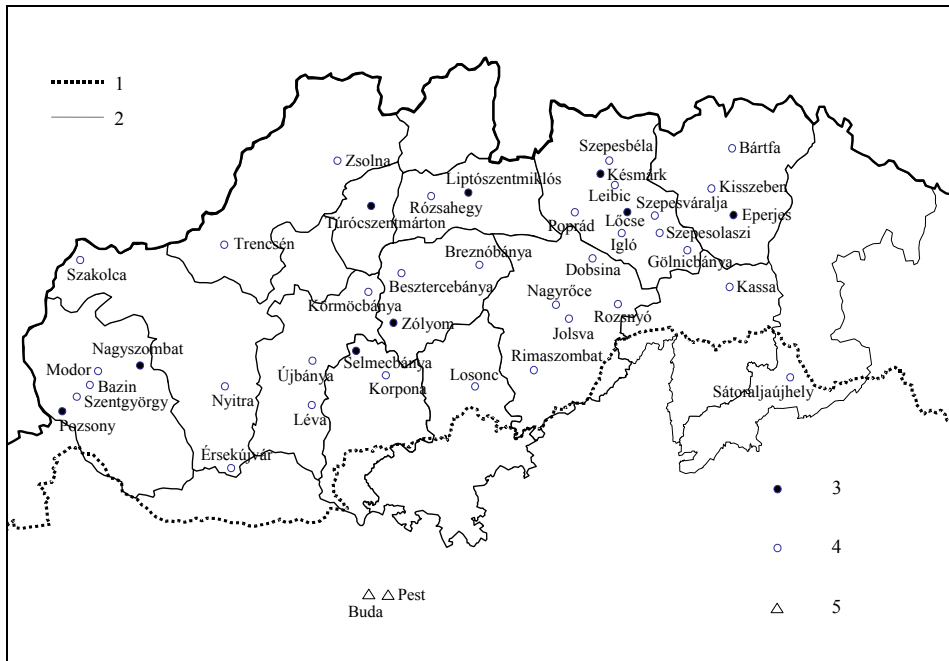


*Legend:* 1 – Trianon border; 2 – Morandum country border; 3 – Iportant towns of the Slovak nation before 1918; 4 – Towns of the counties delineated in the memorandum of 1861; 5 – Towns beyond the border delineated in the memorandum of 1861.
*Source:* Author's construction.

## 2.1 The towns of Felvidék (Upper Hungary) according to their population

At the time of the census of 1910, 35.13% of the more than three million people living in the 15 counties were Hungarians and 54.34% had Slovak as their mother tongue. To the north of the language boundary, however, the difference was even larger: the proportion of the Slovaks was far above 50% there. In the seven counties belonging there, the 772,000 Slovak people accounted for 76.28% of the population compared to the 78,000 Hungarians, which amounted to 7.74%. In the eight counties to the south of the Slovak language boundary in Nyitra [Nitra] the Slovak people represented a proportion of 70.97%, but in Bars [Tekov] County it was higher than 50% and in Pozsony [Bratislava] County it was just half a per cent lower than 50%. Meanwhile, this was a region with several ethnicities, because apart from the two large ethnic groups there was also a high number of Germans, Ruthenians, Polish (Gorals), Czech Moravians, Romanians, Serbs, Croatians and Gypsies, as well as English, Italians, French, Russians etc. in low numbers.

The town stock of this area, which was marked out in 1861, had some specific characteristic features. The 39 towns that can be found there accounted for 31.2% of the 138 towns of the Hungarian Empire. However, only a smaller percentage of the urban population lived in these small towns: in 1890, 13.5% of the population of all of the towns, whereas in 1910, only 12.7%.

The classification of towns according to the number of their population (*Figure 1*) indicates that the typical town of the Felvidék (Upper Hungary) was a town with a low number of inhabitants. The municipal boroughs (Pozsony [Bratislava], Kassa [Košice] and Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica]) were evenly distributed among the different population categories, but nine other towns had as few as 20 thousand inhabitants and 27 of them had fewer than 10 thousand.

## 2.2 Ethnic Composition of towns in Felvidék

The 1861 memorandum was intended to establish the Slovak language region. However, in the listed counties there was a rather complex society composed of several ethnic groups, as was also true of the towns in these counties. As can be seen in *Table 2*, of the urban population of 403,778 living in this area in 1910, 49.6% were of Hungarian, 31.1% of Slovak and 17.2% of German ethnicity, but in addition to these groups, censuses also registered several other ethnicities.

On the basis of the classification of the memorandum we can point out further peculiarities. In the towns of the counties considered as counties with mixed populations from an ethnic point of view, there were more Slovak inhabitants (69,053) than in the towns of the purely Slavic counties (56,396). Still, this meant

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that there was a higher percentage of Slovak inhabitants in northern towns, at 46.7%, compared with 24.2% for the towns in the south.

Mention must be made of the fact that there were five towns in the north where over 50% of the population was Slovak, adding up to 19,820 people, and there was only one town with a considerable majority at 73.7% (Breznóbánya [Brezno] with 3,081 people), whereas in the southern counties, which were considered 'mixed', there were eight towns with a percentage of Slovaks higher than 50%, in four of which the rate was over 80%. In these towns there were 36,907 people.

In the north, due to the lower population of the towns, there was an actual Slovak majority. Compared to the 32.8% of Hungarian inhabitants, the percentage of the Slovaks was 46.7%, which meant an average of 3,33 people, i.e. a Slovak population of 47% in these small towns. This can be compared to the counties in the south, with a Hungarian majority, where the number of the Slovak inhabitants was 3.288 people on average, representing 37.3%. It is a fact that in the north, in every town, the percentage of Slovak inhabitants was over 25%, while in the more southern counties nine towns had a percentage of lower than 16%.

After long decades of continuous increase in the Slovak population, the 1910 census was the first to indicate an increase in the number of the Hungarian population. The reason for this was the considerable development of the economy, culture, health care etc. in the Hungarian bourgeois era (1867–1914), which resulted partly in an increase in the population and partly in a change in the direction of the assimilation processes. Apart from natural assimilation, the magyarisation policy enforced by the Hungarian government was not really effective (*Kocsis*, 1998).

Table 1

*Classification of the towns in Hungary according to their population in 1910*

| Number of municipality boroughs*:* | *27* | In the county included in the memorandum of 1861 |
|---|---|---|
| Over 70,000 people, Budapest included: | 6 | 1 (Pozsony [Bratislava]) |
| 50–70,000 people | 6 | – |
| 30–50,000 people | 9 | 1 (Kassa [Košice]) |
| 15–30,000 people | 6 | 1 (Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica]) |
| Number of towns: | 111 | |
| Between 30–60 thousand people | 9 | – |
| Between 20–30 thousand people | 16 | – |
| Between 10–20 thousand people | 33 | 9 (including Sátoraljaújhely) |
| Between 1–10 thousand people | 53 | 27 |

*Source:* Hungarian Statistical Publications. Budapest, 1910.

Table 2

*The population and ethnicity composition of the towns in Felvidék (Upper Hungary) and present-day Slovakia*
*in 1910 and in 2001, following the classification used in the Slovak memorandum of 1861*

| Towns | 1910 | | | | | 2001 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | population | Hungarian | Slovak | German | other | population | Hungarian | Slovak | German | other |
| The 'northern' towns of Felvidék (Upper Hungary) (18) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Eperjes [Prešov] | 16,323 | 7,976 | 6,494 | 1,404 | 449 | 92,786 | 208 | 86,910 | 42 | 5,626 |
| Rózsahegy [Ružomberok] | 12,249 | 1,735 | 8,340 | 1,031 | 1,143 | 30,417 | 41 | 29,394 | 6 | 976 |
| Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] | 10,776 | 5,261 | 4,388 | 879 | 248 | 83,056 | 446 | 78,690 | 53 | 3,867 |
| Igló [Spišská Nová Ves] | 10,525 | 3,494 | 5,103 | 1,786 | 142 | 39,193 | 65 | 36,924 | 74 | 2,130 |
| Zsolna [Žilina] | 9,179 | 2,336 | 4,954 | 1,463 | 426 | 85,400 | 106 | 82,750 | 57 | 2,487 |
| Zólyom [Zvolen] | 8,799 | 4,973 | 3,579 | 209 | 38 | 43,789 | 218 | 41,980 | 14 | 1,577 |
| Trencsén [Trenčín] | 7,805 | 2,997 | 3,676 | 925 | 207 | 57,854 | 164 | 55,131 | 25 | 2,534 |
| Lőcse [Levoča] | 7,528 | 2,410 | 3,094 | 1,377 | 647 | 14,366 | 15 | 12,509 | 8 | 1,834 |
| Bártfa [Bardejov] | 6,578 | 2,179 | 2,571 | 1,617 | 211 | 33,247 | 48 | 30,346 | 3 | 2,850 |
| Késmárk [Kežmarok] | 6,317 | 1,314 | 1,606 | 3,242 | 155 | 17,383 | 26 | 16,550 | 74 | 733 |
| Breznóbánya [Brezno] | 4,179 | 1,010 | 3,081 | 73 | 15 | 22,875 | 50 | 21,239 | 7 | 1,579 |
| Gölnicbánya [Gelnica] | 3,833 | 606 | 1,098 | 2,095 | 34 | 6,404 | 6 | 6,143 | 52 | 203 |
| Kisszeben [Sabinov] | 3,288 | 1,168 | 1,640 | 341 | 139 | 12,290 | 7 | 11,137 | 1 | 1,145 |
| Szepesváralja [Spišské Podhradie] | 3,129 | 566 | 1,832 | 713 | 18 | 3,780 | 1 | 3,490 | 1 | 288 |
| Szepesbéla [Spišská Belá] | 2,894 | 355 | 1,258 | 1,247 | 34 | 6,136 | 4 | 5,818 | 16 | 298 |
| Leibic [Ľubica] | 2,782 | 213 | 1,311 | 1,135 | 123 | 3,677 | 1 | 3,443 | 2 | 231 |
| Szepesolaszi [Spišské Vlachy] | 2,413 | 340 | 1,613 | 440 | 20 | 3,518 | 2 | 3,441 | 0 | 75 |
| Poprád [Poprad] | 2,283 | 689 | 758 | 818 | 18 | 56,157 | 131 | 52,868 | 119 | 3,039 |
| Total | 120,880 | 39,622 | 56,396 | 20,795 | 4,067 | 612,328 | 1,539 | 578,763 | 554 | 31,472 |
| % | | 32.8 | 46.7 | 17.2 | 3.4 | | 0.3 | 94.5 | 0.1 | 5.1 |
| *Changes compared with 1910, %* | | | | | | *506.6* | *3.9* | *1,026.2* | *2.7* | *773.8* |

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This historical situation would have made it possible for a new state, one breaking away from Hungary, to accept the fact that many languages are spoken and to not set the goal of homogeneity when organizing the state. However, it can already be seen in the text of the memorandum that the most important political actors were those that, while seeking political solutions, had language homogeneity in mind. They wrote about the purest Slavic counties and called the counties with a Hungarian majority 'mixed' ethnicity counties. The question of the individual and collective protection of the language and cultural rights of all the Slovaks living in the territory of historical Hungary did not arise later, either, because their ambition was to establish a monolingual state in an acquirable area, which eventually was ensured by the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920.

*Table 2*, which includes both the 1910 data and the figures of the 2001 census regarding the same towns, proves that the Slovaks managed to achieve their goal and established a state which, from the point of view of ethnic composition, represents a new quality. The first remarkable factor to be seen is the considerable increase in the population during the 1910–2001 period.

The population of the towns formerly called 'northern' increased by over five times (there was an increase of 506.6%), whereas that of the towns in the south rose by nearly four times. However, the targeted and artificial results of changes enforced by political means are even more striking. In the north, the percentage of the population of Hungarian ethnicity decreased to only 0.3% and that of the Germans to 0.1%, while that of the Slovak ethnicity increased to 94.5%.

In the south, not only was the increase in the population more modest (387.1%), but also the proportion of Hungarians (7.2%) and Germans (0.2%) remained higher than in the north, leading to a Slovak proportion of 'only' 88.0%, although the proportion of the Slovak ethnicity grew more than twelve times (1229.2%).

Apart from the dominance of the Slovak nation, the increase in the proportion of the ethnicities listed in the 'others' category by seven times in the north and by ten times in the south (773.8% and 1064.4%, respectively) indicates that this is a version of multiculturalism which gives up a thousand-year-old tradition and denies both Hungarians and Germans a country where the new state has formed its ethnic composition in a way that would be favourable for these minorities.

## 2.3 Occupational composition of towns in Felvidék

The special features of the towns of Felvidék, i.e. the short distances between them, their 'density' per one unit of area and their small size, are all in close connection with the opportunities for employment and subsistence. The utilisation of the resources provided by the mountains made it possible for mining, industry and

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wood cutting (forestry) to boost and, in close connection with it, transport and trade to strengthen.

It is a well-known fact that the Hungarian bourgeois period was the period of economic prosperity in Hungary, and especially the degree of industrialisation increased at a very quick pace year by year. By county, there was an unbroken area around Zólyom County, where industry played an important role at a national level, too. In Zólyom County 38.4% of the population was employed in industry, and in Szepes, Liptó, Gömör-Kishont, Turóc and Nógrád Counties, which surround Zólyom County, this proportion was also higher than 30%.

The changes in industry were indicated by the increase in the proportion of large-scale industrial works, which meant factories with more than 20 employees. Liptó County, where 1.4% of all factories were large-scale works belonging to this group, was outstanding from this point of view in the whole country. The counties following it were also in Felvidék: Zólyom (1.4%) and Szepes (1.3%). There were such factories in the textile and paper industries. We can also find examples of factories employing more than a thousand people in Felvidék, including the counties Zólyom (1.4%) and Szepes (1.3%), but, for the sake of completeness, we also have to mention the villages that had such large-scale factories: Ruttka [Vrútky]), Lopér [Podbrezová], Nagysurány [Šurany] and Korompa [Krompachy].

The transformation of the economic structure is indicated by the fact that the number of those employed in mining decreased in the whole country. An example for this is Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica] where the percentage of the people working in mining decreased from 35.5% to 25.8%, i.e. from 5,808 to 3,919 people between 1900 and 1910. Miners either moved away or found jobs in industry. One reason for the increase in the population of Selmecbánya [Banská Štiavnica] was this process.

The important role that towns in Felvidék played in industry and trade can be seen in *Table 3*, which shows that, with their higher proportions, these towns are different from the national average for Hungary at that time.

Granting credit was also a typical feature of these five counties. It indicated the liberalism of Hungary of the time that the individual ethnic groups could establish their own banks, in order to be able to support their own people with cheap credit. Such banks in Slovak ownership could also be found in the small towns in Felvidék.

Mention must be made of the fact that the nationwide strengthening of industry was also based on a significant transformation of the economic structure, which also had some regional consequences, affecting Felvidék seriously. On the one hand, the importance of mining decreased and, instead of the former mining of rare ores, the mining of iron ore and coal increased. On the other hand, the processing industry started to produce consumption goods (textile industry, food

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processing industry). As a result of the introduction of new technologies, heavy industry also appeared. However, these new processes were typical of other regions. Light industry and the food processing industry were present with their quality goods in the northern towns, but they mostly satisfied internal demands. Heavy industry, the important sector of the era, could be found first of all in the zone of the towns Salgótarján, Ózd and Diósgyőr (*Vuics*, 1998). As a result of the same processes, and due to Vienna and Budapest gaining more prominence, Pozsony [Bratislava] started to lose its central role. Compared to Kassa [Košice], Miskolc was becoming increasingly important as a commercial and financial centre (*Gál*, 1998).

Consequently, the large-scale changes of the dualistic era affected Felvidék disadvantageously, but discovering and taking opportunities and adjusting to the new conditions were already tasks for the new state to solve after the collapse of historical Hungary.

Table 3

*Proportions of people employed in mining and industry, transportation and trade out of all workers in the towns of Hungary in 1910, %*

|  | Mining and industry | Transportation and trade | Σ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Municipal boroughs | 37.7 | 16.3 | 54.0 |
| Without Budapest | 3.6 | 13.6 | 45.2 |
| Towns | 29.2 | 10.2 | 39.4 |
| 'Northern' Felvidék (Upper Hungary) towns | 38.2 | 12.2 | 50.4 |
| 'Southern' Felvidék (Upper Hungary) towns | 37.9 | 12.9 | 50.8 |

*Source:* Hungarian Statistical Publications. New series. Volume 27. (1909), pp. 102–103, and Volume 64. (1910), pp. 130–133.

## 3  The settlement structure of Slovakia

The settlement structure of a country depends on several factors, some of the most important being its geographical location, natural conditions, historical development and demographic conditions. In Slovakia, due to the special features of the terrain, the natural conditions and geographical location exert a profound influence on the settlement structure of the country. Modern-day Slovakia is located at the watershed of continental Europe in the Northwestern Carpathians, in the northern part of the Carpathian Basin.

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The terrain of Slovakia is very indented. Its lowest-lying region is Medzi-bodrocké plánavy, which is located at a height of 94 m above sea level; while the highest is the High Tatras with the Gerlachov peak standing as high as 2,655 m. Since 71.7% of the area of the country is occupied by the Carpathians and the rest, i.e., 28.3%, is covered by plains, it can be stated that the most characteristic element of the terrain is its mountains. This determines the location of the different settlements, their size, internal structure, ways of construction and the means of subsistence of the population. The large and deep valleys fulfill the function of plains and are therefore of the utmost importance. Economic activities, including agriculture, industry and transport, are concentrated in large valleys of the mountains and in plain areas. Residential areas can also be found there. The most important communication channels and town zones are in the valleys of the rivers Váh and Hornad and in other valleys of Southern Slovakia. These towns, together with the branch of the Hron area, connect the two big cities Bratislava and Košice.

According to the calculations of Slovak researchers (*Očovský – Bezák – Podolák*, 1996), 33.2% (i.e. 3,080) of all the settlements (1,022) of the country can be found in the plains. In the plains there is an overwhelming majority of settlements with a high population, which also means that settlement density is rather low (17.4/100 km$^2$). This can also be seen in the areas to the east of the Little Carpathians, in the valley of the lower reaches of the rivers Váh and Nitra, in Žitný ostrov and in Szigetköz.

As mentioned before, the Carpathians cover 71.7% of the area of the country, concentrating the overwhelming majority (2,058, or 66.8%) of settlements and 58% of the population. All this indicates the importance of small settlements. All settlements in the region had to adjust to the geographic structure of the region. The region of the Carpathians can be divided into two geographical and settlement units. One of them is the area of large valleys, which accounts for 16.5% of the area of the country. Thirty per cent, i.e. 924, of all the settlements can be found there. The density of typical small settlements is higher (11.4/100 km$^2$). The number of towns is also high in these valleys: 38% of all towns, with 41% of the urban population. The large valley of the river Váh, at medium height, is the most densely populated. The other geographical unit is the mountainous area, which covers the largest area of the Carpathians (55.1%), but, compared with the size of the area, the high number of settlements (1,134 or 36.8% of all settlements) gives an extremely low population density (4.2/100 km$^2$) in the high-lying valleys (*Očovský – Bezák – Podolák*, 1996).

The main characteristic feature of the settlement system of Slovakia is that there are a many settlements and an especially high number of small villages (*Table 4*), which is mostly due to the geographical surface, because the indented terrain is favourable for the emergence of a high number of small villages. Besides

the villages with a low number of population, there are also sporadic settlements. According to researchers of the settlement geography of Slovakia, a settlement can be defined as a dwelling community which consists of a group of houses, is at least 200 metres from the neighbouring community, and where there is open space dividing them from each other (*Očovský – Bezák – Podolák*, 1996).

Table 4

*The main characteristic features of the Slovak settlement system*

|  | Geographical composition of the area of the country (%) | Number of settlements | Proportion of settlements (%) | Settlement density settlement/100 km$^2$ | Proportion of the population (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lowlands | 28.3 | 1022 | 33.2 | 7.4 | 42 |
| The Carpathians | 71.7 | 2058 | 66.8 | 5.9 | 58 |
| large valleys | 16.5 | 924 | 30.0 | 11.4 | 35 |
| mountains | 55.1 | 1134 | 36.8 | 4.2 | 23 |

*Source:* Očovský – Bezák – Podolák, 1996.

Compared to the figures of 1950, the number of the settlements decreased for 40 years. In the 1950 census 3,344 independent settlements were registered. This number had dropped to 2,725 by 1980. The proportions show that the population became concentrated in settlements with an increasing number of inhabitants (*Table 5*). Simultaneously, due to small villages becoming independent again, their number began to rise from the 1980s.

During the decades of socialism the number of settlements with fewer than 1000 inhabitants decreased at an extremely quick pace, which was first of all due to the fact that settlements merged and small settlements were attached to larger ones. Their proportion decreased from 74.9% in 1950 to 64.6% in 1980, and their number from 2,506 to 1,759. It was in the 1970s that the settlement structure was subject to the largest intervention, because in this decade the number of settlements fell by 366. According to the figures shown in *Table 5*, this change may have been due to the fact that the population had moved from small to large settlements, because the number of towns with more than 10 thousand inhabitants rose by 20.

When the political practice of centralisation and the fusion of settlements lost its dominating role, a high number of formerly independent settlements separated from central settlements, leading to an increase by 98 settlements. This was encouraged by the first administrative measure of the new democratic era to restore the independence of settlements (*Table 6*).

**Table 5**

**The number of settlements in Slovakia, according to settlement groups**

**Table 6**


**Population of settlements in Slovakia according to settlement
size, with change rates**

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The reasons for the changes in the number of the inhabitants of settlements were different in each era. Due to the settlement policy of the 1950s, there was a decrease in the number of inhabitants of villages with a population of fewer than 500, but in all the other types of settlement a considerable increase can be seen. According to the 1961 census, the number of inhabitants of towns with a population of 20–50,000 increased by 174.6% and, according to that of 1970, it increased by 209.5%. There was a decrease in the population of settlements with between 200 and 10,000 people in the 1970s, whereas in those with more than 10,000 inhabitants the population increased. As a matter of fact, this trend continues as the 1991 figures indicate that the number of inhabitants in settlements with more than 20,000 people increased considerably, while the population of small villages with fewer than 500 inhabitants also showed signs of revival. The figures for 2001 actually refer to the new phenomenon, because they show that in all but two settlement types there was an increase in the population. The fact that it was the number of the inhabitants of the settlements with a population of between 2,000 and 5,000 people that increased to the largest extent shows that people had started to move out of big cities, perhaps searching for a better quality of life.

*Table 7* shows two processes that have the same trend. One of them is the increase of the population from 2,998,239 people at the time of the 1921 census to 5,379,455 people according to the 2001 census. At 179.4% this increase is considerable. The other process is that an increasing proportion of the population lives in ever bigger settlements. It is an obvious sign of urbanisation that the number of inhabitants of settlements with fewer than 1,000 people decreased from more than one million (1,155,022 people) to much fewer than one million (878,377) between 1950 and 2001. This is a decrease of 76.0%.

As can be seen in *Figure 2*, the population of settlements with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants had been around 2 million until the 1970s, and then it started to decrease dramatically. The population of settlements with more than 2,000 but fewer than 10,000 inhabitants increased slowly till their total population became more than one million. Meanwhile, in the settlements with more than 10,000 people (all of them towns) there was steady and later accelerating growth.

The 20th century was the most decisive period of the history of Slovakia also from the point of view of the settlement structure. The settlement structure of small settlements, which had been typical for centuries, was replaced by an urban settlement structure complemented by the surviving small village environment.

The urban structure of present-day Slovakia emerged between the two World Wars. Compared with 1910, the number of towns had almost doubled by 1930 (*Table 8*, *Figure 3*). However, this change did not take place over twenty years, since it was the result of a quick decision of the new state, rather than a process of gradual development. The new state power wanted to express its own power by changing the administrative system. The number of the towns determined in this

20

**Table7**


**Settlements in Slovakia with population below and above
the thresholds of 1,000 and 10,000 in Slovakia**

way continued to grow, although at a slower pace. It had not doubled by 2001, either, compared with the 77 towns in 1930.

The dramatic changes made in the number and population of towns reflected the state-creating aims of the new political power. The new state intended to set up new central places based on its own ideas rather than on traditions.

Figure 2

*Changes in the population in the three most typical settlement groups*
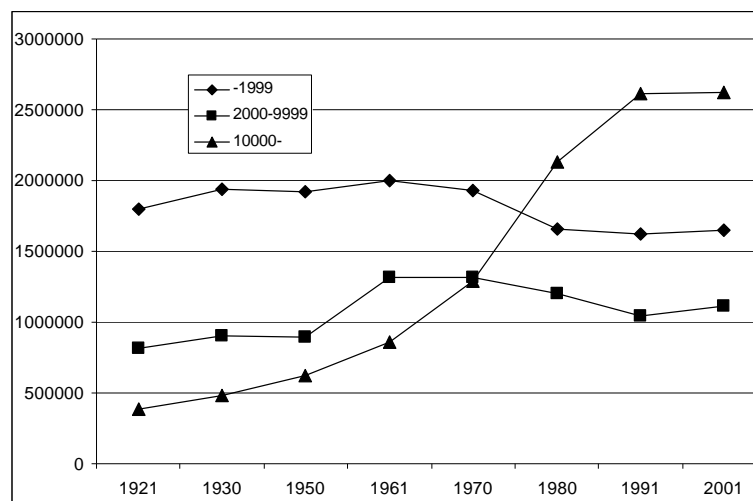


*Source:* Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

Table 8

*Changes in the number and population of towns between 1910 and 2001*

|  | 1910 | 1930 | 1950* | 1980 | 1991 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of towns | 39 | 77 | 91 | 84 | 136 | 136 |
| Population of towns | 481,184 | 902,953 | 1,048,219 | 2,205,711 | 2,933,088 | 3,010,162 |
| Rate of population increase, % | – | 187.6 | 116.1 | 210.4 | 133.0 | 102.6 |
| Average population of towns | 12,713 | 13,506 | 13,464 | 25,671 | 22,008 | 21,987 |

* The source of the 1950 figure: Statistický lexikon obcí ČSSR 1982. The legal definition of the town concept has only been in use since 1991, so the town is used below as a statistical unit, rather than a legal and administrative concept (Slavik, 2000).
*Source:* Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

Figure 3

*Towns of Slovakia in 1930*
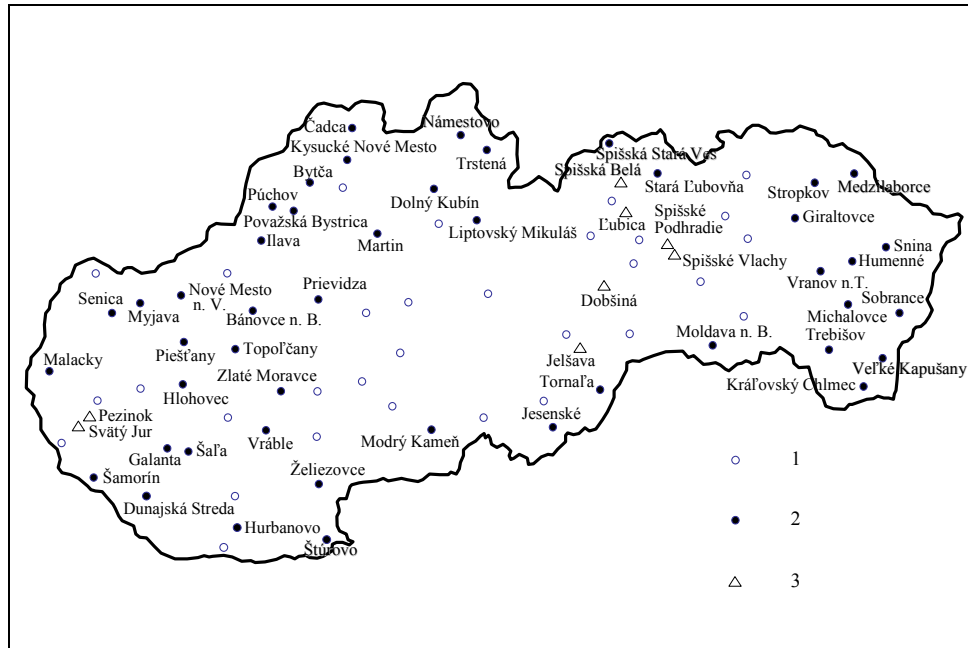


*Legend:* 1 – Towns in 1910; 2 – Town status gained by 1930; 3 – Town status lost by 1930.
*Source:* Statistisches Handbuch (1932).

Most settlements that have been declared towns can be found along an imaginary axis to the northeast of Bratislava. Twenty settlements were declared towns in this zone. This region had been rather short of towns. On the other hand, most new towns were originally 'ancient' Slovak towns: Liptovský Mikuláš, Martin, Považská Bystrica, Piešťany, just to mention the most famous members of some town groups. Besides, there were the towns created from agricultural villages with a high number of inhabitants in the Žitný ostrov region, like Dunajská Streda, Galanta, Šaľa, Šamorín etc. One important aspect of planning the town network was that there should be towns along the borders. This can be seen from Senica to Čadca (Czech language border), from Námestovo to the far-away Medzilaborce (Polish border), and from Šamorín through Štúrovo and Modrý Kameň to Kráľovský Chlmec (Hungarian border).

By setting up the administrative units of the new state power and with this new network of towns, the Czecho(slovak) power showed explicitly that then and there a 20th century conquest had taken place. It was a part of the conquest when,

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after marking out the state borders, the administrative districts were set up. Conquest was also the political content of the following decades from the point of view of the changes affecting towns and villages. However, both the number of towns and, mainly, their functions, underwent severe changes.

# 4 The most important steps in the (Czecho)Slovak conquest

## 4.1 Census as a means of statistical Slovakisation

The state's most important objective between the two World Wars was the Slovakisation of towns. In the northern part of contemporary Hungary, multilingualism meant that Hungarian, German and Slovak languages were used to different extents in the individual regions. Besides, further ethnicities and language communities also had their own locales (Czechs, Polish, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Russians, Jews etc.). In modern terms, towns were really multicultural. It was a result of multilingualism that the national identity of the people living there was rather uncertain. Due to their dual (sometimes even multiple) identity, most people could not even decide what ethnicity they really were. What is more, they could not even name their actual mother tongue. This was what the new Czech, or in a wider sense the new Czechoslovak power, wanted to change in order to establish a homogeneous, monolingual and one-ethnicity state as well as monolingual towns with means of state administration.

The state power introduced laws that resulted in the deprivation of civil rights. According to the 1920 language act, the population proportion under which the language of the ethnicity could not be used in settlements officially was 20%. After that each census became decisive for ethnic minorities, because this was what determined what the official language of a village or a town would be. In this way, the census changed from an impartial means of demographic data collection into a political manoeuvre serving political purposes, i.e. it became a means of 'statistical Slovakisation' between the two World Wars. The Czechoslovak state power wanted to prove the majority presence of the 'Czechoslovak national ethnicity' in the new state at all costs (*Table 9*).

During the war the ethnic composition continued changing. As a result of the 1938 Vienna Award, Hungary got back the southern areas populated by an overwhelming majority of Hungarian people. The Czech and Slovak people who had moved there and occupied the leading positions in the towns or worked as farmers in the fields confiscated from Hungarians started to move back to Czechia and Slovakia. In the remaining Slovak area, the new Slovak Republic was declared. The new state started Slovakisation immediately. They resettled the people with Czech citizenship from Bratislava to Czechia and the Jews to concentration camps. Within the German alliance system, they could not take hostile steps

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against the Hungarians, although the removal of the Hungarian population was the subject of political common talk and opinions published in newspapers.

Table 9

*Number and proportion of the three main ethnicities according to censuses in the area of present-day Slovakia*

| Year | Total | Slovak | | Hungarian | | German | | Other | |
|------|-------|--------|---|-----------|---|--------|---|-------|---|
| | | people | % | people | % | people | % | people | % |
| 1910 | 2,926,824 | 1,686,712 | 57.6 | 896,271 | 30.6 | 196,958 | 6.7 | 146,883 | 5.0 |
| 1921 | 2,998,244 | 1,941,942 | 64.8 | 634,827 | 21.2 | 139,800 | 4.7 | 281,675 | 9.4 |
| 1930 | 3,329,793 | 2,224,983 | 66.8 | 571,988 | 17.2 | 147,507 | 4.4 | 385,315 | 11.6 |
| 1950 | 3,442,317 | 2,982,524 | 86.6 | 354,532 | 10.3 | 5,179 | 0.2 | 100,082 | 2.9 |
| 1961 | 4,174,046 | 3,560,216 | 85.3 | 518,782 | 12.4 | 6,259 | 0.1 | 88,789 | 2.1 |
| 1970 | 4,537,290 | 3,878,904 | 85.5 | 552,006 | 12.2 | 4,760 | 0.1 | 101,620 | 2.2 |
| 1980 | 4,987,853 | 4,321,139 | 86.6 | 559,801 | 11.2 | 5,121 | 0.1 | 101,792 | 2.0 |
| 1991 | 5,274,335 | 4,519,328 | 85.7 | 567,296 | 10.8 | nd. | nd. | 187,711 | 3.6 |
| 2001 | 5,379,455 | 4,614,854 | 85.8 | 520,528 | 9.7 | 5,405 | 0.1 | 238,668 | 4.4 |

*Source:* Author's calculations and construction on the basis of Popély (1991) and Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

After the war the Czechoslovak state interfered with the ethnic composition in a most aggressive way. The new Czechoslovak government had sided with the winners and thought it was time to create an ethnically homogeneous national state. This was included in the infamous 1945 government programme of Košice. Giving the false arguments of Hungarian and German people having been the reason for the collapse of Czechoslovakia, they did all in their power to expel Germans and Hungarians from the country. Since the victorious powers did not allow the method of mass removal of the population, they tried to achieve their goal by population exchange, deportation and different means of intimidation. How 'successful' this was, was proved by the census figures. While the proportion of the population of Slovak ethnicity increased from 57.6% in 1910 to 66.8% in 1930, and to 86.6% in 1950, the proportion of citizens of Hungarian ethnicity fell from 30.6% to 10.3%. The personal tragedies behind these changes have not been spoken about openly up to the present day.

During the decades between the censuses the population of Czechoslovakia, and, since 1993 that of Slovakia, has been increasing steadily. The proportion of people with Hungarian ethnicity fell dramatically until the 1950 census. It was only in 1961 that it seemed to level off, but by 2001 this proportion had further decreased.

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## 4.2  Towns as the centres of Slovakisation

The new state regarded it as its major task to change the urban Hungarian majority to a Slovak majority. That was the reason why so many settlements were declared towns. Both in existing and new towns it was the state's ambition to achieve the dominance and exclusive majority of employees with Slovak national ethnicity in administration, the state institutional system and public institutions, as soon as possible. They were therefore eager to prove Slovak predominance by censuses, which produced numerous abuses as a consequence.

As the figures of *Table 10* show, both in 1910 and in 2001 there were about 200,000 people of Hungarian ethnicity in the towns of Felvidék, i.e. of present-day Slovakia. However, there was a huge difference between the two figures, since in 1910 the 200,000 Hungarians lived in 39 towns, whereas in 2001 they lived in as many as 136 towns! This figure refers to a high number of tragic events, because the number of the people of Hungarian ethnicity living in the nation decreased from 935,000 to 319,000. If we also take into consideration that the rural population was moved into towns (after their lands and houses had been confiscated), which was typical of all the socialist countries in the 1950s, then we can see that the figures regarding deportation, removal and exchange of the population, executions and expatriations represent a case of ethnic cleansing.

The 31.1% proportion of the urban Slovak population in 1910 rose to 88.5% in 2001. During those 90 years the number and population of towns increased considerably. In 1910 there were altogether 403,000 town-dwellers in contemporary Felvidék, and in 2001 there were more than 3 million of them in Slovakia. Regarding ethnicity proportions, the urban population with almost 50% Hungarian majority, which actually meant the coexistence of several ethnicities, had become a population of almost 90% Slovak ethnicity by 2001. All in all, the earlier figure of over 50% of different ethnicities fell to hardly 10% in towns. More exactly, the Hungarian-dominated population, which was willing to accept other ethnicities, was replaced by a discriminative Slovak hegemony, which demanded assimilation.

The first results of the struggle for language and national ethnicity could be seen as early as the decades of communism. The proportion of people of Hungarian ethnicity fell to about 10% within the whole of the population. At the time of the 2001 census, only 9.7% of the population of Slovakia declared themselves Hungarian. Their proportion in towns was even lower, 6.6%.

*Table 11* indicates the connection between geographical location and the size and ethnic composition of the urban population. This table includes all of the towns in the population of which the proportion of Hungarian people exceeds 10%. These towns can all be found in the south of Slovakia. All of them are close to or within the Hungarian language border and most of them are parts of the

**Table 10**

**Changes in the proportion of ethnicities in Slovakia between 1910 and 2001**

Hungarian–Slovak borderland. While the most populous settlement groups of Slovakia include the towns with a population of 20–50,000 people, only seven out of the towns with a Hungarian population of more than 10 % belong to this category; 17 belong to the category of much less significant towns with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants. Although these are the towns in which most urban Hungarians live, and besides, they are the towns of the southern zone, which is mostly populated by the Hungarian ethnic minority, the proportion of the Slovak ethnicity there is 53.46%, compared with the 42.59% proportion of the Hungarian ethnicity.

Table 11

*Towns with over 10% of inhabitants of Hungarian ethnicity, 2001*

|  | Slovak people | Hungarian people | Total people | Hungarian, % | Other, % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Veľký Meder | 1,226 | 7,705 | 9,113 | 84.55 | 2.00 |
| Kolárovo | 1,890 | 8,742 | 10,823 | 80.77 | 1.76 |
| Dunajská Streda | 3,588 | 18,756 | 23,519 | 79.75 | 5.00 |
| Kráľovský Chlmec | 1,515 | 6,179 | 8,031 | 76.94 | 4.20 |
| Štúrovo | 3,294 | 8,048 | 11,708 | 68.74 | 3.13 |
| Šamorín | 3,760 | 8,091 | 12,143 | 66.63 | 2.40 |
| Fiľakovo | 3,079 | 6,568 | 10,198 | 64.40 | 5.40 |
| Šahy | 2,787 | 5,015 | 8,061 | 62.21 | 3.21 |
| Tornaľa | 2,432 | 5,076 | 8,169 | 62.14 | 8.09 |
| Čierna nad Tisou | 1,554 | 2,792 | 4,645 | 60.11 | 6.44 |
| Komárno | 12,960 | 22,452 | 37,366 | 60.09 | 5.23 |
| Veľké Kapušany | 3,506 | 5,561 | 9,760 | 56.98 | 7.10 |
| Želiezovce | 3,543 | 3,855 | 7,522 | 51.25 | 1.65 |
| Hurbanovo | 3,711 | 4,092 | 8,153 | 50.19 | 4.29 |
| Moldava nad Bodvou | 4,847 | 4,158 | 9,525 | 43.65 | 5.46 |
| Sládkovičovo | 3,614 | 2,340 | 6,078 | 38.50 | 2.04 |
| Galanta | 9,877 | 6,022 | 16,365 | 36.80 | 2.85 |
| Rimavská Sobota | 14,873 | 8,846 | 25,088 | 35.26 | 5.46 |
| Nové Zámky | 29,446 | 11,632 | 42,262 | 27.52 | 2.80 |
| Rožnava | 13,343 | 5,162 | 19,261 | 26.80 | 3.93 |
| Senec | 10,970 | 3,246 | 14,673 | 22.12 | 3.11 |
| Šaľa | 19,583 | 4,392 | 24,564 | 17.88 | 2.40 |
| Lučenec | 23,127 | 3,713 | 28,332 | 13.11 | 5.27 |
| Levice | 30,997 | 4,469 | 36,538 | 12.23 | 2.93 |
| Total | 209,522 | 166,912 | 391,897 | 42.59 | 3.95 |
| Average: | 8,730 | 6,955 | 16,329 | 49.94 | 4.01 |

*Source:* Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

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*Table 11* is of utmost importance because it proves that the Slovak conquest has been accomplished. The most significant towns of the new country and those of Felvidék in the Hungary of former times show a completely different pattern. The geographical deviation covers deviation of content. The towns that play a central role in the new state can be found in the middle and northern valleys of the rivers flowing southwards. The towns intended to be developed after 1918 make up the new town structure of the new country. In the first period (1918–1945), the towns to be developed were selected according to political points of view. In the second period (1945–1989), the number of the inhabitants of the towns was increased at a quick pace. In the third period up to the present day, (1989–), towns with a high number of professionals have been established by setting up service-providing offices and plants representing modernisation, by intended development. This new kind of town network exerts gravitation on the much less developed, more remote towns with much less important economic weight, mostly along the long southern border, and also on the settlements in the backward central and eastern parts of the country. This geographical separation and this town structural separation prove regional separation. Developed and backward regions have appeared in the country, and these regional differences have already emerged in the new nation, on the basis of the new town structure. The most important towns of the present exert gravitation, and determine the direction of the migration of people, labour force and capital. Bratislava and Košice, the two largest cities, can be found at either end of this new town-structural arch. They are not only the initiators, organizers and gravitation centres of the new town structure; they also have their own gravitation towards other countries.

The country has successfully been developed into a region independent of Hungary.

## 4.3 Choosing the capital

After short hesitation and sharp debates, the capital city of the independent Slovakia became Bratislava. This had several reasons.

Bratislava was an important town of historical Hungary in an economic sense, because it was built not far from Vienna, the capital city of the Hapsburg Empire. With the extending Turkish conquest, its significance was increasing, so, due to the threatened position of Buda, the capital city in the middle of the country, the Hungarian national assembly moved to Pozsony in 1536. It was the temporary capital city for 300 years, until 1848, which also meant that the administrative centres of national importance were also built there. The buildings and the quality of the services provided in the town were developed to such a high level in the

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course of centuries that it was an obvious choice for the capital city of the new Czechoslovak power.

If the new power had really intended to develop a city with national Slovak traditions into a capital city, then it would have chosen another town. Considering Slovak historical memory, they could have found a more suitable town for this purpose among the settlements not far from the Tatras. Besides Nyitra [Nitra], the first princely seat, the towns Liptószentmiklós [Liptovský Mikuláš] and Turóc-szentmárton [Martin] also came up, but Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] could have been suitable for the purpose, as well, especially if it had merged with Zólyom [Zvolen]. Apart from being important central towns of the Slovak national past, Slovak politics and culture, they were located in the geographical centre of the country (except for Nyitra [Nitra]), so these towns would have been much more suitable for playing the role of a centre for the whole country than Pozsony (Bratislava), which has an eccentric location on the western edge of the country, in the 'corner' close to the Austrian border. The new victorious power, however, wanted to grasp the opportunity to take over and occupy the former, though temporary, capital city of the enemy, with its royal castle and coronation church, for administrative purposes.

In this way, since it was not a cultural or political centre of Slovakia, Bratislava became its capital city for political reasons. It did not even have an accepted Slovak name. They mostly used the word Prešporok derived from the German word Pressburg. After October 1918 the Slovak press proposed the name Wilsonovo mesto (Wilson town). In March 1919 the Czechoslovak power named it Bratislava.[1] Though the largest town of the part of the country which had been torn off Hungary was indeed Bratislava, neither its size nor its political and administrative role made it a real capital town. Compared with Vienna, Budapest and Prague or even with Brno, it could not be regarded as a large city, either (*Mihálikov*á, 2006).

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[1] The 9th century Slav earthwork on the Castle Hill of Bratislava became the property of *Breslav* [*Braslav*], the eastern Frankish vassal Pannonian Slav prince. The German name Pressburg (the composition of the Slav name *Braslav* and the German word *burg* [=castle]) and the Slovak name Prešporok, which was used until 1919, can be traced back to his name. The first Magyar settlers of Hungary occupied the town in about 902. In the battle of 907 under its castle called *Braslavespruch* or *Brezalauspruch*, they completely defeated the Bavarian army, which wanted to reoccupy Pannonia again. This is where Pozsony [Bratislava]) was first mentioned. It probably got its Hungarian and Latin name from its castle governor called *Poson*. Its present official name comes from the year 1837, when P. J. Šafárik, a Slovak historian and archaeologist, incorrectly reconstructed the old name of the town and thought that it had originated from the name *Bratislav,* instead of *Braslav* [*Kiss*, 1980]). From 1536 it was the capital of Hapsburg-ruled Hungary. The national assemblies were held there until 1848. Between 1563 and 1830 the Hungarian kings were crowned in St. Martin Cathedral. Between 1552 and 1783 the Holy Crown was preserved in the south-western tower of the castle (Magyar Nagylexikon, 2002).

Apart from the symbols of supremacy expressed in the buildings of the royal town, the new Czechoslovak power did not take over the characteristic identity of the town; in fact, it rejected it. The towns in historical Felvidék were inhabited by people of many different ethnicities and languages. Most of them achieved their independence in the Middle Ages, which they had been developing and improving continuously. Consequently, they also had their own urban regulations and conventions. Local identity was of utmost importance in these towns. Being a Carpathian German of Szepesség [Zipser], a citizen of Kassa [Košice] or Pozsony [Bratislava] meant completely different things, because the rules of social coexistence were not constituted according to what language these people spoke. In other words, in the towns of Felvidék, social and political rights and duties did not depend on the proportions of the people speaking the same language until 1918. The fact that the name Pozsony was changed to Bratislava between the two World Wars was a symbolic occupation.

The change in the ethnicities of Bratislava took place in two ways. On the one hand, the Czech officials and Slovak village people moving into the town increased the number of Slavs, or with contemporary terminology, the Czechoslovak people. On the other hand, the abuses of the censuses were intended to prove the decrease in the proportion of non-Slav people. That was how, according to the 1930 census, the percentage of the Hungarian ethnicity in Bratislava fell to less than 20%, as a result of which the representative body of the town made the decision to abolish the right of Hungarian people to use their language with a majority vote at an extraordinary session in 1933.

The Slovak State, which was established in 1939, started the aggressive changing of the linguistic and ethnicity proportions immediately. First they expelled the Czech inhabitants, then liquidated the large Jewish community of the town. It was between 1939 and 1945, during the first independent Slovak State, that Bratislava was the capital city of Slovakia with full sphere of authority for the first time. This was where they set up the headquarters of the president, the government, the parliament, the Slovak National Bank and the foreign representations. It was only during a 'politically extremely problematic' era (to put it in the correct Slovak term) that Slovak people became aware of the fact that Bratislava was their capital city, their actual centre. After the fall of the satellite regime the city preserved the imaginary role of a capital city, and only waited for the suitable historical moment for it to become its actual role again.

After 1945 the Czechoslovak power, which had emerged on the victorious side, declared the principle of collective responsibility, making the German and the Hungarian people responsible for the collapse of Czechoslovakia. Referring to the Beneš decrees, they expelled them from the city, and, by deportation and exchange of the population, from the country, too. After the communists had taken over control in 1948, they expelled the people and families that they considered

'bourgeois' from the city, after depriving them of their property. While they were ousting people of other ethnicities, there was a continuous inflow of Slovak people, who settled down in the city and gradually took over the leading administrative and managerial posts (from Hungarian people), and economic units, shops and plants (from the remaining Jewish and German people).

The power of the city, its status of a capital city and its legal, administrative and political weight were rather ambiguous in Czechoslovakia, since the capital city was actually Prague. The establishment and organisation of the new state was carried out under Czech control, and centralisation was necessary to be able to plan and perform the tasks. This, however, meant pushing Bratislava into the background. Therefore, when the new state was established Bratislava was regarded as the capital of Slovakia where they set up the headquarters of the Slovak minister, as well as the headquarters of the Prague government commissioner; however, its authority was gradually reduced, as a result of which it had become a mere district centre by 1927. This did not change after the war, either. Although in the 1960s certain offices were set up in Bratislava, they did not have actual political influence or any decision-making power. The federation established in 1968 also had Bratislava as its Slovak capital. The Slovak government, ministries and parliament were located there, but in the course of the next three years, which were called the years of 'normalisation', they were deprived of their actual authority and Bratislava again became a simple mediator of Prague's instructions.

The 40 years of communism were from several aspects also disadvantageous for Bratislava's urban development. Like the capital cities of all the other ex-communist countries, Bratislava showed the signs of decline, both functionally and physically. Its traditional quarters, especially its historical city-centre, were neglected and doomed to decay. With industrialisation, its economic life became rather one-sided. By building huge, 'socialist' housing estates, which looked the same from Berlin to Vladivostok, they severely damaged the specific character of the city. Bratislava became a typical socialist city.

## 5 Town planning in (Czecho)Slovakia

### 5.1 Towns as industrial centres

Like in all the other countries occupied by the Soviets or belonging to the Soviet sphere of interest, a new political system was introduced in Czechoslovakia from 1948. From a Soviet point of view, the geopolitical role of these countries was to defend the Soviet Union from possible imperialist attacks, and to be the starting points of Soviet aspiration for world hegemony, concealed by the slogan 'Proletarians of the world unite!'. Therefore, every country under communist party

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control was forced to prepare for the Third World War; consequently, of all the sectors of economy industry was the focus of development. The enforced development of the industry carried out by the means of state power changed the structure of economic sectors and had a fundamental influence on the role of settlements, i.e. that of towns. Industry, industrial production and the setting-up of industrial plants became primary town building factors.

First of all, the existing towns were industrialized, as the new ideology stressed their ability to provide employment to several people in the vicinity. In this way, industrialisation was determined by political goals, and the elimination of regional differences was also subject to political intentions. The propagated ideology always served the aim of strengthening the working class through the regional division of industrial plants. The development of towns was intertwined with the development of the working class and that of industry; infrastructure, housing and other central functions were subordinated to it. This ideology concealed reality, i.e. actual development decisions were made in the centres of administrative power. For the development of a town, power and competence had to be acquired and strengthened by the local elite. Only in this way could towns acquire industries, and then housing estates and supplementary establishments from the political and official centres above them.

According to *Mariot* (1988), the percentage of industry in Slovakia's economic life increased from 39.9% to 68% between 1948 and 1985, whereas that of agriculture decreased from 32.3% to 6.6%. Going by the percentage of the employed workers, the leading industries were the machine industry (23.8%), electrical industry (15.04%), food industry (8.4%), chemical and rubber industry (8%), steel industry (5.79%) and fuel industry (3.76%). These industries employed 64.8% of the industrial working class, produced 71.4% of all industrial products, and accounted for 59.95% of industrial assets. Naturally, this does not reduce the importance of the energy industry, building material industry, timber industry, textile industry etc., which employed the remaining 35.18% of the workers, accounted for 28.59% of industrial products and possessed 40.05% of the industrial assets.

The most important change in the relationship between the individual industries was in the food industry, which lost its leading position of 1950. The proportion of the value produced by it decreased from 37.5% to 13.90%. In spite of this it retained an important role because it had to produce the most essential food for the population of the country. It was the function of the southern, agricultural regions of Slovakia to supply the country with food. The largest centre of the food industry was Nové Zámky.

There were some changes regarding the proportions between the industrial sectors, because, due to the development of information technology and computer industry from the mid-1970s, the electro-technical industry began to develop

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more rapidly than the other sectors. The oil processing industry was also extremely successful in the plants of Slovnaft based on Soviet crude oil imports.

The number of the people employed in the industry increased from 219,000 in 1948 to 778,000 in 1979, i.e. in thirty years. Most of this huge number of people were employed by the industrial plants of cities. Examining the year 1980, which was the most suitable year for making a summary, 30 out of 84 towns, i.e. 35.7%, were central towns supported by a high rate of industrialisation. Villages also had industrial establishments, because raw materials, transport routes or other existing advantages made it necessary to disregard the settlement form. However, only 29 out of the several villages with some industrial plant achieved an important position, which meant less than 1.09% of the 2639 villages.

Regarding the geographical location of these centres (*Figure 4*), we may say that according to the contemporary administrative division, there was an extremely high number of industrial towns in the western and central parts of the country. There are 12-13 important industrial towns in the western and central regions, while in the eastern region there are no more than five, even if we do not take the production value, or the role they play in the economy, into consideration. This means that starting from Bratislava, in the valleys of the rivers Váh and Hron a significant industrial area emerged, far away from which two isolated centres in the valley of the river Hornad, Košice and Prešov, have been developed as counterbalances. The gravitating effect that the two towns exert on their surroundings is inevitable, but they could not become a driving force for further development under the conditions given in the era.

## 5.2  Towns as the symbols of Slovak grandeur

Industrial development had an important specific feature. In socialist countries industrial development followed the Western European model of the 19th century, i.e. huge factories were built, first of all in heavy industry, employing a high number of workers. This had further advantages for contemporary Czechoslovak politics, because under the auspices of this kind of development setting up the network of big cities could be started in Slovakia.

The builders of the Slovak state called the actors of the historical past to account for the missing large city network, one worthy of an independent and industrialized country. It is true that Slovakia lost its short-lived independence after 1945, but under the conditions of the dictatorship they could claim that in the century before 1948 there was no industrial development that could have resulted in a town network of an appropriate size. This was the reason why the Slovak town network was disintegrated and almost exclusively made up of small towns (*Očovský*, 1979). For lack of a developed town economy, towns could not absorb

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the increase in the village population, so the surplus population migrated abroad, mostly to the United States. Later, during the era of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the dominant direction was Western Europe. During the era of the second Czechoslovak Republic, there was no way to leave the country; therefore, for decades the destination of migration was Czechia. In the 1950s the net number of people migrating from the Slovak part of the country to Czechia was over 10,000. Due to industrialisation, this number began to fall and in the 1970s it decreased to about 3,500 people (*Kühnl*, 1982, 21–23).

Figure 4

*The five cities that produced the highest industrial value in 1980 in the different economic sectors*
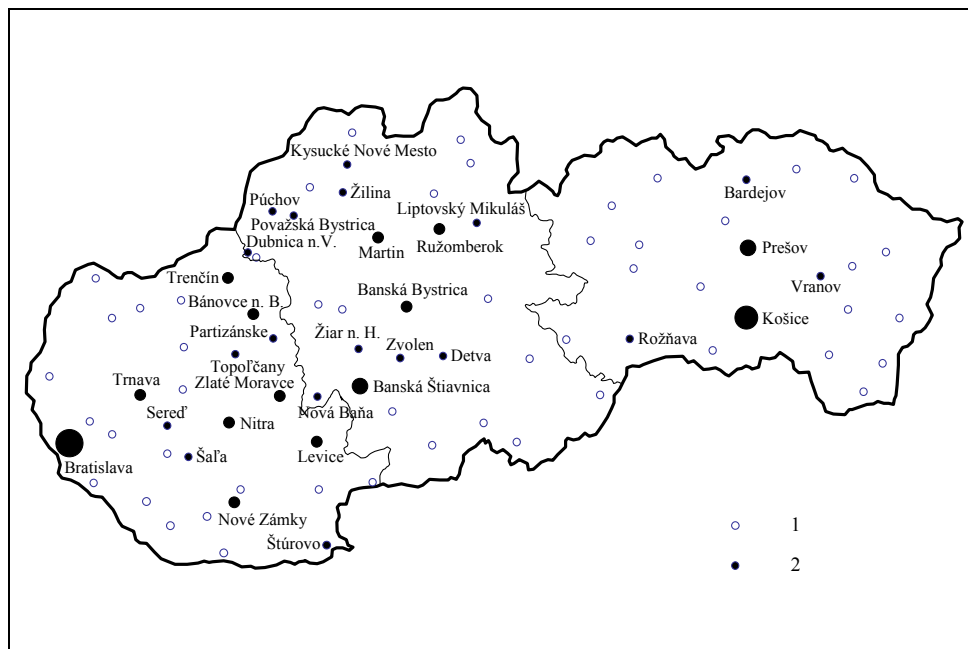


*Legend:* 1 – Towns; 2 – Towns and cities with important industries.
*Source:* Author's construction on the basis of Mariot (1988).

The political leaders of the time decided to make changes to the settlement structure of Slovakia. The decision-makers thought that the main direction of the transformation of the settlement structure should be towards concentration. While planning the population increase of the towns, they calculated with a population increasing from 4.3 to six million by the year 2000 and thought that towns should be able to absorb them.

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The Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 and the 'correction' following the crisis motivated planning; they started at last to partially satisfy the needs of the population, e.g. by the construction of housing estates which started in the 1970s. Until that time, the crowds of people 'liberated' from agriculture and chased from their fields to industry had had to commute to their new places of work. The number of commuters started to decrease when new urban housing estates began to be built. Settlements were classified into different categories, forming sporadic settlements and small settlements into larger administrative units. It was determined where it was forbidden to build new houses and a list of the settlements was made to show where construction of housing estates could begin (*Očovský*, 1979).

In accordance with the governmental decision, 13 regions of urban development were marked out, and one town in each was given priority in development. Besides these, district centres were to have chances of development within the so-called economic and residential zones, in the suburbs. The population of the 13 town regions accounted for 50.2% of the population of the whole country in the 1970s. According to the directive, by the year 2000, 72.2% of the population, i.e. 4.3 million people, were expected to live there.

The directive provided that the three Slovak district centres should distinguish themselves from the six towns belonging to the first category and develop into metropolises with over 300,000 inhabitants. Besides Bratislava and Košice, Banská Bystrica was to have played such a role.

In fact, it is only since the 1960s that Košice has been regarded as a town for which Slovak national politics has had long-range plans. Before that it was one of the neglected Eastern Slovak towns. Its development declined in the 19th century when, as a result of a competition between the two towns, Miskolc took over the central role Košice had played in economy, trade and transport. When the decision was made that, in accordance with the general objectives of industrialisation, an ironworks was to be built there, decision-makers considered several aspects. With metallurgy developing rapidly, one aspect to be considered became the mining of high heat-value coking coal and crude iron ore. Košice, however, did not have deposits of either and nor did Slovakia. In the planned economy, the traditionally accepted criterion in metallurgy that the country should have at least one of the most important raw materials was disregarded: instead, it was decided to disregard costs and have coke supplied from Czech Ostrava and iron ore from the Soviet Union. The latter reason was the most decisive one for Košice in becoming the new metallurgical centre; besides, it had abundant labourers on hand. The metallurgical works were meant to improve the backward situation of the eastern part of the country. Construction was begun in 1961, the cold rolling mill came into use in 1964, and the first blast-furnace in 1965 (*Benedekné*, 1969).

*Očovský* (1979) points out the absurdities that resulted from the directives approved by the government in 1977. The development of prioritised town axes

involves the danger of the disadvantages of certain areas and regions and the lack of towns becoming permanent, which could also make the settlements in their gravitation area stagnate. He gives the environs of Senica, and the broad zones between Nitra and Lučenec and Lučenec and Košice as examples. In his opinion, the Šahy-Dudince region, in which there are no towns, is also a problem, because it proves that the drawbacks of the secondary axes have not been dealt with. Levice, Krupina and Veľký Krtíš will never be strong centres. Očovský emphasized the increasingly backward situation of borderland regions.

The cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants were intended to act as symbols of socialist industrial development and Slovak grandeur, which could also have proved for the historical past the strength of Slovak people as opposed to their 'former tyrants'.

## 6  Towns in Slovakia after 1993

The situation of towns in Slovakia, which became independent again in 1993, is simultaneously influenced by several factors. Of the many factors, those of administration and transportation have to be emphasized from the perspective of spatial restructuring.

In 1991 there were 136 towns in Slovakia with 2,993,234 inhabitants, but in 2001 Krásno nad Kysucou and Šaštín–Stráže were also declared towns and the former Ótátrafüred became a larger town called Vysoké Tatry after some settlements in its environs had been attached to it. In this way, at the time of the 2001 census there were 138 settlements of town rank in the country (*Figure 5, Table 12*).

After 1990 the individual settlements, as independent local authorities, became able to make decisions about the issues within their competences rather than follow party directives and party instructions regarding the settlement system. Consequently, independence had a decisive influence on the future of individual settlements.

The two censuses of the new era provide figures that indicate some new phenomena.

While the number of urban inhabitants rose from 2,993,234 to 3,022,106, the population of 46 towns still decreased, which is a sign of considerable changes in just a decade. These towns belong to larger settlements, with an average of 27,183 inhabitants, the capital city included. Of the towns with increasing population 40 have a population of fewer than 10,000 people, 19 have 10–20,000 inhabitants, and 28 more than 20,000.

Figure 5

*The towns in Slovakia in 2001*
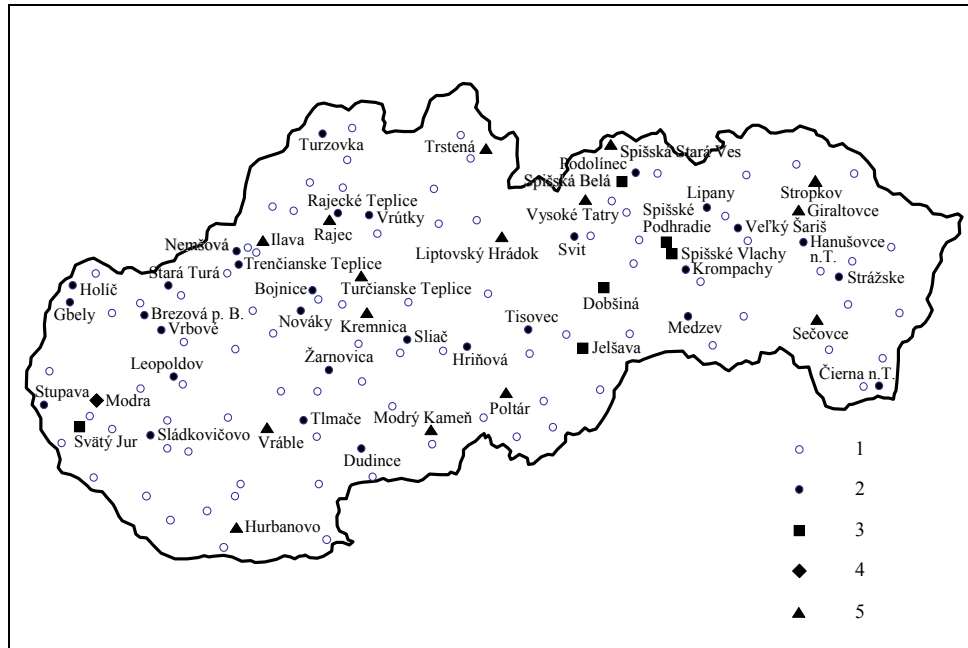


*Legend:* 1 – Towns in 1980; 2 – Town status gained by 2001; 3 – Towns in 1910 that have regained their status by 2001; 4 – Towns in 1930 that have regained their status by 2001; 5 – Towns in 1950 that have regained their status by 2001
*Source:* Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

Table 12

*Towns with decreasing and increasing numbers of population, 1991–2001*

|  | Towns with decreasing population | Towns with increasing population |
|---|---|---|
| Number of towns: | 46 | 92 |
| Average town population | 27,183 | 19,258 |
| Population of the largest town | 428,672 (Bratislava) | 236,093 (Košice) |
| Population of the smallest town | 1,500 (Dudince) | 1,434 (Modrý Kameň) |

Source: Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

This movement of the population is due to several reasons. First of all, the villages that had been attached to the towns without their approval became independent again. The increase in the number of people who moved to towns slowed down due to the termination of state flat construction, which had attracted people and made it possible for them to become inhabitants of towns in a short time. Some industrial sectors, such as arms manufacturing, were faced with a crisis due to the changed political and market conditions. The closure of such factories resulted in a high rate of unemployment, and a portion of the people, looking for a solution to their own situation, moved out of town. However, the reasons for moving from towns have changed considerably. One of the most extreme reasons is that the families that have acquired better living conditions move out of the crowded towns to family houses in the green belt, a village or a small town in the vicinity where there is quiet and clean air, and from where they can commute to the nearby city. The other extreme is represented by those who, because of their limited means, cannot afford to cover their living costs in the city, and so try to find cheaper housing in the countryside.

The movement of the population can also be influenced by the urban development strategy of their new, elected leaders. In the towns where the leaders had spent time, money and energy on urban development and, by developing the infrastructure and business parks and by designating marketable lands and buildings etc., prepared the town for receiving economic investments, and the gradually increasing economic growth attracted families which were seeking jobs and wanted to make a living. A town that had adjusted itself to post-industrial conditions had a better chance to participate in the increasing competition of towns.

The degree of urbanisation of the individual administrative districts can be seen in *Figure 6*. The 100% urbanisation of Bratislava and Košice is easy to understand; what is more, in Slovak administration these two towns are subdivided into further districts.

In the country there are 11 districts where the proportion of the urban population within the district is over 60%. Banská Bystrica, Poprad and Martin are towns with more than 60,000 inhabitants, so they are actually the leading towns of their district, but Myjava, with its 18,160 inhabitants, or Banská Štiavnica, with its 10,662 inhabitants, belong to this category only because of the internal population proportions of their small district.

In 24 districts the proportion of the urban population is higher than 50%. This category includes large towns like Prešov, Žilina, Nitra, Trnava, Prievidza and Trenčín. However, this category also includes a contradictory example, because Medzilaborce, with its 6,616 inhabitants, belongs here only because its district has a low population.

Figure 6

*Degree of urbanisation in individual districts (Level NUTS 4)*
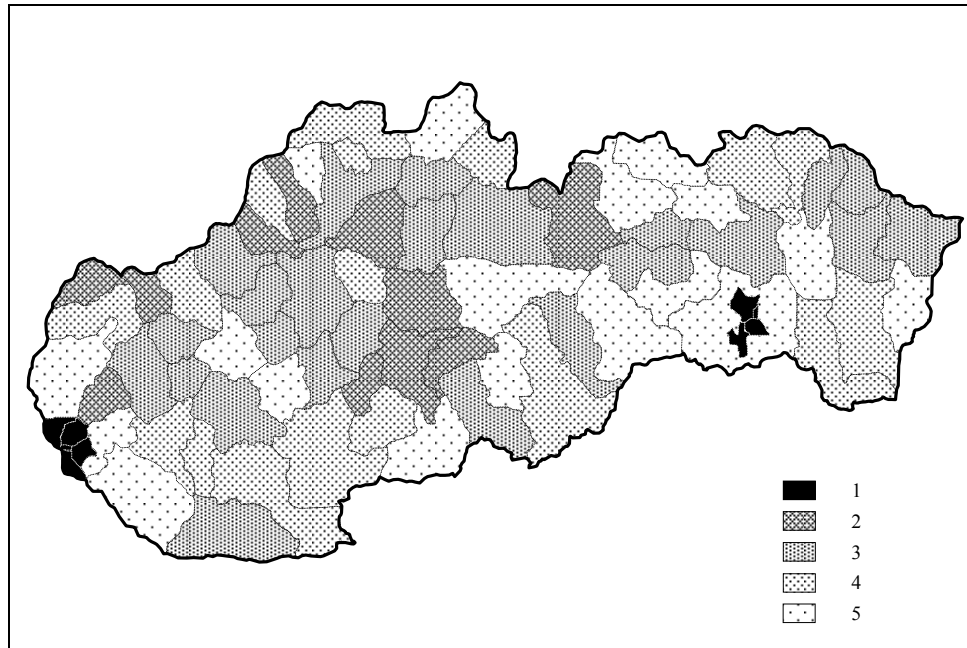


*Legend:* 1 – 100%;  2 – 60–99%; 3 – 50–59%; 4 – 40–49%; 5 – under 40%.
*Source:* Štatisticky úrad SR, Bratislava.

The proportion of town-dwellers is higher than 40% in 17 districts. They also include both big towns like Nové Zámky (62,641), Levice (55,525) or Michalovce (53,970) and small towns, like Krupina with its 9,354 inhabitants.

In 18 districts the proportion of the urban population is between 12% and 40%. This category includes the Dunajská Streda district with its large area and 44,894 town people. Besides the district seat of Dunajská Streda, Šamorín and Veľký Meder also belong to this category increasing the urban population. The districts that can be regarded as internal peripheries and where the small size of the town also makes it difficult for the district to strengthen its economy, like the Brezno, Zlaté Moravce and Gelnica districts, also belong to this group. At some other places, the oversized district worsens the problems of the small town, like in Rožnava or the above-mentioned Dunajská Streda. For Veľký Krtíš and Rožnava, their borderland location was also a limiting factor. The districts along the Polish border also have to cope with the same difficulties, e.g. Námestovo, Kežmarok, Stará Ľubovňa, Sabinov, or Sobrance district along the Ukrainian border. The

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sparse distribution of towns in the district in the environs of Košice is surely compensated for by the presence of the large city nearby.

## 6.1 Administration as a means of organizing the town network

When analysing administration, we should first emphasize that, at the time of the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the Slovak section of the country did not have an outstanding and obvious centre, nor a capital town or a town organizing the life of the Slovaks. After 1918, it was the aim of urban policy to designate new administrative centres.

The first decisive step to state independence was to set up the 16 counties from the 8 complete and 12 fragmentary counties, which happened in 1920. The 6 large counties formed in 1923 already indicated that the new power was seeking centralisation, because in this way they could create a means of homogenisation and Czechoslovakisation. With the provincial system created in 1928, the eastern part of contemporary Czechoslovakia, i.e. the Slovak province, was converted into a subordinated part of the country

The administration between 1939 and 1945 was an important period in Slovak history, because it was at that time that the first independent Slovak state was established. The division into six counties served the interests of those employed in administration, i.e. those of the Slovak middle classes, because in this way many loyal Slovak people could obtain genteel office jobs with regular salaries.

After 1945 administration once more became a means of centralisation, the state machinery and administration controlled by a single party. In 1960, in accordance with the administrative reform, the number of regions was reduced to 3, and that of the districts to 32. This extremely simplified system, which was created for the sole aim of carrying out the central will, operated up until 1991. In 1969 the only change made was that Bratislava itself also became an independent region, so the number of regions increased to 4, and within the administrative boundaries of Bratislava and Košice, the two large cities, several districts were designated, which increased the number of the districts.

In 1991 the former, strictly hierarchical council system based on central directives was replaced by the municipality system; administration and self-governance were separated again. After the decades of communism, the settlements could once again become independent. Smaller districts, 121 in all, were set up for carrying out administrative tasks.

The new district division of 1996 is all the more important because, after a long debate, the eight administrative regions remained, but the county municipality organs were not set up simultaneously. Instead of the 79 districts (okres) marked out in 1996, 50 small districts (obvod) have been responsible for carrying out administrative tasks since 2004.

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The confirmation of the regional boundaries of 1996 excluded the resources that could have led to the self-governance of the Hungarian population. The 'distribution' of the Hungarian ethnicity among the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra districts, as well as the decision to ignore Lučenec, Rimavská Sobota, Rožnava, Kráľovský Chlmec and their districts and their attachment to the regions and districts with a Slovak majority to the north are new signs of the conquerors being unfair. In legal terms, this could be considered refusal of the right to self-determination, or in political terms, the survival of national oppression. This was how the interests of the governing parties in keeping their own positions were interwoven with the interests of (governing and opposition) nationalist Slovak political forces in keeping the nation-state aim in mind continuously.

The eight administrative regions established in 1996 gave a further five towns the opportunity to benefit from the advantages of belonging to the privileged. The role of an administrative centre grants considerable advantages over other towns concerning development. On the other hand, granting authority to these towns also means the enlargement of the existing Bratislava – Banská Bystrica – Košice axis. As a result of the enlargement, the developing new town system shows a new feature, i.e. the strengthening of the Váh Valley as an industrial and service-providing urban zone (Trnava, Trenčín and Žilina), and that of Nitra as the gravitation pole of the plains to the south. Prešov, as the equivalent of Košice, is granted similar opportunities. The task of these two towns is the development of the backward eastern region, which has been lagging behind the other regions.

Table 13

*The administrative system of present-day Slovakia*

| Year | Large territorial unit | Small territorial unit (district) |
|------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1918 | 8 counties + 12 fragmentary counties | 97 |
| 1920 | 16 counties | 95 |
| 1923 | 6 large counties | 77 + Bratislava and Košice |
| 1928 | 1 province | 77 + Bratislava and Košice |
| 1939 | 6 counties | 58 + Bratislava |
| 1945 | – | 77 + Bratislava and Košice |
| 1949 | 6 regions | 90 + Bratislava and Košice |
| 1960 | 3 regions | 32 |
| 1969 | 4 regions (Bratislava included) | 36 + Bratislava and Košice |
| 1991 | – | 121 small districts (obvod) |
| 1996 | 8 regions (kraj) | 79 districts (okres) |
| 2004 | 8 regions (kraj) | 50 small districts (obvod) |

*Source:* Compiled from Kűhnl (1982), Petőcz (1998) and Kocsis (2002).

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Figure 7

*The regional and district (obvod) division of 2004*
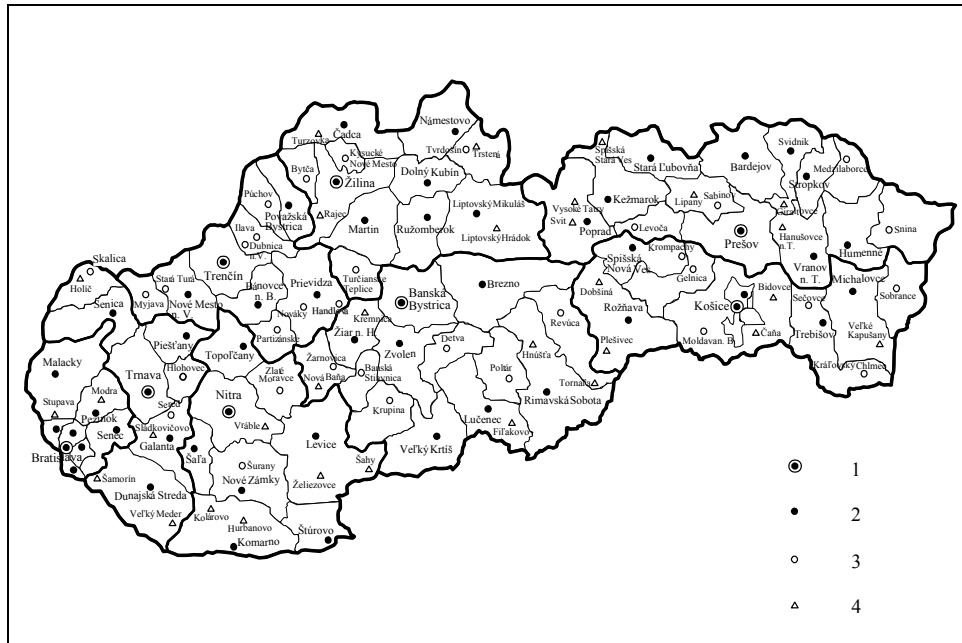


*Legend:* 1 – Headquarters of the regional office (8 kraj);  2 – Headquarters of the district office (50 obvod); 3 – Permanent office branch (33); 4 – Temporary office branch (31).
*Source:* Návrh samosprávnych krajov. ErasData-Pro, spol. S.r.o., Odbor informatiky SVS MV SR. 2003.

## 6.2  The connection between transportation and the town system
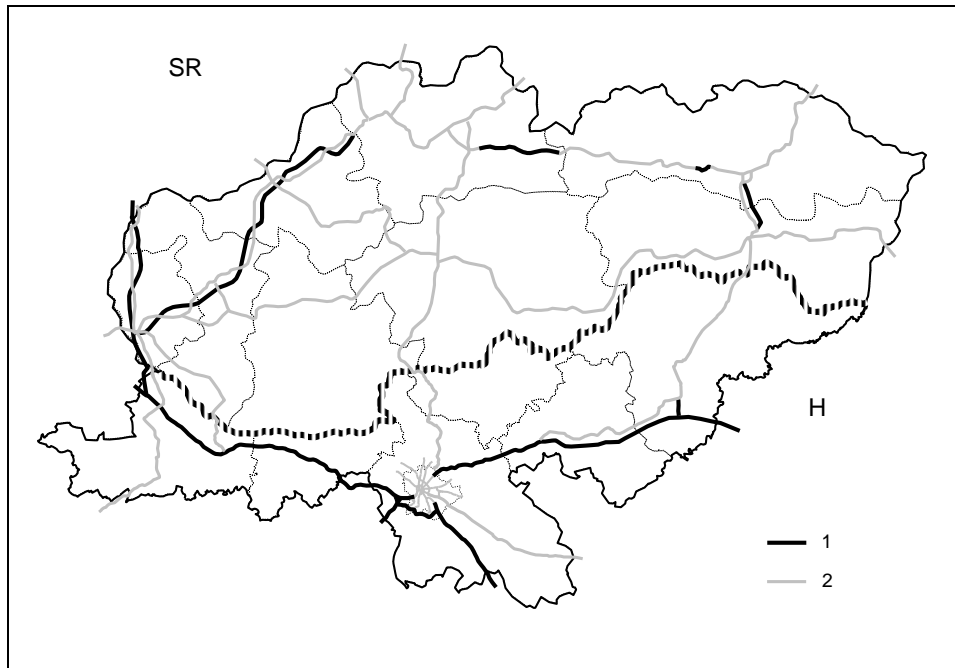
The position a country takes in the area-wide transportation network is decisive from the point of view of its geopolitical situation.  Realizing the importance of the east-west communication axes that cross the Polish and Hungarian plains, Slovakia intends to stand its ground in this competition by marking out its route between them, i.e. building its motorways from Ostrava through Žilina and Košice to Lvov. This means that the road from Žilina will not run southwards at Košice, but it will take a sharp bend to Uzhhorod – Lvov. In comparison with this axis, and regarding also the international relations, the corridors from the north to the south are of minor importance. Two corridors are in use. One of them is the Katowice–Žilina–Bratislava route in the valley of the river Váh, which corre-sponds to the road of the central region that is to be built to the northeast. This

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route is of utmost importance mainly within the country, and has minor international importance. The other is the corridor from the north to the south, from Cracow through Košice to Miskolc, which is much less busy. It is the Slovak section of the road that is important for Slovakia. At the same time, the road Orava–Banská Bystrica–Budapest, which was essential for centuries, is completely missing.

The map in *Figure 8* shows the route of the Slovak motorways that are to be built and the route of existing Hungarian motorways. Between the two road networks there are borderland settlements. It may be stated that the Hungarian motorway network serves the traffic of the dynamic growth axis between the Austrian border and Budapest, while in the eastern part of the country it connects the towns of the North Hungarian range of mountains.

Figure 8

*The road network of the Slovak and Hungarian counties along the Slovak border*



*Legend:* 1 – Motorway;  2 – E-roads.
*Source:* Author's construction

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On the Slovak side, however, the long southern area of the country is not crossed by a freeway, but, starting from Bratislava it runs to the north. This is indicative of the fact that the chances of development in Southern Slovakia have been disregarded and pushed into the background since road construction, just like any other state-controlled development, is carried out on the basis of intended plans.

### 6.3 The urban development role of the economy

The development of the economy is motivated in different ways in particular ages and regions. In the 20th century industry, especially heavy industry was the most prosperous sector in the eastern part of Europe. However, new processes emerged in the world economy, and services began to play the leading role. The ex-communist countries could only adapt to these changes after leaving the Soviet sphere of interest. The leading role of services means that it was no longer the available raw materials, the industrial factories planned and built by the central will, or the state logic of planned economy that initiated the establishment and development of settlements, but individuals who could utilize their expertise and qualifications on the market. Qualifications mean a high level of education, which is provided by towns; towns have the establishments of finance, management and communications that are necessary for the profitable operation of market conditions.

According to European practise, the statistical offices of the individual countries publish regional data. This conceals the economic performance of the individual settlements, especially that of towns, although it is a well-known fact that the major part of the results of both industries and services are provided by towns. The data of settlements provided by the Bratislava-based TREND analysis centre enabled us to clarify the role of towns in economic competition. The drawback of its method is that it does not mean a full-range data provision, because only figures regarding certain sectors are published and data on other sectors are not provided.

The TREND analyzing centre lists 200 companies that, according to their incomes, basically affect the economic life in Slovakia. On the basis of the location of their headquarters (*Table 14*), it can be stated that the 200 companies can be found in 69 settlements, 52 of which are towns and 17 are villages. The shift in proportions, however, cannot only be seen in settlement types, but also in the number of companies, because 90% of the listed companies can be found in towns, as can 94.8% of their income.

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Table 14

*The 200 most important companies in the geographical space, 2005*

|  | Number of settlements | % | Number of companies | % | Total incomest-housand SK | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Town | 52 | 75.4 | 180 | 90.0 | 1,309,457,241 | 94.8 |
| Village | 17 | 24.6 | 20 | 10.0 | 71,360,623 | 5.2 |
| ∑ | 69 | 100.0 | 200 | 100.0 | 13,80,817,864 | 100,0 |

*Source:* www.etrend.sk.

The data prove the priority of towns over villages, but we must also add to the analysis the fact that the significance of Bratislava is also extremely large compared to the other towns. Of the 200 most important companies, 78 are based in Bratislava. All the other towns are much less significant, because there are only eight companies in Košice, six in Žilina, six in Trnava, and four in Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Považská Bystrica and in Prievidza.There are 28 towns where only one company can be found.

The geographical location of the towns shows that the country is divided into two parts (*Figure 9*). The most important companies can be found in the western part of Slovakia. To the east of the Liptovský Mikuláš – Krupina line, there are only very few such important companies. Especially in the borderland region along the Polish border and in the broad area between Banská Bystrica and Košice, more exactly, between Banská Bystrica and the Ukrainian border, important, large companies are completely missing.

## 6.4  Education as a factor of urban development

In recent years the most obvious sign of adjustment to the new conditions was if a town or city provided higher education. In the party-state era there were two towns, Bratislava and Košice, which had independent multi-disciplinary higher educational institutions that trained students for several professions. Besides these, there were two in Nitra (pedagogy and agricultural engineering) and a faculty (of forestry) in Zvolen, but after 1990 new universities were established in several towns. All in all, there are 20 higher educational institutions in Slovakia: apart from the two above mentioned cities, they are locvated in Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Prešov, Ružomberok, Trnava, Trenčín, Komárno, Zvolen and Žilina. The nine private universities have the most peculiar list of settlement names, because besides the big cities, like Bratislava, Prešov and Trenčín, there are small towns, like Skalica and Sládkovičovo, which have such institutions.

Figure 9

*The geographical location of the 180 most important urban companies, 2005*
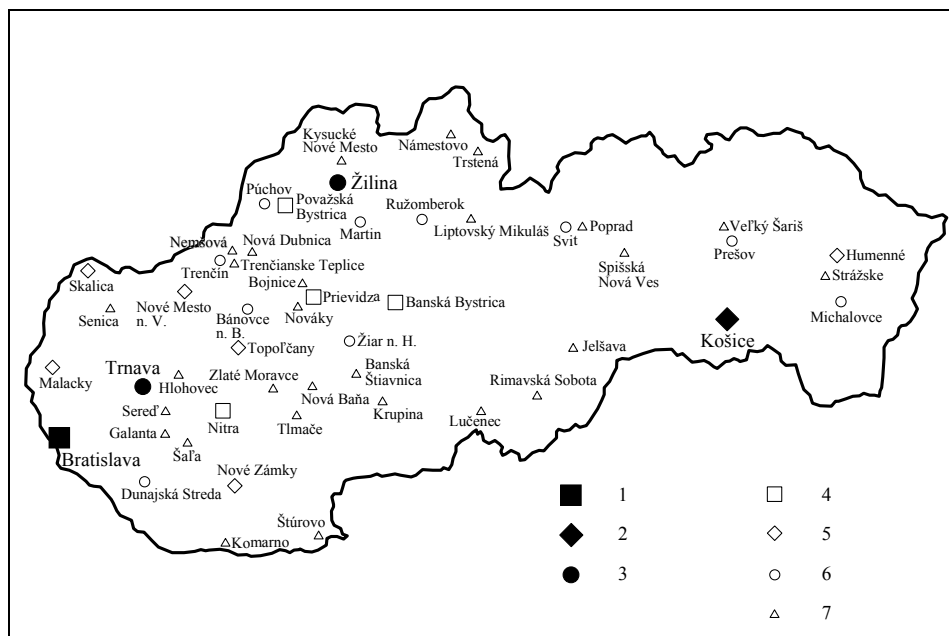


*Legend:* 1 – 78 companies;  2 – 8 companies; 3 – 6 companies; 4 – 4 companies; 5 – 3 companies;
6 – 2 companies; 7 – 1 company.
*Source:* www.etrend.sk.

The appearance of private universities does not mean sharp competition with state institutions, because they only make up 10.3% of all the departments, 2.6% of full-time students and 6.3% of lecturers. The 22.8% proportion of part-time students indicate that private universities have discovered and are trying to meet the special needs of the people who are employed.

The outstanding role of Bratislava is obvious but higher education in Slovakia is not really concentrated in one town. Only 25.9% of all the departments, 34.9% of all full-time students and 37.9% of lecturers can be found in Bratislava. The higher rate of lecturers indicates the outstanding importance of Bratislava in education and research. The high rate of foreign students (43.8%) is a sign of the good reputation of the universities in the city.

## 7 Towns along the Hungarian and Slovak border

In spite of all the well-grounded criticism, Bratislava has become an increasingly important regional centre since the country was declared independent in 1993, but especially since Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004. With the iron curtain pulled down and the checked border (the external border of the EU) shifted to the east, i.e. with the Schengen system set up, the capital city has become an important development area of the European Union. Its geographical location is unique, because it can be found on the western edge of the country. According to the interpretation of Slovak analysts, this eastern capital city is the closest to the Western European countries, to the culture of the west, so Bratislava can be regarded as the gateway between the east and the west.

Developers, who can foresee future processes, first became conscious of the Vienna-Bratislava relation. They pointed out that, with the iron curtain pulled down, this region would be the laboratory of integration, because there were striking differences between the two capital towns, which would lead to the rise of Bratislava, the weaker party (*Mastilak,* 2004). For centuries there were no institutionalized relations between the two towns, and what is more, during the decades of the cold war both of them lost importance both within their own countries and in the two world systems. Now this region may become the centre for Central Europe. Its administrative role, rapidly growing economic weight and the importance of education and research concentrated there may contribute to its stepping on a growth trajectory.

Concerning transportation, the town is in an outstanding position, because it lies at the crossing point of several important roads. Both the road Prague–Bratislava–Budapest and that of Cracow–Žilina–Bratislava–Vienna increase its significance. However, setting up a hierarchy regarding traffic, it can be stated that Brno, Prague and Vienna are the busiest compared to other, more remote centres. Owing to the cold war conflicts, there are still no motorways to Vienna, but there is a scheduled hydrofoil service, and a direct tram-line, which started to operate in 1914, is once again being built between Vienna and Bratislava. This is necessary first of all because of the economic gravitation of Vienna, since thousands of people commute to work to the Austrian capital every day (ODPM, 2006).

In the town there are companies of utmost importance representing each industrial sector. Financial service provision also contributes to the significance of the town. Except for the Žilina-based Dexia Bank, the centre of each bank can be found in Bratislava, but the headquarters of the large insurance companies and financial investors are also located there. The three most important universities of the town (Comenius University, the University of Economics and the Slovak University of Technology) train the most eminent professionals and this is where most researchers work.

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The capital city was the first to plan a way out of the economic crisis of the 1990s. The dominance of the machine industry, the manufacture of arms, and the wave of bankruptcies resulting from this monocentric structure led to a difficult situation. By locating Volkswagen there in 1991, the town made the first model decision. A few years after launching car manufacturing of international significance there, the value produced there accounted for 10% of the GDP and 25% of exports in Slovakia. The appearance and prosperity of Volkswagen attracted further companies and suppliers to the country.

In Csallóköz, along the border, people are involved primarily in agricultural activities and the food industry. Consequently, this region is much poorer than the more industrialized northern regions. A famous sugar factory was located in *Dunajská Streda* under French ownership until 2007. At present only Tauris Danubia, a meat processing company, represents the food industry. Industrial activities can only be found in spots. The foundation of the South Korean Samsung factory in *Galanta*, which employs about two thousand people, was an important step. The Duslo chemical factory, which used to produce rubber and artificial fertilizers, was established in *Šaľa* in 1958. At present they specialize in producing mainly insecticides. The Smurfit Kappa factory, which produces wrapping paper, is based in *Štúrovo*. *Komárno* is the most important economic centre of the region along the Danube. It has its own shipyard and this is where the largest shoe factory in the country (Swiss Rieker) can be found. The largest port of the country between Vienna and Budapest is also in Komárno. In addition, János Selye University, the only university with Hungarian as its language of education, can be found there. To meet the needs of the car manufacturing companies the electric bulb factory of the German company Osram was built in *Nové Zámky*. In *Hurbanovo* Heineken operates the former Arany Fácán brewery, which they bought in 1995.

The towns *Veľký Krtíš* and *Rimavská Sobota* and their districts can be characterized as underdeveloped agricultural areas with an extremely low level of industrialisation. In *Lučenec* there is a furniture factory.

*Košice* is the second-largest regional centre of the country, but it lags behind Bratislava in every respect. It is a town with a central role, but only at a regional level as the centre of Eastern Slovakia. It has hardly any institutions of national importance. It is a transport and communication junction point, however, rather at the level of opportunities, because, although it is involved in the motorway plans, this is only as a destination rather than as a starting point. There is only a short section of about 20 km between Košice and Prešov which has already been built. The infrastructure and traffic of its airport lag behind those of Bratislava. It has no navigable river, either. Besides the plan for the new motorway, which would connect the town with the western part of the country, the motorway to Uzhhorod is also still on the drawing board. To Ukraine the town is only connected by the

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broad-gauge railway, built to satisfy the raw material demand of the city iron-works. It has three universities (the University of Technology, P.J. Šafárik University and the Veterinary University) to train the new generation of professionals. The experts trained there are also employed in the plants of the large automotive manufacturers.

Undoubtedly, Košice was turned from a small provincial town into an industrial centre of national importance by the ironworks, which was built in the 1960s (Ironworks of Eastern Slovakia). After that the inflow of the inhabitants made it necessary for the town to build huge housing estates and service provision units for them, all the more necessary since in the golden age of the factory, it employed 24,000 people. The crisis of the ironworks, a typically communist industrial establishment, was overcome by the Pittsburg-based US Steel buying it for five hundred million US dollars and a promissory note of seven hundred million dollars for modernisation (US Steel Košice). As a result of its modernisation, the factory contributes to the developing Slovak auto industry by plate rolling. At present there are about 16,000 people working in the ironworks, the largest industrial plant of the country.

The *Michalovce*, *Trebišov* and *Rožnava* districts belong to the mixed (industrial and agricultural) districts. Košice emerges from these environs. In the environs of Michalovce there are brown and black coal mines and places of gas occurrence.

The economic weakness of the towns in the borderland region is especially striking if we have the dynamically developing towns in the valley of the river Váh in mind, where besides the car manufacturing plants, the most highly developed sector, various kinds of plants of modern industries and services can be found.

The *Regional Development Concept of Slovakia*, which was published in 2001, also emphasized the importance of towns when it suggested the development of settlement-groups according to gravitation zones.

The following towns are the main junctions in Slovakia (*Figure 10*). There are four pairs of towns whose joint development is beginning to result in the emergence of important economic regions. The most highly developed pair of towns are, of course, Bratislava, the capital city (and its close environs) and Trnava, not far from it. Another pair of towns is Košice and Prešov, the only development centres in the east. As a result of conscious planning, two town pairs emerge in the middle of the country, that of Banská Bystrica and Zvolen and of Žilina and Martin, in the valley of the river Váh. In addition, the towns Trenčín and Nitra represent a breakthrough, and are economic and gravitation centres. Slovak literature also regards the joint strengthening of administrative, educational (in a wider sense: service providing) and economic service providing functions (trade,

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finance) as the basis ensuring the increased importance of towns (*Slavik–Kožuch– Bačik*, 2005).

Figure 10

*Developed urban grativation zones and backward districts in Slovakia*
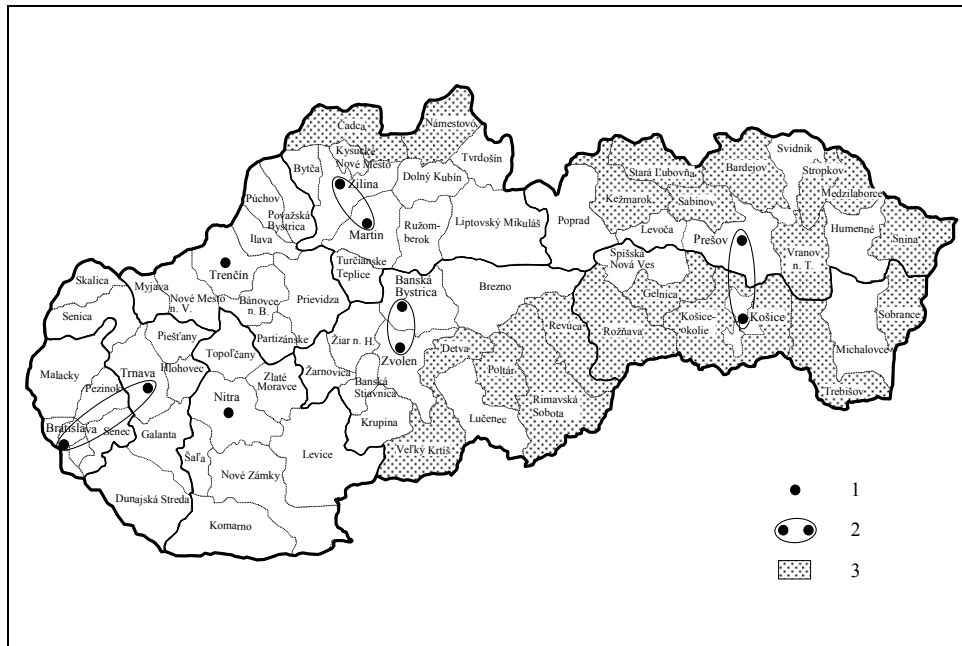


*Legend:* 1 – Development centre, 2 – Towns and cities growing together, 3 – Underdeveloped district.
*Source:* Author's construction.

The areas apart from the listed towns belong to the less developed or backward areas. They are first of all towns, which can be considered as internal peripheries, such as Detva, Poltár, Gelnica, Sabinov and Vranov nad Topľou, together with their districts, i.e. with the villages not far from them. The majority, however, can be found along the border and are considered borderland peripheries, like Čadca and Námestovo not far from the Czech and Polish borders, or Kežmarok, Stará Ľubovňa, Bardejov, Stropkov, Medzilaborce and Snina along the Polish border, Sobrance by the Ukrainian border and Veľký Krtíš, Rimavská Sobota, Revúca, Rožnava and Trebišov along the Hungarian border. All in all, these settlements divide the country into two parts along a Veľký Krtíš–Kežmarok axis, into a western, more developed and an eastern, less developed part.

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Thus, in the Hungarian and Slovak borderland region there are towns at all levels of development; from Bratislava, which is developed to a European level, through the towns along the Danube, which are fairly developed compared to the typical Slovak development levels, to the backward Eastern Slovak towns, of which only Košice emerges representing the level of a highly developed city (*Korec*, 2007).

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