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## BOOK REVIEW: SLOVAKS IN SERBIA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE CULTURE

Andrej Vaščík\*

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**SKLABINSKÁ, M., MOSNÁKOVÁ, K.:** *Slováci v Srbsku z aspektu kultúry.* Nový Sad : Ústav pre kultúru vojvodinských Slovákov, 2012. 399 p. ISBN 978-86-87947-06-1.

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Mgr. art. **Milina Sklabinská** (born on the December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1978 in Báčska Palanka in Vojvodina in Serbia) graduated from the University of Arts in Belgrade, where she successfully defended her thesis *Cultural Policy Based on Facts – Building of Databases about the Culture of Slovaks in Vojvodina* in December 2009. Nowadays, she works as director of the Institute for the Culture of Slovaks in Vojvodina in Novi Sad. She has actively participated in many projects for the support of culture such as organising conferences about Slovak music in Vojvodina in 2005 – 2012, organising the conference "Strategic Development of Culture of Slovaks in Serbia in 2006", participating in project of support for young artists called Young Talents in 2006 and Digitalisation of the Collection of Slovak Songs in the Museum of Vojvodina realised in 2007. She has actively participated in many other events. **Katarína Mosnáková** works as professional assistant at the Institute for Culture of Slovaks in Vojvodina in Novi Sad. She is successful singer, dancer, folk choreographer and teacher from Vojvodina.

**M. Sklabinská** and **K. Mosnáková** co-authored the reviewed book entitled *Slovaks in Serbia from the Point of View of the Culture*, which was published in the Slovak language. The book was published in Novi Sad in 2012 in the Slovak language thanks to the support of the autonomous government of Vojvodina and the Slovak agency for international development cooperation called SlovakAid. The book offers information about the history and the cultural

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life of Slovaks in Vojvodina. The authors also cooperated with other institutions from the Slovak Republic during writing of the book. The list of these institutions is published at the end of the book. The institutions mentioned in the book are, for instance, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and Slovak National Library. The cooperation with these institutions and the use of many relevant book and internet resources offers evidence that the content of the book is of high quality.

The purpose of the book is to offer complex view about life of Slovaks living in Vojvodina. It is important to say the book offers complex information about towns and villages inhabited by the Slovak minority. The book contains thirty – four parts dealing with the specific location inhabited by the Slovak minority or with important influence of the Slovak culture. One larger part deals with the town of Novi Sad. Although the number of the members of the Slovak minority is not so large, Novi Sad deserves attention as the capital of Vojvodina. It is also the centre managing the cultural activities of the Slovak minority. A reader can receive interesting information about important historical Slovak figures that lived in Novi Sad, like linguist and Slavist **P. J. Šafárik** (1795 – 1861), the director of the first Serbian Orthodox grammar school, today known as Zmaj – Jovovo. The authors also mention the list of institutions in Novi Sad which are important from the point of view of the cultural development and the promotion of the culture of the Slovak minority, for example Radio – Television of Vojvodina transmitting documentaries about persons and customs of the Vojvodina’s Slovaks or Institute for the Culture of the Slovaks in Vojvodina. The authors also mention many other towns and villages inhabited by the Slovak minority. We can mention the village of Jánošík, Slankamenské vinohrady, Hložany or Lug as interesting locations. The authors introduce geographical information about every village, its brief history, ethnical and confessional composition.

It is important to point out the book has many positive aspects. The introduction of the book written by **M. Sklabinská** contains complex, brief and clear information about the Slovak minority in Vojvodina. At the same time, the introductory part contains information about Slovak language used in Vojvodina. This part of the book was written by Dr. **J. Glovňa**, the lecturer of the Slovak language and the culture at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. Thanks to these introductory parts the reader from Slovakia can receive basic and complex information about the issue.

The parts dealing with particular villages and towns contain maps of the

locations too. This helps the reader to have information about the precise location of the villages. Moreover, the book contains colourful photos about interesting places worth visiting in the respective villages. For example, the part dealing with the village of Hložany contains a few photos of the nature situated near the Danube River because the area is important for recreation during the hot days in summer. The part dealing with the village of Lug contains photos of the beautiful nature depicting the natural park Vorovo.

Each part dealing with the villages contains interesting places and cultural events recommended for foreign visitors visiting particular village. The village of Slankamenské vinohrady is famous because of its vineyards and the visitors are recommended to take part in the events concerning wine. Jánošík is the village known for many cultural events with international dimensions as well. The authors mention the Fishermen Day which takes place in beautiful natural area on the bank of the canal Danube – Tisa. Hundreds of fishermen participate in the event. The international folk festival is organised every year in November and even Slovaks from abroad participate. It is also important to mention the capital Novi Sad which offers for the tourists to visit many historical monuments, e.g. Petrovaradin fortress, which is also called the Gibraltar on the Danube. Novi Sad has many interesting medieval monuments as well. The authors, like in the other cases, also introduce the list of important cultural events with international dimensions. For instance, they introduce the radio competition of the youth within which the pupils from primary and secondary schools participate, including participants from Slovakia and Hungary. On the other hand, the conference of the musicologists and musical experts is meeting of the musicians not only from Serbia but also from Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. Even the Petrovaradin fortress is important from the point of view of the international cultural relations. The authors introduce festivals which take place there and Slovak artists that usually participate in the events. The Petrovaradin fortress is place of these cultural events.

A few pages of the book are also dedicated to the capital of Serbia, Belgrade. Although the capital is not situated in Vojvodina, thanks to its location near the region, its position as capital and its statute as cultural centre of Slovaks living in Serbia, Belgrade certainly deserves attention in the book. The authors, like in the case of other locations, describe the brief history of important Slovaks having lived in Belgrade. They mention names of important Slovaks like **J. Šafárik**, numismatist and museologist, nephew of **P. J. Šafárik**. The authors also mention important cultural associations which were established by the

representatives of the Slovak and Czech minority living in Serbia. Except for the historical development they also introduce cultural activities realized in cooperation with the Slovak Republic. The authors mention cultural events organised by the Slovak and Czech minority supported by the Slovak and Czech embassies in Belgrade.

To conclude, we could say the book offers complex view of the history, cultural life and international cooperation of the Slovak minority living in the Serbian Vojvodina. The book is enriched with the positions of the locations on the map and colourful photos as well. Its reader may find every important pieces of information about the Slovaks living in Vojvodina. The book is dedicated to broad public. The information included in the book can be used by everybody who is interested in Vojvodina and life of Slovaks living in the region. It can be useful both for experts and for general public. For instance, it is very useful for historians who deal with the history of the region. It can be interesting for international relations experts too, mainly for those who focus on the cultural dimension of foreign relations. Experts in geography, art or culture can also find useful pieces of information. The book is also available for common people as well who are simply interested in the region and they would like to visit places with interesting cultural and historical sites or beautiful nature.

That is why we consider the book as important contribution, as it offers complex information about the Slovak community in Vojvodina and at the same time it is dedicated virtually to everyone interested in the region, both to experts and general public.