THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK DEAF COMMUNITY DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract
The paper deals with the history of care and education of people who are deaf and hard of hearing and the development of the Slovak Deaf Community in the 20th century. It presents the existence of institutes and schools for deaf pupils and later for pupils with hearing impairment in Slovakia, as well as civic associations of the deaf. It explains the views on the use of sign language in the teaching. The paper introduces job opportunities and sports activities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as the accessibility of mass media.

Key words
history, 20th century, care, deaf, Slovak deaf community

Introduction

The history of care and education for deaf people in Slovakia is rich and diverse, reflecting the complex process of integration and acceptance of this community in society. It is also related to the use of sign language and the opinions of professionals about this language. From establishing the first institutes and later schools for deaf pupils that appeared on the territory of Slovakia to the current educational institutions, a system has developed that tries to respond to the needs of pupils with hearing impairment. These institutions have played a key role in developing education and social integration for people who are deaf and hard of hearing while gradually adapting to changing social and legislative conditions. Over the years, civic associations have also emerged to advocate for the rights and interests of deaf people. These organisations support education and employment and promote sign language, thus contributing to its visibility in society. The debate on using sign language in teaching has become an essential part of this issue, with differing views on its integration into the educational process.

This paper presents the development of care and education for deaf people in Slovakia, specifically in the 20th century. It will analyse existing institutions and organisations and provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the deaf community.

Text about the concise history of the care and education of deaf individuals around the globe.

The historical development of the education of deaf people started in the ancient period when Plato and Aristotle primarily expressed negative views about deaf people. Aristotle contended that deaf people could not receive an education, which shaped the perception of deaf education for centuries (Lee, 2004; Kemaloğlu & Kemaloğlu; 2012; Pfau et al., 2012). However, in the later Middle Ages, evidence of Deaf people's ability to learn began to emerge, primarily through the works of humanists such as Rudolf Agricola and Girolamo Cardano (Kemaloğlu & Kemaloğlu, 2012; Pfau et al., 2012). In the 16th century, the first efforts to educate the deaf began in Spain, first led by the Benedictine monk Pedro Ponce de León (Lee, 2004; Pfau et al., 2012). In the 18th century, 1760, Charles Michel de l'Épée opened the first public institute for deaf people in Paris and developed a signing system throughout Europe. Subsequently, Samuel Heinicke promoted oral education in Germany, which led to

the division of methods into manual and oral. In the 20th century, deaf education shifted towards oralism. The International Congress on the Education of the Deaf was held in Milan in 1880 when sign language was not accepted (Eriksson, 1998). In the following decades, unsatisfactory results emerged in the reading performance of deaf pupils, leading to new approaches such as total communication, including all communication forms. Thanks to total communication, it was based on the fact that in 1960, William Stokoe wrote the first linguistic study on sign language structure. He proved that sign language is natural and full-fledged (Shanker, 2000; Johnston & Schembri, 2007).

Methodological anchoring of the paper

This paper examines the development of the Deaf community in the 20th century using the historical research method. This method aims to gather knowledge from the past, specifically from the 20th century period, and record it. In historical research, we applied the so-called direct method, which consists of analysing and obtaining historical facts by examining relevant sources (Zounek & Simane, 2014). From the chronological point of view, this paper uses the progressive method of historical research, which analyses historical events according to their logical temporal sequence. This research aims to collect and analyse facts to answer the research questions: *What was the history of the care and education of deaf, later people with hearing impairment in Slovakia in the 20th century? How did the Deaf community develop in the 20th century? What was the opinion about using sign language used of deaf people?*

Content analysis was used in collaboration with the historical research method to answer these research questions. Information regarding the development of the Slovak deaf community throughout the 20th century is primarily sourced from five books, three of which are by the Slovak author Pleva (1994, 1995, 2006), collectively titled *The Development of Organized Care for the People with Hearing Impairment in Slovakia. Parts 1 – 3*) [original Slovak title: *Rozvoj organizovanej starostlivosti o sluchovo postihnutých na Slovensku* (1. až 3. časť)], one book by the Slovak author Lechta (2016) with the title *Constituting Special Education Theory and Practice* [original Slovak title: *Konštituovanie špeciálnopedagogickej teórie a praxe*] and one by the Czech author Hruby (1999) with the title *The Large Illustrated Guide to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Following their Destiny. Part 1.)* [original Czech title: *Velký ilustrovaný průvodce neslyšících a nedoslýchavých po jejich vlastním osudu. 1. díl*].

Chronology of care and education of deaf people in the 20th century

Text regarding statistical data on individuals with hearing impairment. In the 1900 census of Hungary, 65,266 individuals with disabilities (physical, visual, and hearing) were documented, including 12,344 schoolchildren. Most of them grew up without the possibility of obtaining a basic education or an apprenticeship in a trade. These people remained unemployed and became freeloaders, thieves, beggars or vagrants. According to the results of the above census, the number of people with hearing impairment was the second highest among people with all disabilities. There were 22,126 of them, including 5,361 school children with hearing impairment. Of this number, 4 972 people with hearing impairment lived in Slovakia, of whom 1 216 were schoolchildren. At the end of the 19th century, no institution existed for deaf children in Slovakia. Before that, there were institutes in Bratislava (1833 – 1872, 1880 – 1892) and Liptovský Mikuláš (1835 – 1849), but they did not last long. However, the Liptovský Mikuláš Institute was the first Israelite institute in Hungary (Pleva, 1994).

Picture 1: The first schools for deaf children in Slovakia (Source: the author).

Deaf children are considered abandoned. In 1901, the Hungarian Parliament passed a law requiring the state to provide food and clothing for all abandoned children. Already in the school year 1906/1907, deaf pupils in institutions were considered abandoned children. Individuals from low-income families received state funds to cover housing, food, and clothing expenses. Consequently, this was perceived as a demonstration of support from the state (ibid.).

The town of Jelšava is the first institute founded in the 20th century. A new institute has been established in Jelšava, situated in the southeast of Slovakia, where the education of deaf pupils commenced in October 1901. The institute was officially called *The Andrej Cházár State-Supported Institute for the Deaf and Blind*. In this institute, pupils were taught basketry and brush-making as part of courses in domestic crafts (ibid.).

Other constitutions are in the early 20th century. In October 1903, the teaching of deaf pupils began in the centre of Slovakia, namely in Kremnica. The institute was called *The State-Supported Municipal Institute for the Deaf*. From 1903 to 1919, 1,002 pupils received primary education in this institute. Even then, the institute was one of Hungary's leading and most significant. It was the first in the number of educated children and in its teachers' pedagogical and publicist activities. This institute is still functioning today. In 1904, an institute was established in Uzhhorod in Subcarpathian Rus, part of Czechoslovakia until 1945. During the First World War, military hospitals were set up in the buildings of all the above-mentioned institutes, and no or limited teaching occurred there (ibid.).

In October 1905, the teaching of deaf children also began in the south-west of Slovakia, namely in Bratislava. The institute was called *the State-Supported Institute for the Deaf* and was the second institute in Bratislava. The location of the institute was provisional for several years and changed frequently. The management of the institute and representatives of the city sought a definitive spatial solution for the construction of a purpose-built building. A plot of land at the intersection of Moskovská Street and Odborárske Square was selected from multiple offers. In March 1910, construction commenced and was completed the following year. Its value amounted to 600,000 Austrian crowns, and most of the costs were covered by charity. The deaf pupils thus gained a modern purpose-built building in Baroque style.

On the front of the building is a relief depicting the teaching of deaf children, which is still preserved, along with the original external façade. The 1911/1912 school year was conducted in the new building, which was specifically designed for the education of deaf individuals. The institute served for three full years, but in the fall of 1914, this building was converted into a military hospital and vacated for teaching until the fall of 1919, but not for long (ibid.).

Picture 2: The relief depicting the teaching of deaf children (Source: the author).

However, establishing the Czechoslovak state complicated the conditions for further development of the Institute in Bratislava. Bratislava began to develop as the centre of Slovakia's political, economic and cultural life and, therefore, did not have sufficient spatial conditions. The city leadership recklessly abandoned an important humanistic institution, such as the Institute for the Deaf, when it sold its building to the state for 3,000,000 Slovak crowns. The state set up the Education Department's office in the building. The sale and purchase agreement was signed with all parties' consent, ensuring that the institute would be temporarily relocated to a manor house in Dubnica nad Váhom. The word 'temporarily' was also included in the relevant Ministry of Education and National Education decree on 28 January 1921 (ibid.).

During the Second World War, armament production grew near Dubnica nad Váhom, and new premises and workers' accommodation were urgently needed. The Dubnica armaments factory also sought to acquire the building of the institute. As a result, in 1942, the Ministries of Education and the Interior decided to relocate the institute to Prešov. Thus, the notion of a "temporary" relocation of the institute from Bratislava to Dubnica nad Váhom effectively ceased in 1943. A new institute was established in Prešov (1942 – present) (ibid.).

Our institutes were only established in the first half of the 20th century, which means a significant lag compared to developed countries in Europe, where the first institutes for pupils with disabilities began to be established in the 18th century (Lechta, 2016). The institutes' premises were often inadequate, and the endowments were insufficient. For a brief illustration, at least two figures can be cited:

- From 1933, from an institute for deaf people in Kremnica – two children slept on one bed, somewhere five children slept on two beds (Fajcik, 1971),
- From 1954, from the institute for the deaf in Lučenec – as far as the pupils' hygiene was concerned, there were 70 to 75 pupils at that time. The girls bathed in a bathroom with two bathtubs, while the boys bathed in the basement in the laundry room. Water was brought in barrels from a nearby artesian well and gradually heated in a boiler. Bathing lasted from noon to nine o'clock in the evening (Muslova, 1974).

Teaching in Hungarian. Pupils in all the institutes were educated, with exceptions, in Hungarian until 1919. Education was delivered through the oral method. It was a mistake that the government and the local authorities did not consider the nationality principle when setting up the institutes. Sometimes, children of Slovak nationality, following their parents, were taught in Hungarian. When they returned home, based on what they had learned, they could not communicate with their parents, siblings and others who spoke only Slovak. After the war in 1918, Austria-Hungary broke up into several separate states. In this context, the so-called Hungarian period in developing organised care for deaf people also ended. This period brought many benefits to deaf people, such as education and the development of organised care to improve their social status (Pleva, 1994).

Teaching was in both Slovak and Czech. After the First World War, solving the shortage of Slovak teachers in the three institutes in Bratislava, Kremnica, and Jelšava was necessary. Additional efforts were necessary to recruit teachers proficient in Slovak or Czech to ensure the smooth operation of education. In this period, the help of teachers from Czech institutes who came to Slovakia to help teach and further develop the institutes for deaf people was invaluable. Our lagging behind was not only in comparison with the developed countries of Europe but also in comparison with the situation in the Czech Republic (ibid.).

It is important to note that different educational laws were in effect in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These differences persisted during the establishment of Czechoslovakia in terms of the education of pupils with disabilities. In the Czech Republic, the most important measure in the care of people with disabilities was the Act on Educational and Teaching Institutions for Deaf and Blind Children of 1890, which at that time dealt with the problem of special education and teaching in a very progressive manner. The Hungarian Education Act of 1868 contained no provision obliging the maintainers of schools to establish special schools as well. In many areas (e.g. the exemption of failing pupils from schooling), this law was even in force until 1948. Therefore, it is not surprising that institutional (special education) care in the Czech Republic developed much more rapidly than in Slovakia (for example, the Institute for the Deaf in Prague was established as early as 1786), and conditions were much more favourable in the newly established state compared to Slovakia. Later, however, due to the political situation – the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which was established in March 1939, and the establishment of the independent Slovak state, teachers of Czech nationality had to abandon their institutes because of nationalism. For example, in 1939, in the Kremnica Institute, the new school administration dismissed 12 professional teachers of Czech nationality, and their places were filled by Slovak teachers who had no professional qualifications and were complete beginners in the education of the deaf (Pleva, 1994; Lechta, 2016).

The state authorities also sensitively considered the teaching of children whose parents were of Hungarian, German and Ruthenian nationality. Many parents in the southern regions of Slovakia hoped their children would continue to receive education in the Hungarian language. Initially, the institute had a Hungarian branch in Jelšava, but the Ministry of Education established a separate institute with Hungarian as the language of instruction in Komárno. Children of parents of Ruthenian nationality could attend the institute in Uzhhorod. Children of German nationality could attend a German institute in the Czech Republic (Pleva, 1994).

Development of the Institute in Kremnica. Kremnica became the centre of organised institutional care for deaf people in Slovakia in the 1920s and 1930s. In the school year 1918/1919, the institute started with two classes, with up to seven grades and 56 pupils. In the 1937/1938 school year, 266 pupils were already attending the institute, and in the mid-1930s, this number increased even further. During the 20 school years, as many as 4 752 pupils attended the institute, proving that the institute was one of the largest in Europe (ibid.).

From the school year 1922/1923, a Continuation School for Tradesmen (the so-called secondary school) opened alongside the institute. Initially, it had a shoemaking workshop for boys and a tailoring workshop for girls. Later, it was expanded to incorporate carpentry and men's tailoring workshops. Viliam Gaňo, who took over as director in 1933, also contributed to the increasing authority of the institute. With its good results, the institute also gained international recognition, as evidenced by the frequent visits of foreign experts in special education. It became a mecca in the education of deaf people and the centre of the birth and further development of special education in Slovakia (ibid.).

Homes for deaf people are also in Kremnica and Olichov. The deaf adults who have completed the continuation school were also taught. In the autumn of 1924, a Home for the Deaf-Mute was established in Kremnica. The home provided deaf adults with accommodation, meals, and even work as carpenters, basket makers, bookbinders and art toy manufacturers. The home housed 26 to 30 inmates – girls and boys. Later, they worked in various branches of agricultural production – in the fields and keeping domestic animals. The home also cared for their non-work activities, organising educational courses, lip reading courses, entertainment, and sports (ibid.).

The number of deaf people was increasing, so in 1937, an agricultural farm, part of the forest and pastures in Olichov near Zlaté Moravce were purchased. In 1938, a home for 80 inmates was built. The inmates were also engaged in fieldwork, keeping domestic animals and various work tasks. In 1943, for example, as many as 17 grain wagons were harvested in the fields of Olichov. The home economy provided housing and employment opportunities for abandoned deaf citizens between the ages of 15 and 65, orphans, people experiencing homelessness, as well as those who often did not even know their names and did not know their origins. In exceptional cases, they also found lifelong care there (ibid.).

Text about the proposal to reform education for deaf children. In June 1919, the civic association *Provincial Society of Care of Deaf-Mute* submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education to reform the education of deaf people throughout the Czechoslovak Republic. Ten principles were listed in the proposal. For this paper, we will choose two principles that we consider to be key:

- Compulsory eight-year schooling will be introduced by law for all deaf children in specially established institutions.

- It will be taught by the oral-spelling method for normally gifted children and the combined method for less gifted children (Hruby, 1999).

Attempt to introduce compulsory schooling. In 1922, a draft law on the education of deaf children in the Czechoslovak Republic was drawn up. Compulsory schooling lasts nine years and usually begins in the sixth year of life. Unfortunately, one of the deputies who introduced the bill died shortly afterwards. After her death, no one attempted to enforce the law (ibid.).

***The Society for the Care of the Deaf-Mute* had prepared a strict position.** Under pressure from *the Society for the Care of the Deaf-Mute*, the Provincial Administrative Committee adopted a strict position about sign language at its meeting in September 1923. For this paper, we will select three relevant positions:

- All deaf children, if their mental faculties permit, will be taught by the purely oral method. Only children with weaker talents may select methods to be used according to the degree and extent of the pupils' mental ability. Using the sign and combined teaching methods, i.e., combining oral speech with sign language, is not permissible. Less gifted children who impede the progress of other children in the classroom will be educated in special departments.
- Teachers of deaf people will receive a year's extra pay if they do not use sign language in schools.
- The school inspector, Victor Parma, will supervise the teaching the oral method in all institutes. (He has dramatically opposed using sign language in teaching.) (ibid).

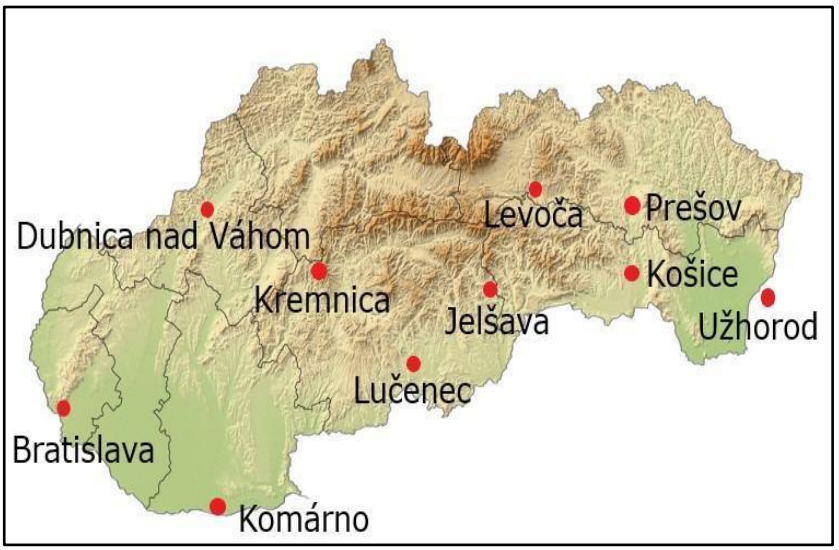
Text about institutional care between 1938 and 1945. At the beginning of November 1938, based on the Vienna Arbitration between Germany and Italy, Hungary occupied part of the territory of southern Slovakia. The towns of Jelšava (1901 – 1939), Komárno (1921 – 1939) and Košice (1924 – 1938), which had housed institutions for deaf people, were annexed to Hungary. The deaf institutes there practically ceased to exist. However, problems arose with the training of children, and therefore, the Hungarian school administration set up a new institute in Lučenec in July 1939. The institute also had a continuation school where apprentices could gain qualifications in men's and women's tailoring, weaving and horticulture (Pleva, 1994). The school in Lučenec is still functioning today.

Teaching without sign language. Since the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, instruction has been conducted using the oral method. This approach continued during the communist regime, which lasted from February 1948 until November 1989 in Czechoslovakia. Few dared question the method, which promised the full inclusion of deaf children in hearing society. Only the parents of children who had already undergone the oral method were painfully aware that the reality differed significantly from the expectations of the oral method proponents (Hruby, 1999).

Nationalisation and categorisation of schools. Under the 1948 Education Act, all schools, including schools for deaf pupils, were nationalised. Schools for children with disabilities were then called *schools for youngsters requiring special care*. The first differentiation of pupils with hearing impairment into standard and mentally handicapped, as well as the deaf and the hard of hearing pupils, was introduced. Schools were established instead of institutions:

- *The National School for the Deaf-Mute in Bratislava* (in operation since 1929),
- *The National, Secondary and Special School for the Deaf-Mute in Kremnica* (in operation since 1903),

- *National and Secondary School for the Deaf-Mute in Prešov* (operating since 1942),
- *National and Secondary School for Deaf-Mute in Košice* (operated from 1924 to 1938, then after the war from 1945 to 1949, then from 2021 to the present),
- *National and Secondary School for the Hard of Hearing in Lučenec* (operating from 1939 until now),
- *The special school in Olichov* is for sixth – ninth-grade pupils (Pleva, 1994). (Currently, this building serves as a social services facility where few deaf clients live).



Picture 3: Schools for deaf children in Slovakia (Source: the author).

Compulsory school attendance. A school law introduced nine-year mandatory schooling for children with disabilities. It came into force at the beginning of the 1949/1950 school year (Pleva, 1995). In the 1953/54 school year, schools for hard of hearing pupils began to teach according to the curriculum for normal schools, and regular school textbooks were used (Muslova, 1974).

Boarding schools. At that time, 13 boarding schools for children, youth and adults were nationalised in Slovakia. Four were intended for deaf children and youth: two in Bratislava, one in Kremnica and one in Olichov. At that time, the boarding school was called *the State Home for the Deaf-Mute* (Pleva, 1994).

Letter of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. At the beginning of August 1950, a meeting of teachers of Czechoslovak schools was held in Ivančice, near Brno, on the problem of sign language. At this meeting, it was mentioned that on 22 July 1950, the representatives received a letter from Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, which was sent as a contribution to the discussion on linguistics. In it, J. V. Stalin compares the "language of gestures" to a hoe and the "language of sound" to a contemporary caterpillar tractor with a five-row plough and a tractor mower. At the end of the meeting, the teachers decided that deaf pupils could best be prepared for life by the oral method, which was an all-round proven fact (Hruby, 1999).

There are requirements on the issue of sign language. After the meeting held in Ivančice, the meeting was continued at the Ministry of Education in March 1951. The chairman of the civil association of *the Central Unity of the Disabled*, J. T. Auředníček, put forward the following demands:

- Natural sign language should be used in all levels of schools to facilitate teaching.
- The separate teaching of sign language should be introduced as an individual subject.
- Sign language courses should be established for teachers.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Arts should initiate the study of sign language at the university.

A very heated debate followed these demands. No conclusion was reached at the meeting (ibid.).

Text about the seminar on communication in Stará Lesná in the High Tatras. After over 30 years, the discussion on using sign language in deaf education has been reignited. The debate took place at the International Seminar on Options for Improving Communication of the Hearing Impaired and their Social Inclusion. It occurred from 17 to 19 May 1984 in Stará Lesná. Interestingly, at this seminar, many people advocated the purely oral method, which had already been advocated at a meeting of the Ministry of Education in March 1951. A completely new impulse at this seminar, however, was the fundamental contribution of the Slovak linguist Jozef Mistrík. He proved that sign language is a full-fledged language with all the characteristics and immense possibilities of expression (ibid.).

The first dictionary of sign language was published in book form. The first book, *Frequency Dictionary of Sign Speech*, by Štefan Csonka, Jozef Mistrík and Ladislav Ubár, was published in 1986. It was the first dictionary on the territory of Czechoslovakia. It contained 800 of the most frequent words in Slovak and Czech and their Slovak sign language equivalents. The dictionary was mainly used to improve the education of interpreters, to improve the expression of sign language and to teach total communication. After the announcement of the linguist J. Mistrík's speech at a professional seminar and the publication of the dictionary, there was considerable interest in all information in the field of total communication, which includes all types of communication, including spoken language, the signing system (i.e. the combined system of simultaneous signing and speaking) and sign language.

The right to education using sign language is part of the School Act. After the end of the communist regime in November 1989, the entire legislation began to change rapidly. The following sentence was successfully inserted into the amendment to the School Act of 3 May 1990: *"The deaf and blind shall be ensured the right to education in their language using sign speech or Braille."* (Hruby, 1999).

A multimedia dictionary of sign language has been published for codification. In 1994, a list of 1,200 individual signs was compiled for the forthcoming separate law on the sign speech of deaf people. Subsequently 1995, the dictionary *Codification System of Sign Speech* was published as a video cassette (Vojtechovsky, 2011).

Act on Sign Speech of the Deaf People. On 26 June 1995, the National Council of the Slovak Republic deputies approved the Act on Sign Speech for the Deaf People. The draft law was prepared as early as 1993, and the collocation *sign language* was used in several paragraphs (Kmet, 1993, 1994). Unfortunately, the law was adopted only with the term *sign speech of the deaf people*, which, in our opinion, is perceived

as the ability of a sign language user to control, create and use language as a system of signs in communication.

Secret documents. At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, in connection with the emerging changes in the better position of people with disabilities in Czechoslovakia, it was often reported that documents and recommendations of various international organisations were kept secret from members of *the Union of Disabled People*. For example, the recognition of sign language was made by UNESCO in 1984, the European Parliament in 1988, and the adoption of the Act on Sign Language and Education of the Deaf in Sweden in 1981. Political and state authorities were informed (Pleva, 2006).

Categorisation of primary schools. From the 1961/1962 school year, primary schools were renamed again, and the term deaf-mute was no longer used:

- Western Slovakia:
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for deaf pupils in Bratislava on Hrdličkova Street (operating since 1833 to date),
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for the hard of hearing pupils in Bratislava on Drotárska Street (operating since 1955 to date),
- Central Slovakia:
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for deaf pupils in Kremnica (operating since 1903 to date),
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for the hard of hearing pupils in Lučenec (operating since 1939 to date),
- Eastern Slovakia:
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for deaf pupils in Prešov (operating since 1942 to date),
  - Elementary nine-year boarding school for the hard of hearing pupils in Levoča (operating since 1950).

Since the 1991/1992 school year, all the above-mentioned schools have been renamed **primary boarding schools for deaf pupils**, which no longer differentiates children and pupils according to the extent of their hearing loss. Due to the decrease in the number of pupils with hearing impairment in primary and secondary vocational schools, the structure of these schools has been reorganised. Several relevant schools are called *Joint Boarding Schools*, which include several components but have at least three organisational components: *Elementary Boarding School for pupils with hearing impairments, Primary Boarding School for Pupils with Impaired Communication Skills and Special Kindergarten Boarding School*.

Text about secondary schools for pupils with hearing impairments. When the first secondary schools for pupils with hearing impairments were established, they were initially called continuation schools. There are three secondary schools in Slovakia: in western Slovakia in Bratislava since 1947, in central Slovakia in Kremnica since 1923, and in eastern Slovakia in Prešov since 1989. Since the 1974/75 school year, the first secondary school with a high school diploma was established – *the Secondary Industrial School for Clothing for the Hearing Impaired in Kremnica*. In Czechoslovakia, until 1989, two secondary schools offered subjects with a high school diploma: the Secondary Industrial School for Clothing for the Hearing Impaired in Kremnica (since 1794) and the Grammar School for the Hearing Impaired in Prague (since 1954) (Vojtechovsky, 2011). Knowledge of Czech for deaf children from Slovakia at the grammar school in Prague and knowledge of Slovak for deaf children from the Czech Republic at the high school in Kremnica were also problems.

Deaf societies in Slovakia. Organised social life in Slovakia began to develop only at the beginning of the 20th century. Previous social life in Slovakia was not as developed as in the Czech Republic. The first Czech society – *the Support Society of the Deaf-Mute of St. Francis of Sales*, was founded in May 1868 in Prague (Hruby, 1999). When the educational activities of institutions developed in Slovakia and the first deaf graduates began to participate in social life, societies and homes were also established, founded by adult deaf people (Pleva, 1994). In addition to societies of the deaf, there were also societies for the deaf that took care of the deaf, institutions for the deaf, vocational education and employment for graduates, material security for the deaf, took care of the unemployed, sick and destitute deaf people, and contributed financially. The first such society was established in November 1919 under the *Society for the Care of the Deaf-Mute*, which was approved in January 1920. This society existed until 1950 (ibid.).

We will select several deaf societies in Slovakia in the years 1911–1950 (Pleva, 1994, 1995):

- *The Bratislava Deaf-Mute Society* was established at the institute in 1911/1912 when the institute in Bratislava acquired a modern purpose-built new building on Moskovská Street. It was the first deaf Society in Bratislava. The chairman was Ferenc Széfalusi, who worked as a teacher at this institute. On the premises of the newly built institute, the society organised social gatherings, sports activities in the gym, organised trips, social entertainment and charity events. The Ministry of the Interior approved the society's statutes only at the beginning of 1913. In the autumn of 1914, this building was converted into a military hospital, and the society probably ceased to exist.
- *Support Society of the Deaf-Mute* – a working draft of this name was prepared in November 1925. It was founded at a meeting by deaf artisans from Bratislava. The chairman was master carpenter Ľudovít Freund. Later, *the Society for the Care of the Deaf-Mute in Bratislava was renamed*. The society organised social events, cultural events, reading circles for lovers of poetry, literature, entertainment magazines, hiking clubs, football, and table tennis. The society had 62 members and branches in Hlohovec and Nitra when it was founded. After German troops occupied the Bratislava – Petržalka district at the end of 1938, the society's activities were suspended in January 1939.
- *Slovak Support Society for the Deaf-Mute in Bratislava*. In July 1945, the Bratislava Deaf decided to renew the society's activities. Ninety-one deaf people applied to become members. Although the society's activities were mainly in Bratislava, it had a nationwide scope. The society organised educational lectures, courses, reading circles, and social evenings. However, it was most active in sports activities, especially football. It had its special football section, which became a member of the Slovak Football Association.
- *"Falcon" Deaf-Mute Club Bratislava*. In 1947, deaf athletes in Bratislava united within the society to form a sports club for the deaf. The club had statutes and more than 30 members, and its communication was sign language. It also had an honorary chairman, Viliam Gaňa.
- *"Považie" Support Society of the Deaf-Mute in Trenčín* was founded in August 1945 with 39 members.
- *The Central Slovak Support Association of the Deaf-Mute in Kremnica* operated from 1931 and probably ceased to exist in the autumn of 1933.
- *The Society of the Eastern Slovak Deaf in Košice* – a preparatory association was founded between 1946 and 1948.

In 1966, Slovakia had 17 essential organisations for the deaf and the hard of hearing (Pleva, 1995).

The demise of civic associations. After the communist coup in February 1948, there was a period of the demise and liquidation of all independent civic associations of people with disabilities until 1950. In June 1949, the Central Council of the Disabled was established, which became the umbrella nationwide interest organisation of people with physical and sensory disabilities in Czechoslovakia. From 1952 to 1969, the *Union of Czechoslovak Disabled People* functioned. District Units of the Disabled were established in regional capitals and larger cities, which the Central Unit of the Disabled People managed. By the measures taken, a new term, *disabled citizens*, also began to be used. Four groups of disabled people were distinguished: physically disabled, internally disabled, visually impaired and hearing impaired (Pleva, 1995).

Number of interpreters. Deaf people felt good in their collective but isolated at the organisation's joint meetings, activities, and events. They could not hear what was being discussed, and they could not even speak. They needed sign language interpreters. Few people knew sign language, often only family members, people who are hard of hearing and some teachers. There were almost no interpreters, especially court interpreters. By the end of the 1950s, the union had 40 interpreters, which was insufficient. Later data from 1965 states that there were already 67 interpreters in the Czech Republic, and in Slovakia, there was practically no single active interpreter (Pleva, 1995).

National meeting of interpreters. In 1978, the first Slovak International Day of the Deaf was celebrated with the 1st Slovak meeting of sign language interpreters in Košice (Pleva, 2006).

Deaf sports activities. In the 1950s, deaf sports activities, such as football, handball, athletics, skiing, ice hockey, hiking, table tennis, and other disciplines, were relatively the most prosperous areas of social activity (Pleva, 1995).

Slovak Association of the Hearing Impaired. In March 1969, an independent civic interest association, the Slovak Association of the Hearing Impaired, was founded in Bratislava. For political reasons, it was dissolved in 1974. For the next 16 years, the Association of the Disabled addressed the deaf issues. Thanks to favourable conditions, the Slovak Association of the Hearing Impaired was re-founded in April 1990 (Pleva, 2006).

After World War II, there were job opportunities for deaf people. Several deaf people who qualified at special secondary schools found employment in the textile, shoe, and wood industries. Deaf educators worked in boarding schools for the deaf and two homes for the deaf-mute (Pleva, 2006).

Until the mid-1970s, only one Zlín, Czechia shoe factory employed a sign language interpreter for its 160 deaf employees. Then, in 1975, the Metal-plastic company in Bratislava employed more employees and a social worker who knew sign language. Based on the knowledge and experience of the Metal-plastic company in Bratislava and the shoe factory in Zlín, a proposal was made to create work and social centres for the deaf in companies in those production sectors that employed a more significant number of deaf people in the presence of a social worker – a sign language interpreter. Subsequently, in 1978, deaf people worked at the heavy industry enterprise Bratislava's electrical engineering plants in Bratislava. By 1987, 170 deaf workers were working there. A unique grassroots organisation of deaf youth was also established at this enterprise. The centre was also visited by the president of the World Federation of the Deaf, Dragoljub Vukotič, who praised the experiment (ibid.).

Another work-social centre for the deaf, which became an integral part of the workforce, was established in 1979 at the Horizon company in Košice. Deaf people worked there primarily in metalworking. Other centres were established, for example, at the Trenčín clothing factory in 1984, the Bratislava chemical factory in 1985, and the Integra company of various manual industries in Banská Bystrica. Many deaf people started families in the vicinity of these centres, found accommodation there, and became involved in the activities of the deaf organisation (ibid.).

Education of special educators. Slovakia and Hungary were worse in special educational care than in the Czech Republic or Austria. There was an opportunity in Hungary to obtain a university education at a higher level of education, which the Austrian (Czech) educational system did not provide. The University for the Preparation of Therapeutic and Pedagogical Professors in Budapest was established in 1906 as the first independent university in Hungary. Although there was a language barrier for many Slovaks, several important Slovak special educators (led by the founder of Slovak special education, Viliam Gaňo) graduated from this university and not only in the period under review but also later determined the trend of the development of Slovak special education. University education of special educators in Slovakia began to be implemented only after the Second World War, initially only in the form of a two-semester advanced study at the University of Pedagogy in Bratislava. Thus, the aforementioned course-based form of special education teacher education persisted in the period under review. It was not until 1967 that the Institute for Special Education Teacher Education was established at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava (Lechta, 2016).

Closed captions. On 1 May 1988, Czechoslovak Television began to broadcast teletext on a trial basis, which allowed the broadcasting of closed captions for people with hearing impairment. However, the production of the first Czechoslovak television with built-in teletext was planned for 1991. Closed captions began to be broadcast on a trial basis on 1 July 1992. Subsequently, after the division of the two states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993, Slovak Television began to broadcast closed captions on a trial basis from 1 September 1995 (Hrubý, 1999; Vojtechovský, 2011).

Television Club of the Deaf. In addition to some films about the lives of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Television Club of the Deaf was regularly broadcast on television. It was broadcast for the first time in December 1979 under the program title Echoes. A year later, in June, it was renamed Television Club of the Deaf. It is currently broadcast on Slovak television twice a month and lasts approximately 26 minutes (Pleva, 2006).

News reports for deaf people. Daily evening news programs on Czechoslovak television with interpreters for the deaf began broadcasting from Prague in 1990. Later, from 1992 until today, broadcast from Bratislava with Slovak interpreters.

Text about magazines about the deaf-mute and the deaf. In the past, magazines were also published, the publishers of which were civic associations with Czechoslovak activities or were intended for readers of Czechoslovakia. In institutions, later in schools, the name deaf-mute was used for many years, but for interest, some magazines already had the Czech name *deaf*. For example, *Self-help to the Deaf-mute* was published in 1926/1927; a year later, it was renamed *Self-help to Deaf people*. It was staffed by deaf editors and was published until 1932. Other

magazine titles: *Interests of the Deaf* (1930 – 1940), *Czechia-Slovakia Deaf* (March 1939) – two more were also staffed by deaf editors, *ABC Deaf* (1946 – 1949), and *Interests of the Deaf* (1949). In the second half of the 20th century, they continued to publish magazines with the term *Deaf* (Hrubý, 1999).

House of the Deaf in Košice. In 1984, representatives of the deaf organisation met with the mayor of Košice, who permitted the building of a cultural house for deaf people in a dilapidated building on Kováčska Street. In 1993, the reconstruction of the two buildings was completed, and the House of the Deaf was created, a unique structure for the needs of deaf people (Pleva, 2006).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we diligently searched for relevant sources that are available using the direct method of historical research and selected important information for readers of this issue. At the same time, when describing the chronology of care and education of people with hearing impairment in the 20th century, we relied on the research questions we fulfilled. Proof of this is that the history of the Slovak deaf community in the 20th century testifies to a constant effort to improve the conditions of education, integration and social support. From modest beginnings, when deaf children faced a lack of education and support, the situation improved with the creation of the first institutions and the introduction of compulsory nine-year school attendance in 1949. These institutions and boarding schools became the basis for vocational training and employment, opening the door to independence and social participation. These institutions were also the place where Slovak sign language developed. During this period, a debate on the use of sign language also developed, culminating in the 1980s and leading to the publication of the first sign language dictionary and legislative changes that ensured the right to education in sign language. These reforms, combined with developing sports activities and deaf associations, enhanced the community's identity and cohesion. Despite the complex political and social conditions and the restrictions brought about by the communist regime, the Slovak deaf community managed to organise itself, create its societies, and thus become an active participant in social life. Today, when we look at the progress that has been achieved, we can look with hope to a future in which deaf citizens will be fully involved in all aspects of social life, with recognition of their linguistic and cultural specificities.

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