

Foreword

There are areas which somehow seem to be familiar. Is it because the landscape is so spectacular: wooded ranges of mountains, valleys, hilly landscapes, meadows with meandering rivers or plains with ripening wheat? However, the Hungarian visitor can also enjoy the towns. The romantic beauty of the main squares, the size and ornaments of buildings and churches of different religions are all familiar. They may really evoke romantic memories, since what Hungarian visitors can see in the different towns of Felvidék ('Upper Hungary', today Slovakia) are the scenes they read about in the books of their youth. Wherever they go in the Carpathian Basin, they have the impression of familiarity, they feel that they have already seen or read about something similar. The long, common past is indelibly printed on their memories. It would be great to be able to read about similar experiences of Slovak, Ruthenian, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, Austrian, German, and other travellers in their writings about the towns of the Carpathian Basin, too. After all, common experiences rest upon mutuality. This experience could also be mutual; it could be shared with others, too.

A paper on towns should be objective, because it examines the events and changes of the present age. Nevertheless, the emerging questions inevitably raise some aspects of the past. The most important question rooted in the past is how the original social, linguistic, cultural, religious and human diversity has survived so many stormy decades. It is a fact that, in the case of Slovakia, we have witnessed a successful conquest, in so far as Felvidék, the annexed area, has become a completely new state and, in accordance with the original Slovak ambition of conquest, a new urban structure and new regional units have emerged, mostly intentionally, within the borders of the new state. First, the present account compares the old and the new, describes the changed con-

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ditions and then gives an account of the new fields of reviving cooperation.

My plan to write about towns along the border taking the whole of the Slovak urban structure as a starting point is not new. With long interruptions, I have been writing it for a year. Thanks are due to my sponsors, who have made it possible for me to write the present book, to my family and my colleagues for their patience.

An increasing number of books, articles, papers and writings have been published on Slovakia. Hopefully, the present publication will have its place among them.

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