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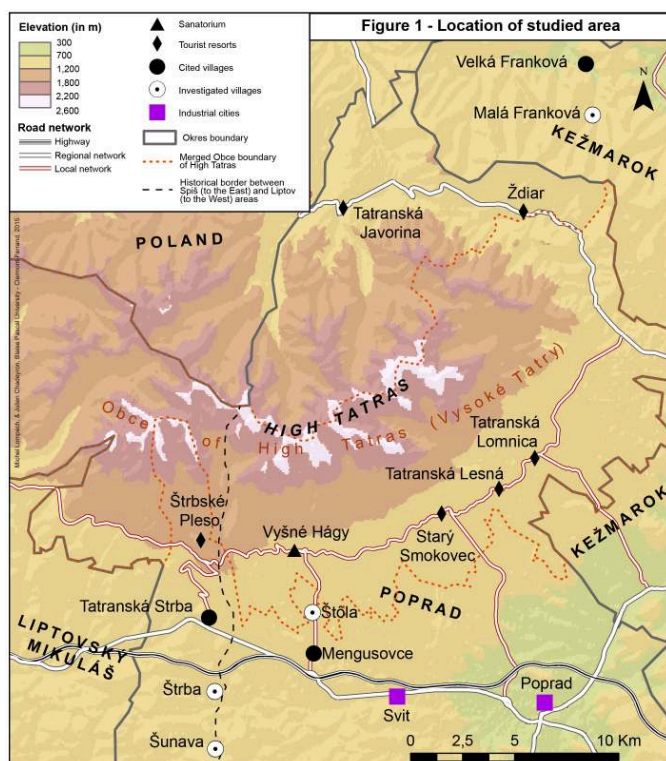
Are Past Conflicts Now Over? Oppositions to Collectivism in the Tatras

Michel Lompech

I am grateful to my colleague Daniel Ricard for his careful re-reading of this article.

- 1 The demographic fabric of the Tatras presents a mosaic of localities with a very diverse sociocultural composition and opportunities for conflictual situations that are unrivalled in Slovakia. The mountain communities there differ from each other in the extent to which they have been exposed to rural depopulation and agricultural transformation, their degree of integration into the regional economy and the importance of the Roma issue. A study of these conflicts provides the keys to an understanding of the initial processes of engaging with collectivism and the conditions of transformation during the post-socialist period. Through an observation of the forces at work in the social change of localised societies, we can identify the factors leading to success or obstruction during the different phases of modernisation that the mountain regions of Slovakia have undergone. Social change corresponds to a lasting transformation of the social system in terms of its organisation, structure and cultural models. Following the series of innovations in the Tatras arising from industrialisation and modernisation at the end of the 19th century (opening of the railway, creation of the industrial town of Svit and the development of alpine tourism), socialism imposed its collectivist programme of economic and social organisation and its project of cultural modernisation on these mountain areas. The conflicts that we will consider led to confrontations between the rural societies of three villages in the Tatras and the socialist authorities in relation to these transformations. In order to understand the implication of other sociocultural elements in the proposed modernisation, we will examine the non-conflictual modernisation of a fourth locality. The conflicts allow us to analyse local combinations of factors that led to these trajectories of collectivisation and to the processes of modernisation and of maintaining traditional social relations in mountain societies.

Location of studied area



Réalisation : Michel Lompech & Julien Chadeyron, 2015.

A conflict, a blockage and divisions

- 2 Šuňava, at the foothills of the Tatras, has the appearance of a one-street village. New houses and parallel streets indicate recent developments. There are two churches, and agricultural buildings at either end. While the visitor might perceive a single entity, there were originally two villages, twins in name and nature: the upper (Vyšná) and the lower (Nižná). Anthropologist Peter Skalník studied these villages between 1975 and 1977 and stresses their socio-economic differences: Although Nižná Šuňava covers a larger surface area (1,020 ha) than does Vyšná (507 ha), the latter was less egalitarian than the former. One family has presided over the local community in the upper village since the beginning of the 20th century, whereas the lower village has not experienced the same continuity: An emigrant who had returned from America was even the mayor during the inter-war period. Indeed, the two communities did not face up to the political changes of the 20th century in the same way (the creation of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak state, the socialist regime). Nižná reacted with suspicion and resentment to the political upheavals of the late 190s, while Vyšná collaborated with the nearby village of Štrba and its new administration, and the mayor skilfully responded to the political transformations. The two Šuňavas benefitted from the industrialisation of the Poprad Valley around Svit and from the rise of tourism in the nearby Tatras during the 1930s. The villagers took on jobs in the industries and hotels without any particular cultural resistance. The end of emigration under the Slovak State (1939–1944) even reinforced the attraction of these forms of employment, which were the only ones

available. This was the beginning of the establishment of a peasant-worker lifestyle that combined a factory job with the family farm. The monetarisation of the peasant economy took place within the family structure and was centred on the household. However, the end of isolation for the community did not entail abandoning rural traditions. These two neighbouring villages are Catholic, and the two churches serve their respective communities under a single priest. Local cohesion was cemented by religious identity: In 1946, according to local records, there were 400 confirmands in the two villages, each of which had a population of about 800.

A religious or political conflict?

- 3 The conflict that interests us took place in the summer of 1950. On the night of June 1, a bus dropped off masked and hooded activists in Nižná Šuňava. They woke the village up with their cries, lit flares and let off firecrackers in front of the priest's house. This hullabaloo was evidently an anticlerical provocation intended to challenge the rural community that the Party considered to be too attached to their priest. After the Prague coup of 1948, the socialist regime sought to assert its control over the rural areas dominated by the Church. The Catholic orders were abolished and diocesan priests arrested; the Popular Militias struggled with the Catholic Action movements for control over the local powers. A fight broke out between villagers protecting their priest and the agitators, forcing the latter to withdraw. But on June 12, 750 armed men returned in a punitive raid on the village, taking over the main street and seizing inhabitants at random. Some 200 people (a quarter of the population) were taken into custody, interrogated and beaten; 40 were detained for nine months without trial. Heavy prison sentences were handed out to the priest and 18 other people. The intention was to "humiliate" the village that had rejected the communist activists.¹
- 4 The nature of the conflict opposing the inhabitants of Nižná Šuňava and the communist authorities is not clear. In 1993, Skalník² sees it as a peasant uprising provoked by the demands for compulsory deliveries. Unattainable quotas had certainly pushed farmers to their limits. The explanation given by local records rather related to the disarray caused by antireligious persecution. This affair did not concern Vyšná Šuňava, which was equally hostile to the regime, but, as Skalník suggests, it was also more tightly controlled by its ruling families. Nižná Šuňava welcomed the Prague Spring as a liberation. The court convictions of the 1950s were annulled. A documentary film was made about the village uprising and allowed the victims to give their point of view. This was not allowed to be aired, however, until it was finally shown in 1992. During the period of "normalisation", boards announcing support for Alexander Dubček were displayed at points of entry to the village, stating *in petto* the villagers' opinions on these events...
- 5 Whatever the causes may have been, this spontaneous resistance and its repression blocked the process of modernisation in Nižná Šuňava. It engendered a feeling of collective guilt that reinforced the inhabitants' individualism and insularity. There was subsequently a form of dissolution of the local society in the 1950s and '60s, and the differences between the two communities continued to be apparent. In 1958, Vyšná Šuňava followed its leaders and founded a cooperative, which in grouping together 108 members included almost the entire village. The society in the lower village became divided: Only half of its farmers created a cooperative in 1959, while the other half

retained their private farms. The rebel village was left behind by agricultural modernisation. This situation lasted until 1972, when the administration confiscated the holdings of the last few recalcitrants. The transition to a rationalised system made it untenable to retain private plots within the new landholding pattern. Peasant farming was considered a sign of political opposition and economic backwardness.

- 6 During the 1950s and 1960s, the central administration neglected Nižná Šuňava, which was judged to be “unreliable” and had no influence over the regional administration. After the violent episode of the summer of 1950, the local audience of the Communist Party was more than limited, and its rare members were more visible in the factories of Svit than in the village. Even if the president of the National Municipal Committee (*Obecný Národný Výbor*, ONV)³ was always a local personality and sometimes did not even belong to the party, his secretary – in fact, the key player in the administration – was always a communist functionary. In 1972 the Plan for the Systemisation of Housing relegated both villages to the “localities of lesser importance”, and this occurred at a time when their joint demographic growth between 1948 and 1970 reached 19%. The Protestant village of Štrba was designated the centre of local growth. This measure hindered housing development and ruled out any new infrastructure. Faced with this administrative downgrade, the two villages merged in 1974 to attain the crucial threshold of 1,500 inhabitants. The two cooperatives were integrated, too. An architectural project closed the space separating the two villages by a group of public buildings, including a village hall, school, park and a building to house the municipal offices, although the latter was only finished in 1988. In reality, there were numerous illegal constructions that resulted from negotiations with the local clerk. Despite a demographic growth rate of 8.5% between 1971 and 1991, Šuňava was still without a drinking water distribution or a sewage system, and makeshift connections brought electricity to the new houses.
- 7 This informal extension is explained by the frequency of the bus service covering the 20 kilometres between Šuňava and Svit, and the possibility of building a house in the village, which makes it possible to obtain housing more rapidly and of a better quality than in town. The economic integration of the working population into the regional industrial employment zone generalised this form of salaried employment and supported household equipment – essential elements in the definition of social change during the period of the socialist welfare state. The rise in the number of employees and agrarian collectivisation could have led us to expect a modernisation of social relations. However, the political conflict in Nižná Šuňava from the summer of 1950 was revived by collectivisation during the 1960s and explains the administrative ostracism that the unified village suffered for the following decade: This legacy united the village in its refusal to bend to outside pressure, while masking a real social division.

Repercussions of the conflict: a divided society

- 8 The merger of the villages failed to unite the two communities, and the general rise in the standard of living took a distinct form in each locality. Skalník notes that, against all expectations, traditions were more strongly preserved in the collectivised village than in the other. In Vyšná Šuňava, the population appears greatly attached to religious rites and folkloric practices. In our 2015 study, the participation in local associations is still clearly separate: For example, the youth of Nižná Šuňava man the local fire brigade, whereas the families of Vyšná Šuňava lead the folklore group. In this

way each community retains its own forms of socialisation. The events of 1950 are a sensitive issue: If part of the village is proud of this heritage, it accuses the other of collaborating with the secret services (ŠTB)... A commemorative plaque on the presbytery divided the parish into factions to such an extent that the priest requested it be moved elsewhere. For elections, two polling stations were opened: The results were KDH (Christian Democrats) for one and HZDS (Mečiar) for the other. Other matters reveal a local society riven with conflicts and rivalries. Thus, following the laws of transformation in the 1990s, the property of the cooperative remained in the hands of villagers who had property deeds. But in the following decade, investors from outside the village quietly bought up these shares. With the complicity of elements inside the company, they initially made offers to shareholders living outside Šuňava before approaching village residents by going door to door, thereby taking over control of the company. An operation of this sort, although not unique in Slovakia, rarely leads to a change in ownership of the means of production, but here, the tensions and rivalries were too intense and illustrate the lack of interest on the part of local society for the socialist legacy represented by the cooperative. Only 20 or so workers are still employed by the agricultural company.

- 9 The current mayor, who is not a native of Šuňava, belongs to the transactional and anti-totalitarian movement “People against Violence” (VPN) and has held the office since 1990. His programme consists of bringing the backward infrastructure of the village (electricity, mains water supply, gas and even fibre cabling) up to date and providing it with public amenities (a school, sports ground and sports hall). The healthy demography (1,936 inhabitants, 9.5% growth between 1991 and 2011) is caused by householders returning to the village of their birth. This supports private enterprise in building trades and construction (10 or so planning permission applications are granted every year). The conflict that established the village’s identity has been fading from memory, and there has been a move to teach primary schoolchildren about it. After the break with its peasant identity that was brutally imposed by the politico-religious conflict, the village today is abandoning its agricultural character.

Change without conflict: Štrba

- 10 The case of Štrba is a counterpoint to the previous example, where collectivism was marked by conflict and violence. Only 3 kilometres away from Šuňava, this large village enjoys an incomparable location and infrastructure. There are two train stations, one in the village and one at the start of the rack and pinion railway serving the Tatra resorts, along with a motorway exit. In addition to the central village, which numbers over 3,000 inhabitants, two zones have developed around the Tatranská Štrba station (1,000 inhabitants), and the Štrbské Pleso ski resort (80 inhabitants).
- 11 The population of Štrba quickly learnt the lessons of the neighbouring village’s rebellion. During the national campaign to set up cooperatives in 1958, collectivisation went ahead with no real resistance. During the early stages, the religious leaders tolerated work on Sundays. They also joined in with the brigades that were formed for heavy chores like haymaking and the potato harvest. However, local communists did not wish to make trouble for their priest or pastor. Although the Protestant school was nationalised in 1949, the church was enlarged to give it a catechism room, and photos of confirmations bear witness to an active parish life over this period. The former

director of the cooperative and former local council leader described the consensus that existed in the following terms: “You know, we were Christians and communists...” (Podoba, 1999). In Štrba, the “class war” in the village could not feed off inter-faith rivalries as was frequently the case in the 1950s. In this village of worker-peasants, the local elites, with the backing of the population, pursued a strategy that was both opportunistic and pragmatic. They continued their goals of modernisation within the communist system and sought to make the most of state subsidies for collectivised agriculture and the support mechanisms of the managed economy. The cooperative thus increased the number of assembly workshops and employed women who had no access to factory jobs. The local leaders, backed by a party leader who came from Štrba itself and held okres-level⁴ responsibilities, participated in this strategy as did the village as a whole.

- 12 The continued modernisation of the village rapidly increased its attractiveness for locals, incomers and tourists. Today, Štrba is characterised in the region by a moderate unemployment rate (11% as opposed to 20% at the regional level), four decades of demographic growth and a balanced composition of age groups. The village has taken full advantage of its promotion to the rank of central village: Five housing estates of 15 or so units were built over two decades. Several reasons explain this situation: local solidarity, a clear economic prosperity, good access reinforced by the opening of the motorway, its location on the main national transport route, its proximity to Poprad and Svit and the social protection provided by the local community through its support of women’s employment. We should add to this list a certain quality of life, thanks to the preservation of a thriving local culture (three folk groups), as well as a healthy range of clubs and societies. Traditionally, social control coexisted with strong local cohesion. The majority of Štrba’s population, guided by the formal and informal cooperation of local elites, has always known how to accommodate itself to the models of modernisation imposed by various historical situations and has been able to make the most of them. In the heart of the village, the administrative buildings, post office and a small shopping centre with a supermarket, a restaurant and a music school constitute a group of modern buildings dating to the 1980s. Municipal newsletters contain an impressive series of photos of village parades to mark anniversaries: of the cooperative, the village, major collective projects (for example, the construction – by pickaxe! – of trenches for the gas lines) and visits by national personalities, both political⁵ and from the entertainment sector. This social change was made possible by a specific combination of opportunism and loyalty to existing political structures, a mix of Lutheran pragmatism and Marxist utilitarianism, local solidarity and cohesion (Podoba, 1999). The regime’s policy was applied by the local elites with flexibility and tactical sense. The extent and responsiveness of their networks made it possible to manage the delicate phase of transition. In this way, at the Supreme Court, the municipality was able to quash the administrative attachment of the resort of Štrbské Pleso to the commune of the Greater Tatras decided in 1988. Its subsequent development was reoriented towards tourism. Transforming former barns into tourist accommodation shows how their owners have taken advantage of the nearby sporting facilities. We could also mention the route taken by the motorway in the 2000s, which benefitted many residents who were compensated for the expropriation of a purely theoretical agricultural holding. Many houses had their roofs or door and window frames renovated on this occasion. Direct access to the highway extended employment opportunities to the west (Liptovský Mikuláš).

- 13 There has been both horizontal and vertical continuity in the political leadership of Štrba, as each new generation of leaders has been integrated into the preceding generation. In this way, the director of the cooperative who has overseen the process of transformation over the past two decades was chosen by its original founder, who held office in the central administration and instigated collectivisation in the 1950s. The current mayor, consistently re-elected since 1990, was already president of the ONV in the 1980s, at the height of the property boom. The mayor, the president of the cooperative and the director of the Forestry Syndicate jointly participate at their respective councils (municipal, administration and management). All of this demonstrates the cohesion of local leaders in the management of public affairs. This inter-connected network of political and professional influence, combined with a relatively tight social control, has grown out of sociocultural structures handed down from the communist period and conservative inertia. They also account for the preservation of the cooperative. The latter has 800 members and a workforce of almost 100. In spite of this grossly oversized general assembly, the managers have successfully fended off an outside takeover like that in Šuňava but are lacking a new agricultural project: The cooperative has limited itself exclusively to dairy farming (around 100 cows). The European agricultural policy has enabled it to continue unchanged. Most unusually, the company has retained an assembly shop for spare parts that employs about a dozen people. The attitude of impotence and the inability to devise a strategy to take advantage of tourism or the regional economy, which Juraj Podoba already described back in 1999, remain unchanged.
- 14 This large village seems to have been sucked into the dynamics of the global society through the generalisation of salaried employment, the development of services (in tourism of course, but also through the opening of a private retirement home by a Protestant foundation in Tatranská Štrba), the further education of its adolescents away from the village and job-seeking outside the country (in construction and personal services). One of our interlocutors, a Lutheran pastor, deplored the fraying of social relations and the growing anonymity of local life. Growth has come to an end in Štrba, which lost some 100 inhabitants between the two last censuses (2001–2010). Residential development has used up all the available supply of building land and any change in status of undeveloped land has met with obstructions. Today is a time of renovation and the ending of intergenerational cohabitation which is changing traditional ways of life. A certain “demise of the village” (Le Goff, 2012) is taking place.

Imposed collectivisation and economic integration: the case of Stôla

- 15 Stôla (520 inhabitants) is located at the foothills of the Tatras, about 10 kilometres away from Poprad. Its main street climbs the hill towards the medical centre of Vyšné Hagy. Stôla, like its neighbour Mengušovce situated 3 kilometres lower down, is one of the Protestant localities of the Spiš. Collectivisation was, however, more a source of conflict here than it was in Štrba. This village serves as a case study of an ordinary conflict linked to collectivisation, the traces of which have been erased by the changes in land use over three decades.
- 16 In the 19th century, the traditional economy was that of typical peasant life in the Tatras. Cereals were grown on the land, and the cultivation of flax provided a saleable

supplement. The village men made wooden staircases and acted as guides in the early days of mountaineering. The development of the health tourism sector was launched at the end of the 19th century with the establishment of a high altitude centre in Vyšné Hagy in 1887. In the 1930s, the State turned this into a sanatorium, later renamed Masaryk, specialising in the treatment of tuberculosis. Some private initiatives also emerged in the form of a guest house in 1935 and subsequently a hotel. Because of these facilities, Stôla was integrated after the liberation into the newly created Greater Tatras administrative area to include the mountain resorts. The 1950s therefore did not interrupt this economic development. An initial socialisation of resources came about with the nationalisation of private forestry (80 ha), which was absorbed into the Tatras National Park.

- 17 Before the agricultural collectivisation campaign began in the village in 1958, peasant farming was already in decline. The increase in salaried employment opportunities led to a gradual abandoning of crop farming. Part of the 250 hectares of cropland was left uncultivated. This regression made the situation seem ripe for collectivisation. On repeated visits to their homes, agents of official propaganda attempted to persuade the farmers with the help of intimidation by, for example, threatening to block their children from receiving further education or fixing excessive quotas for delivery. In 1960, Stôla was taken out of the Greater Tatras group village and merged with Mengušovce, which had set up a cooperative in 1952. However, after 15 years of trying, only one farmer without a successor agreed to join. Ideological pressure eased off with the Prague Spring, and a new socialist solution was sought for the modernisation of agriculture: a *Spoločenstvo jednotlivých hospodáriacich roľníkov* (SJHR, united community of farmers), which brought farmers together with the goal of enabling them to purchase inputs, seeds and machinery. The Stôla farmers supported this form of pooling resources that respected their right to hold property and their freedom of decision. However, after 1968, the “normalised” authorities saw this structure as a transitional step towards the complete socialisation of the means of production. The regional government applied the new legislation to the unused land and confiscated the holdings, herds and equipment of Stôla’s farmers in 1972. The plots were amalgamated in the spring, and the farmland was incorporated into the cultivation plan of the Mengušovce cooperative.
- 18 The rise in jobs in the health sector and in the hotel and catering business alongside the factory jobs in Svit and Poprad reinforced the way of life of worker-peasants. Although the attachment to the land diminished as it no longer constituted an essential element of household income, it endured thanks to the sturdiness of the family farming unit. Unlike the farmer of Šuňava, those in Stôla were not subjected to political and police violence, but they refused to be dispossessed of their traditional way of life by compulsory schemes. The normalised Czechoslovak model adopted a structure that has been described as “Stalinist” or a “stereotype of collectivism” (Maurel, 1994). Corporate forms combining public enterprise and private initiative had developed during the early decades of socialism, and it was this mixed structure that was broken up.
- 19 The termination of its existence as a village entailed the absence of a village land use plan governing new housing development. Small groups of public buildings, recreational facilities and hotels were built in a disorganised way by the healthcare establishments or works councils. Over the last two decades of socialism, the villagers

profited from the growth of tourism by renting out rooms, a practice tolerated by the authorities who were unable to meet the demand for seasonal accommodation.

- 20 Upon the decollectivisation of agriculture, Stôla's former landowners got back their property rights and gained shares in the Mengušovce cooperative. However, the former plot limits had been obliterated by the process of cultivation, and mechanisation had made traditional skills obsolete. It was extremely difficult for the cooperative to calculate compensation; the calculation of financial reparations owed by the cooperative becomes a major headache of little interest, so ridiculously low are the monies to be refunded. Two inhabitants declared themselves farmers, on small holdings without the necessary means. The village was re-established as an administrative unit in 1990, and the administrative offices were set up in the former Protestant school. The main concern has subsequently been the revival of the health and hotel sector and the management of peri-urbanisation, as the local area functions today as an annex of Poprad and Svit. In the most recent census, 60% of the villagers claimed to be Catholic, an obvious sign of social change due to migration. The agrarian conflict is now nothing more than an episode in local history. A change in land use status within the built-up area (*intravilan*)⁶ is the only issue that can revive memories of peasant land ownership.

The conflict with those holding out the longest: Malá Franková

- 21 Malá Franková is located in a valley wedged between the White Tatras and Poland. Its agrarian landscape was shaped by the *kopaničiarske osídlenie* (settlements scattered throughout the *kopanice*) in the 14th century on the Magura massif but organised here according to the Germanic principle of a linear housing pattern. The houses are strung out along a central road, and their yards provide access to plots stretching right up the hillside: There is no precise zoning of areas incorporated into or outside of the built-up area. In this way, Malá Franková in its present form stretches for 3 kilometres along the valley. This small village of 185 inhabitants is dominated by a family of notables, the Čarnogurskýs. Several members of this family have played a role in national politics with a member of parliament belonging to the Hlinka Party during the First Republic, and Jan Čarnogurský, one of the best-known Slovak opponents of the Communist regime, notably within the Charter 77 movement, was minister of agriculture during the Velvet Revolution and stood several times as a candidate in the presidential elections. Membership of a political party and religious practice are federating forces in a community that remembers the many religious vocations produced in its midst.
- 22 The disappearance of private agriculture had been planned in the White Tatras during the 1970s. In 1976 the farmers of a nearby village, Veľká Franková, decided to make the transition to socialist modernity by setting up its own cooperative, which was quickly absorbed by the big *Zamagurie* in Špišské Hanušovce. The landowners of Malá Franková opposed the decision taken in 1980 to put their holdings into this entity: A few widows were the only ones who agreed to join. The administration applied its ruling to unfarmed land and confiscated the higher altitude plots of this small area (540 hectares). Whereas in comparable situations the small farmers generally submitted to this process or came to some arrangement, the farmers here clung to their property rights and played on the difficulty of fixing boundaries in the mountain pastures in

order to slow down the amalgamation of holdings. The cooperative envisaged a cadastral reorganisation; it marked out an inner village boundary to contain the plots in order to launch farming operations in the outer-village area. The farmers moved the boundary markers and continued to make hay on their former plots. The cooperative brought in officers and a bailiff to record the trespass, and it paid informers to keep an eye on the fences. The disputes were transformed into cases brought before the courts. The local conflict over land became a legal conflict. In 1990 this small village held the record for cases heard by the Bratislava Tribunal. It took on a national dimension due to the political identity attributed to the opposing parties. The Velvet Revolution brought this litigation to an end.

- 23 The regional land use plan categorised the village in 1972 as “unsuitable for development”. The population, which had risen to more than 300 in the 1960s, subsequently fell rapidly due to a belated but sudden rural exodus. The primary school was closed in 1975, and in retaliation for its opposition to collectivisation, the authorities decided in 1979 to terminate the existence of the village as a separate administrative unit, and it was annexed by the neighbouring village of Veľká Franková. Downgraded to a simple “residential sector”, Malá Franková was blighted by a ban on construction, left without a water supply system and with an inadequate mains electricity supply. No possibilities for development were extended to this village, treated as a backwater and left to decline, whereas at the same time, just a few kilometres away on the opposite side of the same mountain, Ždiar was transformed into a “Slovak village resort” that welcomed crowds of tourists.⁷
- 24 The end of this acrimonious war against communism heralded a political victory for the village as well as a challenge. The village was one of the first to be rehabilitated as a fully functioning local administrative unit in 1990. The memory of local personalities is kept alive by commemorative masses, or on the occasion of summer visits by members of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), who come to seek inspiration from this cradle of Catholic dissidence. By contrast, the attempt to create new openings for local development has been much more complicated. The village land registry counts 20 or so independent farmers, five of whom with more than 20 hectares of land. They are part-time farmers (with cows, sheep and horses), combining agriculture with another activity, generally in forestry. Such pluriactivity ensures the upkeep of the holdings but also entails abandoning the plots higher up in the mountain. Forty or so hectares of grassland remain unused and are cut once a year by an entrepreneur from outside the valley. There is a reluctance to ask for assistance from the neighbouring cooperative with which there had been such a bitter dispute. This small-scale agriculture does not provide a sufficient basis for local development. In 2014, two projects launched within the framework of European rural development programmes failed. The first one concerned a sheep-farming venture to make use of the abandoned grasslands. The project got off to a bad start with an immediate purchase of a flock of sheep, tractors and complete haymaking equipment from France. The partner bank quickly withdrew from this poorly calibrated project, subsidies were not paid due to the lack of co-financing arrangements, and finally the operation foundered. Another village resident built bungalows as accommodation for hikers walking around the Tatras, but sanitary accreditation was withheld from the new installations in the absence of a water supply and sewerage system. The entrepreneur was held accountable for a badly conceived operation. Inevitably, the local population is ageing, and only 45 houses out of 73 are inhabited. It is too remote from urban centres (50 kilometres of mountain roads to get

to Kežmarok) for regular travel between homes and workplaces to be possible. It would take a dynamic tourist initiative to give a new lease of life to the traditional wooden houses as second homes, and to take advantage of the passage of hikers, but for this to happen it would be necessary to connect the village with Ždiar via the mountain pass.

Conclusion

- 25 The conflicts we have studied here are essentially conflicts of values caused by cultural factors (religion, land tenure, the traditional rural way of life), and they are independent of spatial issues. They have, however, brought about differential effects that were difficult to foresee at the initial stages of this process. Several types of factors have come into play. Firstly, we have the isolation that is typical of mountain areas, evident in the case of Malá Franková, at the far end of a secondary valley, the geographic marginalisation of Stôla on the slopes of the Tatras and the distance of Šuňava from the main road axis. Another major factor has come into play, reinforced by the procedures of a development strictly organised along hierarchical lines, which affected Šuňava and Malá Franková, and which the two Šuňavas avoided by merging. The agrarian structures, which collectivism annihilated throughout the country, had the effect of creating deadlock in Malá Franková, which the villagers used to oppose collectivisation, but they have left the town with a problematic legacy. Štrba was, by all accounts, the best placed to take advantage of the cumulative effect of decisions made under socialism as well as more recently, reinforcing its territorial trajectory (path dependency). The presence or absence of leaders also impacts the forms of social compromise that make the collectivist project possible. This is obvious in Štrba, where it was enthusiastically and dynamically supported in the 1980s, but it can also be discerned in Vyšná Šuňava, whose ruling families were better able to deal with the political pressures of the 1950s. In Malá Franková the small farmers were resolutely opposed to collectivism, at the cost of asphyxiating their village. Finally, the conflicts throw light on the collective behaviour that accompanied social change. Religious identity also played a role when the authorities came down brutally on a clerical society like that of Nižná Šuňava, which paid for its revolt with 30 years of being relegated to the sidelines. We cannot overestimate this factor: The Stôla Protestants resisted agrarian collectivism inch by inch, whereas Štrba once again demonstrated the capacity of traditional structures to adapt. In this way, the forms of social change adopted by montane communities have varied from one locality to the next, despite the stereotypical model imposed by the communist regime. For the past 20 years, due to an increasingly urbanised way of life, the cultural characteristics of montane communities that were the source of many conflicts have gradually disappeared.

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NOTES

1. Šuňava, Universum, 2014, pp.45-68. This monograph, published by the local council, and the local records accessible via the village website, give an account of these events.
2. For obvious reasons, the researcher had been unable to provide a direct account of the reasons for the conflict. While these different publications (Skalník, 1979, 1982, 1986) gradually lifted the veil on the 1950 conflict, it is only in 1993 that his analysis was finally explicit in its assessment. In a final publication (Skalník, 2001), the author explains how this subject, initially imposed on him as a rookie ethnologist by his professor (instead of fieldwork in Africa!), turned out to be a fascinating theme.
3. Administrative structure managing the village during the socialist period.
4. An *okres* is an administrative unit in Slovakia and can roughly be translated as a “county”.
5. The visit of Leonid Brezhnev in 1965 (for the 20th anniversary of the liberation of the village by the Red Army) is the only one not to appear in the 2004 edition (perhaps a problem re-printing it in colour?).
6. This Romanian word, used as an ideal type to describe the agrarian structures of Central Europe, refers to the zone of tilled fields with permanent crops, situated around the village.

Beyond the edge of the *intravilan*, the *extravilan* includes wider, less fertile areas and larger plots of land that are sometimes grazed.

7. The brochure published by the council of *Malá Frankova* provides certain historical information that we were able to complete from an interview with the mayor.

ABSTRACTS

The conflicts arising from imposed agrarian collectivism provide a key to interpreting the transformations and blockages that societies in mountain areas experienced during the second half of the 20th century. The diversity of village populations in the Slovak Tatras explains the increase in the number of such conflictual situations over the four decades of socialism. This article compares the conflicts that arose in three villages in the same mountain region with that of a fourth that was successful in its modernisation. It highlights the components and geographical effects of social change.

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Keywords: decollectivisation, social change, Tatras, Slovakia

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