Jozef Haľko and Ľuboš Rojka

Dejiny jezuitov v Bratislave do roku 1773. Trnava: Dobrá kniha, 2015. Pp. 192.
Hb, 21 euros.

The geographical focus of this history is what is now Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. Jesuits have been active in the area since the late sixteenth century. While the volume does end in 1773, the year of the Society's papal suppression, interestingly the third-to-last page (167) does highlight the Jesuits' renewed presence in 1850s Prešporok (as Bratislava was then known), and the last two (168–69) list the Jesuits stationed in Prešporok in 1773 and their activities after the suppression. Thus, the concluding pages of this history are not so much a tragedy as a glimmer of the Jesuits' ongoing, hopeful presence.

The body of the volume is comprised of seven chapters, followed by an index of names, separate bibliographies for books, periodicals, and internet sources, and a list of illustrations. These are numerous, many of them in color. Of the volume's two authors, Haľko is the auxiliary bishop of the Bratislava archdiocese and a professor at the archdiocesan Catholic theological faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava. Rojka is a Jesuit who teaches at the Gregorian University in Rome and the Slovak Trnava university—historically identified with the Jesuits—in its theological faculty. They draw primarily on Hungarian and Slovak sources, as well as various German, Latin, and Italian materials, to create an engaging presentation of the narrative.

What is striking is that for most of the seventeenth century—presented in the first five chapters—the Jesuits' efforts took place in a Prešporok whose political leadership was predominantly Lutheran, and definitely and actively hostile to anything related to the Society. Indeed, broader historical circumstances intermittently hindered the Jesuits' work, even forcing them to withdraw from the city. Nevertheless, the period marks a dramatic change in the religious, historical, educational, and cultural circumstances of Bratislava and even more in the surrounding region—in which process the Jesuits played a prominent role.

Among the various Jesuits profiled over the Society's two hundred years in Prešporok, one in particular stands out: Péter Pázmány (1570–1637). Pázmány came from a noble Calvinist family in Transylvania (modern-day Romania); at thirteen he became a Catholic and at seventeen entered the Society. After completing his formation and his academic studies, and teaching philosophy and theology at the university in Graz from 1597 to 1607, he began his activity in the Kingdom of Hungary. At the 1608 session of its diet, he succeeded in obtaining permission for a Jesuit presence under the terms of the Peace of Vienna (1606), though the Society was denied the right to own property. Over the next

thirty years, the Jesuits' situation dramatically changed, primarily because of Pázmány's efforts.

Despite political turmoil in the surrounding area and strong opposition from members of Prešporok's political establishment, the Society founded a printing press (1623) and a residence and secondary school (1626–27), in a complex now part of the archdiocesan seminary. Pázmány's preaching and publications, especially his *Magyar Guide to God's Truth* (Bratislava, 1613) had a great effect on many readers, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Indeed, a Latin translation was made at the request of the palatine of Hungary, György Thurzó and his wife, so that the Wittenberg theologian Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627) could make a critical evaluation of it.

The last three chapters concern the setbacks as well as the successes of Jesuits in Prešporok. The Jesuit church near the historic town hall was originally built by the Lutherans without the approval of the king of Hungary and Holy Roman emperor, and some forty years later it was officially given to the Society by another king-emperor. The authors describe in detail the Jesuits' various changes to the church—the altars, the paintings and statues, the pulpit, and the Marian column outside the main doors. The achievements of the Jesuits' students—their solid education, devotional public processions, and dramatic presentations—rivalled the extensive pastoral and liturgical activities of the Society itself and the Marian congregations among the laity. Indeed, from the first theatrical performance by Jesuit students from Trnava at the 1618 royal coronation in Prešporok under the direction of the Jesuit György Káldy to the fateful year of 1773, there were 321 such student presentations (some named and briefly discussed), usually about biblical, historical or mythological figures, or on religious topics, and mostly performed in the Jesuit church. Only one concerned "Jesus's mother the Virgin Mary," and that only in 1773.

One striking story concerns the last days of the prominent Lutheran cleric and author Daniel Krman (1663–1740), imprisoned in Prešporok. This baroque writer of literary and grammatical texts was severely tortured to force him to renounce Lutheranism. According to a Latin (Jesuit) text of 1740, the Jesuit Jozef Weismayer (or Weismaeyer) visited Krman with a "Catholic physician and two military commanders" and "asked emphatically whether he really and sincerely wanted to become a Catholic, [and] then whether he wanted to repudiate the errors for which until then he had fought, and to accept the Catholic faith." His firm reply was "I unambiguously want to be a Catholic, I want to die as a Catholic" (137). Several times, witnesses were present for this declaration. Because of his physical condition he was unable to receive the Eucharist, but he did receive the last rites. He was buried in the crypt of the Cathedral of St. Martin. The Lutherans contended that the conversion had

been wrung out of him by torture, while the Catholics found the event cause for celebration.

The one egregious limitation of this volume is that there is no summary in a Western language such as English, which would have offered a greater exposure for those interested in this subject. Perhaps the publisher Dobrá kniha might remedy this in the future.

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