

# CALENDAR FOR THE GREEK CATHOLIC SLOVAKS FOR THE YEAR 1941<sup>1</sup>

Peter Borza

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**Abstract:** BORZA, Peter. *Calendar for the Greek Catholic Slovaks for the year 1941*. Calendar for the Greek Catholic Slovaks for 1941 was the first publication of its kind intended for the Greek Catholic Slovaks. With its content and involvement of state authorities in the distribution among the faithful, it pointed out the close cooperation of the representatives of the Slovak State regime and the emerging leadership of the Greek Catholic Slovaks in the association with an ideological reference to the legacy of Cyril and Methodius. However, they interpreted it with the emphasis on the requirement to use the Slovak language in religious life and the appropriate share of Slovaks in the leadership of the Greek Catholic Church. The study also analyses the publication in the context of the government's political goals. The support of the Greek Catholic Slovaks was part of a broader plan the aim of which was to reduce the activities of the unwanted Bishop Pavel Gojdič, the leadership of the Greek Catholic Church and their influence, and ultimately wanted to find the solution to the Ruthenian issue in Slovakia.

**Keywords:** *Cyril and Methodius Society, Calendar, Greek Catholic Church, Slovak State, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, Šariš-Zemplín County*

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Foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic created favourable conditions for the development of individual nationalities which have formed a new state in the middle of Europe and also highlighted the diverse ethnic composition of the Greek Catholic Church. Subcarpathian Russia was dominated by the Greek Catholic Ruthenians, but the situation in Slovakia was different and more balanced, with a slight predominance of Greek Catholic Slovaks. In 1930, 109,826 Greek Catholics declared themselves to be of Slovak nationality and 87,494 of "Russian nationalities" (the census states only Russian and Little Russian nationalities together, although, they were in fact Ruthenians and Ukrainians). Besides the Greek Catholics of Slovak and 'Russian' nationalities, the total number of 213,725 Greek Catholics included 12,398 believers of Hungarian nationality, 1,964 citizens of Roma nationality (in the census referred to as Gypsy nationality) and 1,293 of Polish nationality. The interests of Slovak Greek Catholics became known through the Slovak League and the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. In 1935, the Slovak League called for the establishment of the Slovak Greek Catholic Diocese and a teacher training institute for the Slovak Greek Catholics. Its demands were also promoted by the daily *Slovák*, the central press body of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Letz 1996, 262-263). In reality, the leadership of the church reflected the actual ethnic composition only slightly. Although the Prešov Bishop Pavel Gojdič OSBM advocated for the Ruthenians, he emphasized universal Christian ideas common to all nationalities. Especially

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in the difficult rivalry with the Orthodox Church in the interwar period, he supported the importance of the Catholic affiliation of the Eastern Rite believers and warned of disunity. He saw it as a problem also in relation to national issues within the Church, and in this case he preferred its Ruthenian character (Redakcionnyj komitet 1947, Barnovský, 2004, 228-235).

The establishment of the Slovak State changed the ethnic composition of the Greek Catholic Church, since the territorial losses reduced the number of Ruthenian Greek Catholics. In 1940, 176,341 citizens, of whom 115,060 were of Slovak nationality, 49,784 of Ruthenian nationality, 9,265 of Russian nationality, 197 of Ukrainian nationality and 2,035 of other nationalities, predominantly Roma nationality, registered with the Greek Catholics (SNA, f. 209, to 290). The two-thirds representation of Slovak Greek Catholics led to an escalation of tensions against the church leadership. The conflict manifested itself immediately after the establishment of the Slovak State. It is important to add that the demand for greater representation of Slovak Greek Catholics in the church leadership was legitimate, but, unfortunately, it was enforced with the political support of the state. This led to pressure on Bishop Gojdič and reduction in financial support of schools and clergy who did not identify with such a procedure.

The idea of the establishment of the Slovak Greek Catholic Diocese lived with the help of state authorities. Gradually, representatives of Slovak Greek Catholics from the environment of priests and intelligence emerged. The administrator of the Prešov eparchy, Bishop Gojdič, decided to abdicate in November 1939 in order to eliminate the cause of the state's restrictions put of the Greek Catholic Church. However, his abdication was not accepted by the Holy See and Pope Pius XII on July 19, 1940, as proof of his support, promoted him to the bishop of Prešov. Relations between state authorities and the diocesan leadership did not calm down and remained tense even after the appointment of Bishop Gojdič (Barnovský 2004, 228-235). From the outset, resolution of the Ruthenian issue played an important role. In January 1941, the count Andrej Dudáš proposed that the Greek Catholic Russian Teachers' Academy in Prešov be abolished and proposed the creation of a Ruthenian branch at the Teachers' Academy in Michalovce for the needs of the Ruthenian minority. He also demanded the replacement of Ruthenian teachers teaching in Slovak schools by Slovak teachers. The overall support of Greek Catholics of Slovak nationality was also to be helped by the effort to persuade Bishop Gojdič to take into account the results of the census, which did not speak in favour of the Ruthenians, and to introduce Slovak sermons in Slovak parishes (SNA, f. 209, p. 290). In May 1941, the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment proposed the establishment of a bilateral commission, which would be part of a comprehensive plan for cooperation between Greek Catholic Slovaks and Ruthenians. The proposal envisaged an administrative reorganization of the Greek Catholic Church according to its ethnic composition at the highest level and in ecclesiastical institutions such as the chapter, the seminary, monasteries and parishes. Although the commission was not established under the auspices of the ministry and county office in Prešov, two years later, on September 30, 1943, the Slovak government, by the resolution, established a government advisory commission on Ruthenian, Greek Catholic and Orthodox affairs, led by the Minister of Justice Gejza Fritz. The chairman of the commission was the Minister of Justice and the members were the count Andrej Dudáš, Matej Hutka from Michalovce, Michal Boňko from Vyšný Svidník and Professor Ján Murín from Michalovce. The latter was the leading figure of the Greek Catholic Slovaks and since 1941 worked as the administrator of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The role of the commission was to issue opinions in dealing with all matters of the Ruthenians, Greek Catholics and Orthodox. At their request, individual ministries, central offices and county offices (SA Bytča, f. TC, inv. No. 121, b. 47) were bound by a government resolution.

## Calendar of the Cyril and Methodius Association in service to the regime

An important part of the state authorities' efforts was to support the emerging leadership of Slovak Greek Catholics. An important evidence of aid was the publication of the *Calendar for Greek Catholic Slovaks for 1941* published by the Cyril and Methodius Association, which received ecclesiastical approval in 1941 as the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (see Borza – Mandzák 2009).

Until then, the Cyrillo-Methodian idea in the Greek Catholic Church had been primarily associated with the unionist congresses, which took place in Velehrad from the beginning of the 20th century (1907 – 1936) and subscribed to the legacy of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, while emphasizing ecclesiastical unity. However, the Cyrillo-Methodian idea introduced by the Greek Catholic Slovaks emphasized the requirement to use the Slovak language in religious life and the appropriate share of Slovaks in church leadership. It was a new interpretation in accordance with the political goals of the authoritarian regime in Slovakia.

This was also reflected in the publication of the calendar. The support of the state authorities as well as of the bodies of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party played an important role in this. Their impact was reflected in the content and distribution of the calendar. This was provided by the Prešov County Office, by the district offices of the Šariš-Zemplín County and by the authorities of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party and the Hlinka Guard (hereinafter HG). The main distributor was the Association of St. Adalbert's branch in Prešov. The county office received 4,400 calendars which were distributed among 13 district offices which were supposed to be selling them until March 10, 1941. The district chiefs briefed the count on the implementation of the task. Their reports reflected the way in which the individual districts proceeded and also described the involvement of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party and the HG. The district chief from Bardejov only briefly informed about the sale of all 100 pieces of the calendar and about the transfer of payment to the account of the Association of St. Adalbert. On the other hand, the chief of the neighbouring district of Giraltovce sold only 76 of 100 calendars, which he explained by saying that the reduced number had been caused by the sale of calendars organised by the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party organizations and HG headquarters, which also received calendars in order to distribute them among Greek Catholics. The district chiefs also used notary offices in the districts to sell calendars, as the chief from the Michalovce district mentions. The most successful sellers of calendars were in district offices in Humenné, Vranov nad Topľou, Trebišov and Michalovce which received and sold 200 pieces per district. Of the 4,400 calendars, only 86 were returned. The successful campaign was the result of the interest of the political leaders of the Šariš-Zemplín County. The count Andrej Dudáš perceived the distribution of the calendar as an important political task and in the same spirit also instructed the district chiefs (SA, f. ŠZC – SS, inv. no. 235-236). The struggle for Slovak Greek Catholics had been a permanent part of the region's political life since 1939 and lasted with varying intensity until 1943, when the country's overall political climate changed due to the events of World War II.

By active distribution of the calendar, the state actually entered the area of the competence of the Church and of Bishop Gojdič himself, who took several conciliatory steps such as his abdication and especially the appointment of Jozef Zorvan as the Vicar General for the Greek Catholics of the Slovaks. In this way, he tried to reduce tensions between him and the regime. At the same time, he did not want to weaken the unity of the Greek Catholics. Therefore, the appointment of Jozef Zorvan as the vicar general was just formal and he did not have any special competencies which he openly criticised. He later expressed his dissatisfaction in writing to the bishop and resigned from office. His post was no longer filled (AGAP, OD, inv. No. 76, sign. 43, 1941). Meanwhile, in 1941, Bishop Gojdič approved the statutes of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius for the Greek

Catholic Slovaks. He did so despite the embarrassing inaugural meeting of the association, which Anton Tink, the Vicar General of the Mukachevo Eparchy Administration in Slovakia, criticized: *“From the whole course of the assembly as well as from the individual speeches, it was clear that the ecclesiastical title of the community is only a cover to conceal national activities. In the light of all this, in my opinion, the Union in such a form cannot be recognized by ecclesiastical authority, because it would be the first step towards the emergence of the autocephalous church and schism”* (AGAP, OD, inv. No. 76, sign. 43, 1941).

In addition to clergy and teachers, the head of the Michalovce District Office, Štefan Velgos, the county secretary of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party Vyhonský, the secretary of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's district committee, Gejza Jablonský, a member of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's district committee and the Hlinka Guard official Edmund Ferko, and other representatives of the Hlinka Guard, Hlinka Youth, representatives of offices, associations and corporations were present at the inaugural meeting of the Union. Matej Huťka, a member of the regional assembly in Michalovce and the county chairman of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, was among the first persons who registered to be founding members of the association. One of the most active members of the Union committee was the lawyer Jozef Pichonský, who also worked as a publicity and intelligence officer in the Hlinka Guard District Staff. Personal friendships, shared opinions and interests connected people involved in the Union with other influential people active in politics and public life at the time, including the counts Štefan Haššík and Andrej Dudáš. These connections, in fact, opened doors for the representatives of the Union in highest places in Bratislava. Impact of these contacts was reflected in the political and financial support of the Union from the state authorities, especially in the case of the Prešov County Office which received a subsidy of 20,000 crowns from the Propaganda Office (Borza – Mandzák 2009, 482-483).

The close connection between the Union and the regime of the Slovak State raised concerns of Bishop Gojdič of Prešov who was fully aware of the validity of the claims of the Slovak Greek Catholics, but did not agree with the arrogant manners and connections between the Union's representatives and politicians. He saw it as a danger to the priests involved and as a threat to the unity of the faithful. Therefore, he tried to curb the efforts of the Slovak Greek Catholics, but not to slow them down. The result was a search for mutual understanding. The bishop's friendly step was his active participation in the first Cyril and Methodius festivities in Michalovce on July 5, 1942 (Kalendár 1943, 95-99).

The Cyril and Methodius festivities organized by the Union were a public manifestation of the demands of the Slovak Greek Catholics. President Jozef Tiso was also a participant, and he was joined by Minister of Justice Gejza Fritz, Minister of Economy Gejza Medrický, Minister of Transport and Public Works Július Stano and the Šariš-Zemplín count Andrej Dudáš. They were welcomed in Michalovce at the festival gateway on Štefánikova Street by the chairman of the Union, Jozef Zorvan. After him, the Roman Catholic priest Štefan Hlaváč spoke on behalf of the local organization of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, and Andrej Kabina, the government commissioner and district commander of the Hlinka Guard, spoke on behalf of the city. From the gate, the president, sitting in a carriage and accompanied by honor guard on horseback, moved to the Redemptorist monastery, where he was greeted by the hegumen of the monastery, Vasil Musil, and the entire community. In front of the Church of the Holy Spirit the president was welcomed by Bishop Gojdič from Prešov. However, not all believers could enter the temple. Coming to the morning services, many thought they would be able to stay also during the services in the presence of the president. However, after the liturgy at 9 o'clock, only those who had tickets could remain in the church, which, of course, believers did not like. The liturgy was served by the bishop of Prešov and the president sat in front of the benches, on a chair, and the chairman of the Union, Jozef Zorvan, sat next to him. Ministers as well as the Roman Catholic Bishop Jozef Čársky, who

was based in Prešov at the time, were sitting on the first benches. The choir from Trebišov sang at the liturgy and the event was broadcast on radio. At the end, the papal and national anthems were sung. The president stopped for afternoon snack in the monastery and then moved in a carriage to the front of the town hall, where he greeted the procession from the tribune. Around 40,000 people were walking through the town and gathered at the Church Square, where the program continued. The crowd was addressed by Ján Murín, who said, among other things, that “Cyril and Methodius’ heritage includes not only our Christian Catholic faith and ceremony in Old Church Slavonic, but also our Slovak language and our affiliation with the Cyril and Methodius’ Slovak nation.” After him, President Tiso spoke for more than an hour. In his speech, he commented on the importance of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius for the life of the Greek Catholic Slovaks and emphasized the saying Slovakia to Slovaks. In the end, Jozef Pichonský also addressed the present, in a similar spirit as Ján Murín and Jozef Tiso. The Cyril and Methodius festivities resonated in the press. The newspaper *Slovenská sloboda*, on July 5, 1942, devoted fourteen articles written by the representatives of the Union to the President’s visit to Michalovce and the event was described as magnificent (Borza – Mandzák 2009, 492-493).

The festivities showed the determination of the state and the Greek Catholics of the Slovaks, but also pointed to the tension that prevailed between Bishop Gojdič and the state’s major officials. President Tiso expressed his hostility to Gojdič by refusing to shake his hand and not agreeing to their joint trip to Medzilaborce, where the president was heading after the festivities in Michalovce (SSA, f. 305.691 – 7). This clearly demonstrates the tensions between state authorities and the official leadership of the Greek Catholic Church at that time, and it also reflects internal tensions in a multi-national church, in which the majority strongly demanded influence on the direction of the church. The perceptive reader can easily recognize bishop’s foresight, perspective and experience as well as determination and energy of the representatives of the Greek Catholics of the Slovaks.

## Content of the calendar

The calendar for Greek Catholic Slovaks for 1941 was the first publication in the Slovak language of its kind. The cover was decorated with an illustration of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. Its introductory pages contained feast days of the Julian calendar for the Greek Catholics and, in parallel, the Gregorian calendar with feast days of the Roman Catholics. The introductory words were written by the Vicar General for the Greek Catholics, Jozef Zorvan, who emphasized the uniqueness of the first edition in the Slovak language and publication of articles with religious content for the Slovak reader (Kalendár 1941, 1-21).

The calendar was formally classified as a confessional book calendar, but its content corresponded to the Calendar of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party and the Calendar of the Slovak (Svobodová – Pekařová 2011, 60). The calendar contained very few religious articles and offered much more space to the representatives of the Slovak State regime, to the activities of the Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, Hlinka Guard and Hlinka Youth. The authors of the calendar thus vigorously subscribed to the new political regime of the Slovak State which was confirmed already on the introductory pages of the publication. The title page was followed by a portrait photograph of President Jozef Tiso, followed by a photograph of Pope Pius XII and a portrait of Andrej Hlinka. The portrait of Bishop Pavel Gojdič of Prešov was missing. The aforementioned lists of feast days for 1941 and introductory words were followed by three poems. The first three articles consisted of short biographies of President Jozef Tiso, Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka and Interior Minister Alexander Mach. Furthermore, the reader learned about Hlinka’s views on Judaism and the

political part of the publication ended with the greeting of Adolf Hitler addressed to Slovaks. In the second half of the calendar, the authors wrote about the Thessalonian brothers and a larger article was devoted to St. Benedict and St. Andrew Zorard. After that, however, the authors again returned to political topics such as the activities of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in the Šariš-Zemplín County, followed by the historical topic of social revolution in the article on the uprising during the cholera epidemic which ended with a quote from Jozef Tiso's speech. The religious topic appeared in an article about the Marian Congregation in Michalovce. The text on the language of worship appreciated the Old Church Slavonic, but at the same time confirmed the importance of the Slovak language for Greek Catholics. The editors of the calendar then returned to the political theme and introduced the Hlinka Guard. Subsequently, the following articles discussed the use of the Slovak language in the Greek Catholic Church or among Greek Catholics Slovaks in eastern Slovakia, as well as the requirements for teaching religion in the Slovak language and the need for a Slovak prayer book for the Greek Catholics. Apologetic articles were followed by the text about youth and especially about the activities of the Hlinka Youth in Trebišov. The end of the calendar dealt with the general topics such as gardening and health, and also contained jokes and two short stories, about the controversy concerning the use of the Slovak language in the religious life of Greek Catholics (Kalendár 1941, 1-80).

In addition to the already mentioned portraits of political leaders, the calendar was illustrated with photographs of Greek Catholic Slovak priests and believers. On the eighty pages of the calendar there is only one photograph of Bishop Gojdič which shows him celebrating Holy Liturgy.

## The importance of the calendar for Greek Catholic Slovaks

The overall situation in the publication of book calendars in the years 1939 – 1945 changed significantly in comparison with the previous period of the Czechoslovak Republic. The production of calendars was reduced from 120 titles in 1938 to 84 titles in 1939. In 1940, only 42 titles were published since the publications the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party – Calendar of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party and Calendar of the Slovak were considered to be more significant. Given that autonomy was the party's main political goal, the overall concept of the calendars promoted the alliance with the Third Reich. In 1941, the calendars of the Hlinka Guard and Hlinka Youth were added to the list of published calendars. Cooperative calendars did not address political issues and promoted the idea of cooperatives and self-help. Confessional calendars of the Roman Catholic Church and other churches belonged to most widely spread calendars. They covered religious topics, and, for example, the Tranovský Evangelical calendar from 1940 ignored Slovak political life altogether. At the same time, in the given period, the importance of the calendar as an information and educational means was only slightly significant as the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party was in full control of politics and power (Kipsová – Vančová – Gešková 1984, 114-115; Pekařová et al. 2015, 20-21).

However, in the case of the calendar for Greek Catholic Slovaks, this was not entirely true. It was a novelty and therefore a suitable means of influencing the events in the church and creating the conditions for a change in its leadership. The calendar was all the more important since the Greek Catholic diocese had not published an official periodical since 1939. The last issue of *Ruskoje Slovo* was published in December 1938, and the monthly *Dušpastýr*, which was published in cooperation with the Greek Catholic Diocese in Uzhhorod, ended the same way (Plišková 2007, 39; Gradoš 2020). The Diocese of Prešov regularly issued only official reports called *Razporjaženija* which were distributed to the parish offices and church schools. Their publication was also limited since the publication of Bishop Gojdič's pastoral letter on the 1940 census.

Publications intended for Greek Catholics, such as books, book calendars, brochures in the series *Bližše ko Christu* [Closer to Christ] and songbooks with religious themes, were created and published by the Redemptorist Monastery in Michalovce, without any significant state support. The missionary book *Spas dušu svoju* [Save Your Soul] was published in Slovak and Church Slavic, in a modification for children, youth and adults. One of the most important activities since 1939 was the publication of the magazine *Misionár* [Missionary], which eventually fulfilled the long-term efforts of the Redemptorists to issue publication of this kind. After several years of difficulties in obtaining permission from the state authorities to publish the magazine *Misionár*, the first issue of the magazine was finally published on March 7, 1942. Prior to that, the editorial staff coped with the question whether Greek Catholics would not be „Slovakized“ by the magazine written in Slovak. The staff concluded that in a given situation the question of the language in which the magazine will be published was less important than its content and message. The statement clearly characterizes the attitudes of the Redemptorists, which differed significantly from the national attitudes of the representatives of the Greek Catholic Slovaks (Borza – Mandzák 2010, 330-331).

Greek Catholic Slovaks, first via the Cyril and Methodius Association and since 1941 via the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, continued to publish calendars. Gradually, however, political topics were reduced and the content was primarily religious. Interestingly, the first calendar slowly ceased to be even mentioned and in the calendar for 1943, Ján Murín, the administrator of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, mentions in his editorial the second year and considers the calendar for 1942 to be the first (Murín 1943, 34-35), which would mean that the connection with the regime of the Slovak State was being reconsidered. The calendar for 1943 contained only one political text, the speech of the President given at the Cyril and Methodius festivities in Michalovce in 1942 which was a significant difference compared to the first calendar. In 1944, the name of the calendar was changed to the Calendar of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius for 1944. After a forced break caused first by the events of WW2 and then by the consolidation of conditions, the calendar was published again under the title Calendar for Greek Catholic Slovaks for 1948. The last issue of the calendar was released in the following year, under the title Calendar of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius for 1949 (Kipsová – Vančová – Gešková 1984, 173-174).

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The calendar for the Greek Catholic Slovaks for 1941, with its content and involvement of state authorities in its distribution among believers, pointed to the close cooperation of the representatives of Greek Catholic Slovaks with the representatives of the Slovak State regime. The main role was played by the count of Šariš-Zemplín county with district chiefs in close connection with the government of the Slovak State and the president. The support of the Greek Catholic Slovaks was part of a broader plan to reduce the activities of Bishop Gojdič, of the leadership of the church, their influence, and it also sought to resolve the Ruthenian issue in Slovakia. Fast progress in the years 1939 – 1942 was followed by the suppression of these efforts from 1943 onwards. This was reflected, for instance, in a more cautious approach of Slovak Greek Catholic representatives to the politicians who were active at the regional or national level. It was influenced by at least two facts. In the first place, the development on the Eastern Front where Germany was losing the war and the second reason might be the personal approach of the Bishop of Prešov, who approved the statutes of the Union of Sts. Cyril and Methodius and did not hinder its activities.

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doc. ThDr. Peter Borza, PhD.  
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of History  
Moyzesova 9  
040 01 Košice  
Slovakia  
peter.borza@upjs.sk  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1447-3672