

by forcing it into a linear model, compressing it and eliminating the routine habits and rhythm which define our day-to-day existence, our sense of familiarity in the world.

“When a certain balance is upset, a certain measure is not reached, or when there are too many relationships creating fragmentation, too many and too fast goings away and too many intakes or too much giving out, then the identity changes, or simply is erased,<sup>11</sup>” ERZEN writes. “Speed and mechanical manipulation over matter seem to free one of any local pressure, gravity or dependence.<sup>12</sup>”

All hope is not lost, though. ERZEN believes that there is hope to put the sense of place back into human experience, to restore a sense of self and identity to the anonymity of modern life; and she believes in particular it is the role of contemporary art to address the phenomenon of placelessness. “The awareness of contemporary art about creating relationships between the artefact and the observer is rooted in an ethical sense and social engagement,<sup>13</sup>” she writes.

From this aspect, *Winter Stores* goes beyond being a clever and thoughtful rumination on the notion of time, to being a tangible reminder of the value of rootedness in human experience. Ironically, it transforms the abstract, timeless space of the gallery into a place more time-full than most of us experience in our modern homogenised day-to-day lives. To spend an hour in that territory is to renew one’s awareness of one’s environment, one’s life and ultimately, one’s self.

Andrea JÁGEROVÁ

# By-names and other Mockeries of Slovak Towns and Villages

## I. Why do we Use By-names?

One of the main signs of an ethnic community is its name, which is developed within the internal and external frames of this ethnic community. The difference between the unofficial and official names is twofold.

First, on the one side the official names are valid and recognised in the whole state; and second, the unofficial are characteristic of smaller districts and the users are local inhabitants. The official name, however, does not correspond to the unofficial one, which is mainly used by members of a different ethnic group.

The name of the village, town or region is a distinguishing sign, by which the inhabitants of one area are differed from those of other areas. The choice of the name is directly related to different communication situations and its identification needs.

Unofficial names of towns, villages or deserted dwellings were one of the basic identifiers of each local area in Slovakia. They were and are alive as songs, music and dances, but not as much attention has been paid to them as to other folk expressions.

They are a way of identification at different places, occasions, and in certain areas they are more important and used than the official names. They are a hidden source of interesting information about the people, their culture and lifestyle, and many of them still remain in daily communication throughout Slovakia.

An example: “Where are you from?” “From Korytárky.” “Ah, so you are a scales-person” (due to the scales produced in the area.)

There is a rich system of unofficial names. Most of them are sayings bound to the local common knowledge. In informal communication

---

<sup>11</sup> ERZEN 287.

<sup>12</sup> ERZEN 290.

<sup>13</sup> ERZEN 289.

it is common to use more than one name for a village or town; for example, the town Detva in central Slovakia has about eight of them.

## II. History of Unofficial Names of People and Places

In the village, using and inventing unofficial names for people was widespread. In mediæval documents only the first names are present, to which later distinguishing inherited names (surnames) were attached.

Obligatory use of surnames was instituted first by Joseph I in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, because of administrative reasons and requirements. Unofficial names (byname, doubled surnames or adjectives) were later added to first names and surnames.

They served for better identification of people with the same name living in certain areas. They were more significant for certain personalities than the first name and surname, and they had a dominating position and function in the countryside.

It was the same with unofficial names of villages, towns and cities. They have their sources in the collective and common memory, and they are mainly orally passed on and preserved. They help in a closer and more exact identification and description of inhabitants. In the literature these names are called alive, and from the folkloristic point of view, these are the primary names.

## III. Aspects that Determine the Use and Functions of Unofficial Names

With the development of the culture and life conditions throughout history, names have been changing as well. On the one hand, during certain periods the changes did not influence the system of names visibly.

On the other hand, there have been periods when the changes left very significant marks. We can mention, as a very good example of an important historical condition or catalyser of founding new bynames, the period of strong Magyar influence on Slovaks in the Hungarian Empire.

In the 1898 a law about the Magyarisation of the Slovak names of towns was implemented. The decree meant that every town could have only a Magyar name – for example Detva could only be called Gyetva.

For a short period, it was not allowed to use the city names in the mother language of the nationalities anywhere in the non-Magyar

parts inside the Hungarian Empire. There are still Magyar bynames used in everyday communication.

Generally, some of the unofficial names have been alive for a long time throughout generations and some were present in communication for only a very short period. Apart from the primary aim of using the byname as an identifier, there are also secondary uses. They have become the names of folk dance groups or town newspapers, and so on.

Many bynames of towns and villages were founded on the basis of the professional orientation, crafts or jobs carried out, and in the most cases it was the main source of earning a living in the area. For example, people coming from the village Ábelová were called “sack-people”, because of the sack production there.

The political and social changes after the Second World War forced many crafts and professions to cease, and that automatically led to the extinction of the bynames of the inhabitants founded on their profession. Accordingly, the creation of bynames has its source in the current circumstances and conditions.

The research focusing on people addressed by bynames reveals information about their features and social backgrounds, or their relations to closer or farther surroundings.

It is interesting that in every region or micro-region there is a village or town which was the centre or the best object for mockery. In the Zvolen surroundings, for example, it is the village of Očová: “Do you know why the inhabitants of Očová dig two wells?” “One for hot and one for cold water.”

The usual sociological research is focused on differing social aspects. By studying unofficial names, however, we turn our attention to the opposite side, thus to the integrating factors and collectivism.

This category is an important factor for the functioning of folklore phenomena nowadays, and especially for the bynames. It is their basic and primary feature to be related not to individuals, but mainly to all members of groups, whether ethnic or social.

The strength of collectivism is significant in the fact that the bynames were founded by the act of an individual; later, however, they became the name of the whole local community to which the individual belonged.

The research carried out focuses mainly on social integrative factors influencing the existence, development and functioning of unofficial names. In their hierarchy, the most remarkable ones are age and sex, which are followed by confession, education, profession and social status.

Having taken into consideration the aspect of sex, differences at four levels were revealed. These differences can be seen in the extent of knowledge, in its interpretation, the motivations that gave bynames birth, and their use.

Men proved to have the greatest amount of information on unofficial names. Although some women knew certain names, these names were mostly concerned with the villages where they were born and spent their childhood. What explains this situation is the socio-psychological status of women at that time.

The main task of a woman was to keep a household, as opposed to a man, who was more active outside his house and village. Women would hardly ever leave their households, but men were very often compelled to leave their villages because of work.

Differences in interpretation can be found within a group of names that have a rather mocking character. Older women would deny talking about them. They would find it rather embarrassing. Men used to feel freer in such matters.

The place where one could hear the most spontaneous information was the pub. It was the pub where a man would dare to talk about names that had a mocking character. At home a man would not mention any names like in the pub.

Being a member of a folk group was also a kind of means for keeping unofficial names. This fact appears to have been of great importance when observing the younger generation gathered in folk groups.

Communication with our older generation also contributes to a kind of preservation of traditions and the extension of our knowledge. Our relationship to folk dances, music or literature can then become positive.

*Denomination* is also reflected in unofficial names. We can clearly see it in the division into rich Protestants and poor Roman Catholics. That is why some villages are associated with inhabitants that are purely Protestant.

One of the significant signs of unofficial names is that they are restricted to a certain area. This means that the vocabulary of the local people is only related to their former home region. One would not know the bynames of any distant village.

One would be familiar only with bynames that were famous for their mocking character. People also knew the bynames of the neighbouring villages, or villages that functioned as communication centres.

## IV. Important Places for Bynames

So what determines the existence of unofficial names is the socialization of inhabitants who concentrate in certain places, but come from different regions. Pubs, churches, markets (and feasts) were places where one could hear such names.

### 1. Pub

A *pub* necessarily belonged to every single village. It served as a kind of cultural and social institution. As far as men's life was concerned, pubs were really very important. Men would go there almost every day. Bynames were particularly created during fights and arguments, so this environment was very productive.

After the Second World War (1939–1945), the pubs almost totally lost their former primary function. They were then replaced by the so-called cultural houses, an invention of the Communist Party. Those took over the function of social institutions. So, the pub underwent changes regarding its function.

### 2. Church

*Churches*, unlike pubs, were not kinds of places where people would meet every day. Churches also gathered those people living in a faraway dwelling, which naturally did not have any church. Therefore, Sunday holy masses, services and holy liturgies were attended by people coming from those distant villages.

Nowadays every village wants to have a church or at least a place where services can be held, as for example cultural houses. This means that these buildings are centres of social life, but not only for the particular society of one village.

### 3. Market

*Markets* used to ensure the economic and social contact of people coming from various places and regions. In contrast to churches and pubs, they used to group people from distant places, but on the other hand they did not take place so often as masses or meetings in pubs.

At these places people made up unofficial names, characterizing people coming from certain areas, towns or villages, according to their professions. Inhabitants of Banská Bystrica were called *hruškári*, which means *pear-people*.

As time went by, two factors contributed to the extinction

of markets and festivals: first, the change of social and economic conditions; and second, the attempt to ensure supply for inhabitants with a market net.

Nowadays sporting events are the places where unofficial names are created and used. It is fans who use them when encouraging sport teams: for example, there *Zvolenčania* are called *Bryndziari*, meaning bryndza-people (bryndza is a Slovak sheep-milk cheese).

Other places that helped to sustain these unofficial names are schools, work environments and also everyday travelling by bus or train. Nowadays many children travel to schools, but they do not use any bynames.

## V. Classification of By-names

All bynames are restricted to oral communication, but since their meaning is not clear and explicit, one would consider them meaningless. To be able to decode its meaning, one must be a member of the particular cultural and historical society to which these bynames are connected.

Before analysing bynames, we had to get as much information as possible about the causes that gave them birth. In our paper, these were divided into the following subgroups:

1. First, bynames of an *identifying* character. These served to signify certain places, and the names were frequently used in everyday communication. Furthermore, they gained equal position with the official names.

2. Second, bynames of a *mocking* character. These were mostly used during fights and arguments and hardly ever in everyday communication. People addressed with these names were rather ashamed and embarrassed to be called so. What usually gave rise to them was some funny or ridiculous event. Only a small minority of them was related to some historical point.

As far as by-names of a mocking character are concerned, one would usually start narrating a story that ends up in assigning a mocking byname for a certain person, and then this name would be implemented for the whole group to which the person belonged.

The narrations usually finish with words like: “and since then, they are called ..., because ...”. The topics of these narrations can be either universal or specific, for example like the famous story of how inhabitants of one village cooked a goulash from a dog. These comic stories about the motivation for bynames are very popular, and many people believe that they really happened.

(Translated by Katarina BABICOVÁ and Zuzana BABICOVÁ)

Daniel PASTIRČÁK

# A Fairytale about a Jester and a King

“The king is coming tomorrow,” the vassals whispered as they strew about tulip, daffodil and violet petals.

“The king is coming tomorrow,” the mercenaries chanted monotonously instead of a song.

Yes, the king is to come tomorrow. Which king? Well, our king – the king of this country and the king of our fairy-tale. An absolutely ordinary king – as kings usually are: fat, stupid, proud and indifferent. But this particular king had made a fatal mistake: he travelled to the kingdom of the Philosopher King – a humanist. But he made an even greater mistake when he returned from that country to his own, which is the country of our tale.

The king’s carriage, drawn by eight steeds over whirling, faded petals – long live the king! – with gilded wheels which jingled on the stone cobbles, stopped in the middle of the court.

“Long live the king!” At that moment twenty mercenaries stamped with their right foot and marched toward him with arms presented to honour him.

“The king is here to enter into history,” proclaimed the monarch as soon as he quit the carriage.

“We have lagged behind,” he shouted, “but on everything we shall catch up.” A jester stepped out after the king and, like a living shadow, pranced along behind the king’s heels.

“They are writing a book there about everything their king does, and it is the most important thing,” said the King. “You two,” he stopped in front of motionless castle guards, “I promote you to the post of scribes. You have until tomorrow evening to learn to write. You will be responsible for the Book of Royal History – Write it down.”

“Most important is to gain the nation’s heart,” the monarch speculated aloud when the bedroom door closed. “If the nation grows fond of you,” the king winked at the jester confidentially, “they