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The “ideal with great appeal” or the emergence and development of leisure time in Czechoslovakia (among other countries)

Abstract: The first part of the study summarizes the historical antecedents, circumstances, and contexts of the emergence of leisure time. In the second part, the author discusses the development of leisure in Czechoslovakia during the 1960s and 1970s, drawing on contemporary sociological research, including the Czechoslovak Stratification Survey of 1969, which remains unique still today. The third part focuses on the leisure time of Hungarians in Slovakia, also based on sociological research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s. This study serves as an introduction to the article in the next issue, in which the author will analyze the post-1989 transformation and current state of leisure time among Hungarians in Slovakia.

Keywords: leisure time; history of leisure time; leisure sociology; introduction of free Saturday; leisure time in Czechoslovakia; leisure time of Hungarians in Slovakia; media consumption

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61795/fssr.v25y2023i5.02>

Introduction

Our lives begin at a specific time, last for a certain duration, and end at a predetermined moment.¹ This grand mystery that frames our existence has given rise to numerous profound thoughts. Out of curiosity, I searched for literary quotes about time on the Internet and found 108 pages on the citatum.hu website alone, including the following: “Time [...] would keep running on, in an uncountable chain of events, and one day time would erase the dark men governing us, and it would erase my parents, and it would erase me too, and it would keep running along the streets, across the squares, the whole city, leaving a whole future in its wake” (Julián Fuks, Brazilian writer, 1981–), and “Time is what is real, the best we give, and our gift is the hour-glass – indeed, ‘tis subtly narrow, that bottle neck through which the red sand runs, so hairlike its trickle that the eye beholds no diminish-

¹ The study was conducted within the framework of the project titled *Changes in the Hungarian Society in Slovakia over the Last 100 Years, with Particular Focus on Everyday Culture*, with project number APVV-20-0336.

ment in the upper chamber, and only at the very end does it appear to go fast and fast be gone” (Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize-winning German writer, 1875–1955).

From a scientific perspective, time is a multidisciplinary topic, studied in numerous fields. In sociology, Émile Durkheim set the foundational tone, imbued with lyricism, when he wrote in 1912 about time in terms of “an abstract and impersonal framework that maintains not only our individual existence but also that of humanity. It is like an endless canvas on which all duration is spread out before the mind’s eye and on which all possible events are located in relation to points of reference that are fixed and specified” (Durkheim 2003: 20). One segment of this “endless canvas,” which is human lifetime, is leisure time. I will address this aspect in my article, beginning with a brief overview of the origins of leisure time.

1. The “birth” of leisure time

The fundamental thesis posits that leisure time “becomes measurable and perceptible in relation to the time spent on activities that serve the preservation of life, expressing, in the management of time, a certain sense of freedom of a specific type of time” (Fekete 2018: 27). In simpler terms, work time and leisure time cannot be entirely separated. This is because, firstly, both are “manifestations of the same human essence” (Szalai 1976: 11), and secondly, the quantity and content of work time significantly determine the amount and content of leisure time.

As is often the case with social phenomena, leisure time has multiple definitions, generally encompassing activities considered as taking place during leisure hours. One definition is as follows: “Leisure time is the period for relaxation, social interactions, vacations, unwinding, and replenishing physical and mental resources, organized by individuals based on their own needs, desires, values, and aspirations” (Kratochvílová 2010: 4). Methodologically, I primarily align with sociologist Sándor Szalai, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and leader of the Multinational Comparative Time Budget Research Project between 1964 and 1970. According to him, “leisure time cannot be perceived as an abstract category; it must always be defined for research purposes. It only becomes measurable and evaluable when compared to time spent on activities aimed at life maintenance (breadwinning work, mandatory social, family, household, and subsistence tasks, satisfying one’s own physiological needs, etc.)” (Szalai 1976: 13). Additionally, I would emphasize that leisure time is not only free from compulsory activities but is also freely chosen, including the selection of the time period and how that time is spent.

Drawing from the literature on leisure time, three closely related theses can be established: 1. work time and leisure time were not always sharply distinguished from one another (at least for the masses); this separation only occurred in the modern era. Consequently, 2. the phenomenon of leisure time in today’s sense, as the term itself,

is a product of the modern era. 3. Leisure time has never been independent of social status; it has been decided by social class or stratum.

Throughout history, all known societies have had their own days of rest and holidays, with specific times allocated for work and rest. However, in traditional societies, the time of celebration or rest was not freely chosen and spent. In these societies, the periods of work and rest during the day were continuous and intertwined (a situation similar to what millions of people and families experienced during the pandemic when they started working from home). According to Iván Vitányi, who considered time management to be the most important criterion of lifestyle type, time management in traditional societies was governed by habit (Vitányi 2006). Time use was additive: work was primary, and other activities were supplementary, but they were also related to work. Leisure time, in today's sense, did not exist. Yet the concept of leisure had already been defined by the ancient Greek philosophers. “It was on the soil of the great slave-holding civilizations of antiquity that the ideal of choosing activities not determined by efforts of subsistence, was first formulated. [...] This ideal, in which the devaluation of useful labor became part of the ‘ideological arrogance’ of the ruling class, has a great appeal in that it idealizes a state in which energy is freed from securing the necessities of life, and thus, people engage in activities they find appealing for the sake of activity itself” (Danecki 1973: 29–30). This ideal, which characterizes leisure time today and is referred to as “personal time” in everyday discourse, was called “spare time” by ancient Greek philosophers. Aristotle, for example, understood it as a sphere of life where the formal condition is the individual's inner and outer independence and its content is contemplation, as opposed to activities related to acquiring material wealth, which have no strictly defined goals. Leisure time was considered a privilege of the upper echelons of citizens born into freedom (Zborovszkij 1976: 23). Thus, spare time became a monopoly of a narrow elite, but at a great contradiction: “The few obtained it at the cost of converting almost the entire life of the rest into working time” (Danecki 1973: 28–29).

The distinct separation of working time and time spent outside of work, the modern leisure time in industrial societies,² resulted from the radical division of workplaces and households, as well as public and private spheres. Leisure time evolved into an autonomous sphere, providing individuals with an opportunity to escape their obligations and explore self-realization.

However, this does not imply that people worked continuously without rest until the Industrial Revolution. Firstly, their endurance and tolerance were biologically deter-

2 It is worth noting that activity classifications show not only a simple division between working time and leisure time but also more complex time allocations, such as socially bound time, time allocated for meeting physiological needs, and time set aside for activities of personal choice (Falussy 2007).

mined. Secondly, the norms were related to work and rest and primarily based on religious precepts. Even within the Christian cultural sphere in Europe, the Old Testament provided instructions on time management from its first pages. The Creator himself rested on the seventh day after the demanding work of creating the world, which he blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2: 2–3). He also commanded people not to work on the seventh day, as it was a day of rest. This applied to everyone, including all members of the family, servants, domestic animals, and even “strangers within [one’s] gates” (Exodus 20: 8–11; Exodus 31: 12–13). Disobeying this commandment carried the penalty of death (Exodus 31:14–15). Thus, leisure time, in this context, applied to all, irrespective of their social status.

According to Polish sociologist Jan Danecki, in medieval Europe, and in purely agricultural societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the second half of the 20th century, people had more than one-third of the year as time off from work. Sundays and church holidays made up a smaller proportion, while the rest were not freely chosen days off; they were the result of external circumstances, such as natural disasters, diseases, epidemics, unfavorable weather, or natural cycles. These were not perceived positively as they led to deteriorating living conditions. “Therefore, human efforts were generally directed at eliminating this type of surplus time imposed by coercion in order to ensure long-term viability throughout the year and beyond (through accumulating reserves, investments, etc.)” (Danecki 1973: 32). With the advent of capitalism alongside industrial society, these surplus times were eliminated “in the most ruthless manner, using all the means of economic and non-economic coercion” (Danecki 1973: 32). Initially, several holidays were abolished, and idleness and loafing were strongly criticized. In France, this was particularly characteristic of the Enlightenment philosophers, but Protestantism also played a significant role, as evident in Max Weber’s classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Religion and its interpretation played a pivotal role once more. The conviction that salvation depended on fulfilling one’s divine mission and placing work and duty above all else fostered the view that any pursuits outside of labor, including leisure activities, were considered wasteful and even sinful. In other words, leisure time, as the opposite of working time, acquired a negative connotation. Marx also concurred with the defining role of the Protestant ethic, writing in his equally classic work, *Capital*: “Protestantism, by changing almost all the traditional holidays into workdays, plays an important part in the genesis of capital” (Marx 1955: 259, note 124).

The advancement of production techniques, which occurred alongside the scientific and technical revolution, could have allowed most people to access work that sustained their livelihoods and provided them with leisure time for freely chosen activities. However, this conflicted with capitalist interests driven by the free market. Instead, the opposite occurred: during the period when labor-saving machines were introduced, English workers, for example, saw their working hours increased to 12–16 hours a day. As Marx wrote, referring to reports from contemporary labor inspectors, “the fact is,

that prior to the Act of 1833,³ young persons and children were worked all night, all day, or both *ad libitum* (at will)” (Marx 1955: 262), meaning they worked even on Sundays, disregarding “divine ordinance,” leading to an extension of the workday. Eventually, “All bounds of morals and nature, age and sex, day and night, were broken down” (Marx 1955: 261). In France, this transformation was completed by the great revolution.

In these circumstances, where capitalists controlled not only the majority’s working hours but virtually their entire time, leisure time was not a concept for working-class people. This extreme exploitation led to such physical, mental, and moral exhaustion that it began to jeopardize the capitalist system itself. Workers could only enforce the first laws aimed at limiting and precisely defining working hours when the reduction of working hours became a collective interest of the capitalists as well. When the time came to define “when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins” (Marx 1955: 285), and the slow process of reducing working hours commenced,⁴ the history of leisure time, as we understand it today, began. However, “for a long time, it was not a question of acquiring leisure time in the classical sense, but only of reclaiming the time that was stolen from the worker before (Danecki 1973: 36). Thus, the initial labor movements aimed at reducing working hours were primarily motivated by the defense against biological deterioration.

These political movements, along with the strengthening of interest representation, and the development of technical tools and economic organization, increased in labor productivity by the mid-20th century. This led to the mass availability of leisure time, which was previously limited to a narrow social stratum but now became accessible to the majority. This not only allowed people to engage in politics and public activities during their leisure time (Danecki 1973: 39), but also contributed to scientific research, particularly in the emerging field of leisure sociology. In the 1960s and 1970s, leisure time became a measure of social development. In Western countries people often talked about the “society of leisure” and the “civilization of leisure,” with leisure seen as the main path to democratization, with the belief that equality among all social strata could be attained through leisure activities. However, in socialist countries, where leisure time was also a significant social issue, research indicated leisure

3 In this year, the Parliament of the United Kingdom reduced the working hours of children aged 13–18 to 12 full hours in four industries (Marx 1955: 260).

4 As Marx noted, the initial Factory Act of 1833 established a 15-hour workday for the industrial sector, running from 5:30 AM to 8:30 PM. Women and minors worked 12 hours a day under this law. Subsequent legislation made gradual changes: the 1847 law reduced working hours for women to 11 hours, and in 1848, this was further reduced to 10 hours, while men continued to work 15 hours a day. By the 1880s, major industries in England had shortened the workweek to 53–54 hours, representing a significant reduction compared to earlier periods (Szántó 1973: 12).

was unevenly distributed among different social strata, with significant variations in the content of activities (Szántó 1973: 9). Consequently, a “synthetic” solution was proposed “that would simultaneously humanize work and reduce working hours, creating a new, higher-order unity of creative work and creative leisure” (Szántó 1973: 9).

By the early 1970s, it became evident that although working hours had decreased in both Western and Eastern Europe, the amount of time spent on “effective work” increased. People took on additional income-generating side jobs, a phenomenon reflected in the results of the Multinational Comparative Time Budget Research Project⁵ conducted between 1964 and 1970. The research showed that in Hungary, 18% of skilled male workers and 26% of male intellectuals had side jobs. Among those with side jobs, the majority were married men, with 40% doing so due to low income and 25% due to temporary financial difficulties, indicating a strong financial motivation. Additionally, 30% of the respondents justified having a side job with interest in work, and 5% with other reasons. Hungarian sociologist Miklós Szántó noted that the percentage of individuals taking on additional jobs was on the rise and likely higher than that which had been reported in the Multinational Comparative Time Budget Research Project. He attributed this trend to the so-called *fusi* phenomenon, a sensitive matter that was widely acknowledged but not openly discussed, especially during official data collection. Some researchers explained the phenomenon of people engaging in extra work despite reduced working hours by suggesting that individuals did not yet fully value their leisure time. Szántó, however, cautioned that this did not necessarily imply a lack of demand, but rather quite the opposite: “The rapidly growing needs drive these individuals, and often, it is the heightened desire for a higher-quality utilization of weekend leisure time that prompts people to temporarily give up their free hours” (Szántó 1973: 16). This increased desire for more fulfilling leisure activities was closely tied to specific items, such as television sets, which, due to financial constraints, were not initially widely available as mass consumer goods. Consequently, this also clarifies why individuals engaged in work during their leisure hours: to generate the funds necessary for investing in what they considered higher-quality leisure experiences. In this context, their motivation grew, as leisure time had transformed into a commodity integrated into mass consumption. This shift was particularly prominent in

5 Practically every country where social research had reached an advanced level, conducted time-use surveys (Szalai 1976: 25). Most of these surveys were conducted in France, in the Federal Republic of Germany, and the USA, but “some less affluent countries, such as Poland or Hungary, also achieved significant results” (Szalai 1976: 25). The Multinational Comparative Time Budget Research Project was conducted in 12 countries, involving a total of 30,000 respondents. Czechoslovakia was represented by the Prague Technical College’s Sociology Laboratory, which conducted time-budget research in Olomouc and its surroundings in November–December 1965. It is evident that neither Slovaks nor Hungarians in Slovakia were included in the Czechoslovak survey.

Western countries, where an entire “leisure industry” emerged (Szalai 1976: 15), and to some extent, in socialist countries as well. Hence, it was not a matter of people preferring work to leisure, but rather a necessity to earn money for their leisure activities – a trend that remains relevant today. “The work-to-consume strategy became a self-reinforcing cycle, which, although not always consciously acknowledged, influences us all” (Schor 1993, cited in Chorvát 2019: 8).

The key characteristics of modern leisure time can be summarized as follows: 1. It is distinct from working time, representing the opposite end of the spectrum; 2. Leisure time is universal, no longer the exclusive privilege of a select social group but has become accessible to the masses; 3. It is individualized, primarily under the control of the individual, rather than subject to societal rules dictating its use; and 4. It is consolidated, characterized by a “block-like structure” (Szalai 1976: 15). This structure was evident in the shift from fragmented leisure time consisting of numerous small blocks in previous years to the accumulation of substantial leisure periods after work and during weekends and extended vacations. This transition further fueled the growth of the leisure industry and market. The move to a five-day workweek significantly bolstered this consolidation. Between 1940 and 1960, numerous countries embraced the concept of a free Saturday. In Czechoslovakia, this shift occurred relatively swiftly between 1966 and 1968, whereas in Hungary, it unfolded gradually through five phases between January 1, 1968, and June 30, 1982 (Palkó 2014).

2. Leisure time in Czechoslovakia

Reflecting on labor regulations in our region during the 19th century, we find that Hungary’s first Industrial Act of 1872 established a maximum daily working time of 16 hours. This limit remained unchanged with the enactment of the second Industrial Act in 1884. As the 20th century dawned, many Western European countries were already advocating for 8-hour workdays, whereas Hungarian workers were primarily focused on securing Sundays as a day of rest and a maximum daily working duration of 10 hours. Although the demand for an 8-hour workday did arise during certain strikes, it was not the primary objective. In 1910, only 3.4% of workers in Hungary were engaged in 8-hour workdays, while 25.4% worked for 8–10 hours, 66.3% for 10–12 hours, and 4.9% for 12 hours or more. Even during World War I, the majority of workers still endured 10–12-hour workdays (Szántó 1973: 12). Other sources suggested that before 1918, the official working day in the Czech and Slovak regions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was 11 hours, although some industries had shorter hours (Linhart - Vítěčková 1975, cited in Chorvát 2019: 79). The shift to an 8-hour workday occurred in 1918, shortly after the formation of Czechoslovakia.

In 1930, Tomáš Baťa, a prominent shoe manufacturer, introduced a 45-hour, 5-day workweek for his employees, and other factories temporarily also reduced working

hours. Although in 1931, the Ministry of Social Affairs proposed a 40-hour workweek bill, it did not pass. However, due to the economic crisis in the 1930s, some employers voluntarily adopted workweeks of 40 hours or fewer (Štern 1934; Bitterman 1934, cited in Chorvát 2019: 80). The next adjustment to working hours came in 1956 when the workweek was reduced to 46 hours, with a minimum of 5 hours to be worked on Saturdays. In 1965, the Labor Code set a maximum limit of 46 weekly working hours. Nevertheless, during that period, the workweek still spanned six days (with the previously mentioned exception of the Baťa factory), despite analyses pointing to the reduced productivity of Saturdays as workdays.

Subsequently, in August 1966, a decree from the Central Planning Institute declared every fourth Saturday as a day off, and from January 1967, every second Saturday became a day off. In the field of education, this change took effect in September 1967, with schools holding classes every other Saturday. In the autumn of 1967, an experiment was conducted involving 138 factories, exploring the transition to a 5-day workweek, contingent on factories' increasing productivity while maintaining wages. Despite achieving convincing results, Antonín Novotný, the President of Czechoslovakia and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS Central Committee), harbored concerns about the potential adverse economic impact of implementing the 5-day workweek. Consequently, it was only after the period known as the Prague Spring, during which Alexander Dubček succeeded Novotný as Party Secretary General, that the 5-day workweek was fully introduced on September 29, 1968, with all Saturdays designated as days off. Czechoslovakia thus outpaced several Western European countries, including neighboring Austria, where school-free Saturdays were not introduced until the 1970s.⁶

How did individuals choose to utilize this sudden increase in leisure time? In late 1969, the Czechoslovak Labor Research Institute in Bratislava conducted a survey to shed light on this question. Silvia Valná, the head of the research, noted that the transition to a shorter workweek did not significantly alter the lifestyle of rural populations. However, urban residents who owned cottages or weekend houses, known as *chalupa* or *chata* in Czech and Slovak,⁷ suddenly found more time for their favorite activity, the *chalupářstvo*.⁸ This involved visiting their houses and making improvements to them.

6 Source: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/petidenni-pracovni-tyden-zavedeni.A180928_150018_domaci_bse.

7 The difference between the two types of properties is as follows: a *chata* is used for periodical vacations, like a cottage somewhere in nature or a garden, whereas a *chalupa* can serve as a permanent residence, essentially a family house.

8 Another researcher, Martin Fronc, proposed that the phenomenon mentioned earlier gained rapid momentum after the introduction of the “free Saturday” and the rise of the do-it-yourself (DIY) activities. This was partly driven by peoples' desire to create items themselves, fil-

Many working women shifted household chores they used to do during the week to Saturdays, which allowed them to have a genuinely free Sunday. Students also benefited from increased free time, although the reallocation of Saturday classes to other weekdays sometimes resulted in overburdening primary school students.

In a 1970 public opinion survey titled *Názory 1970*, it was found that despite some complications in services and transportation due to the transition to the 5-day workweek, 48% of respondents considered it very good, 34% considered it good, 13% considered it both good and bad, and only 2% considered it bad (Chorvát 2019: 79). When respondents were asked how they spent their newfound leisure time, 80% provided answers. Among them, 19% focused on housework; 15% on socializing, entertainment, watching TV, and self-care; 12% spent time with family and children; 11% rested; 7% went on vacation or engaged in tourism and travel; 5% worked on tasks related to their homes and weekend houses; 3% pursued their hobbies; 3% engaged in culture, self-improvement and sports; and 2% used their free time for various kinds of work to ensure a genuinely free Sunday. Alongside the positive aspects of the free Saturday, 30% of respondents mentioned negatives. For example, 8% cited lower income; 4% complained that nothing could be done or bought on Saturdays because it was a “dead day”; 3% mentioned difficulties related to shopping (long lines, product quality, and availability) and services; 2% complained about the closure of food and other stores; 2% complained that they had to work on Saturdays; and 1% stated they did not have enough free time (Chorvát 2019: 79–82).

In the 1960s, similar to in other countries, in Czechoslovakia it was assumed that increased leisure time would have a positive impact on personal development and the cultivation of needs, thereby enhancing labor productivity and benefiting the economic and labor sectors. However, surveys conducted in the 1960s and 1970s indicated that people in Czechoslovakia, much like in other countries, primarily used their leisure time for work, household chores, traveling, tending to weekend houses, and watching TV (Chorvát 2011: 21).

Surveys conducted in the 1970s also revealed that the free Saturdays were often only nominally free because people could be called in to work if necessary. While such instances were infrequent, national committees (the municipal offices of the time) occasionally announced “Action Z” for Saturdays. This meant that local residents voluntarily participated in community assistance activities such as building cultural centers, schools, mortuaries, and other community buildings or projects. However, even when

ling gaps left by the stores, and partly as a response to the detachment experienced during regular working hours (<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/jak-jsme-zili-7226867/6>). Alternatively, some opinions suggest that the popularity of “weekend cottage living,” especially during the normalization period of the 1970s, represented an escape from a seemingly bleak social environment into a more individual sphere (Slejška Dragoslav 1990: 318–319, cited by Chorvát 2019: 23).

Saturdays were officially free, people did not necessarily dedicate their extra leisure time solely to personal hobbies. For example, surveys conducted by Slovak sociologist Ladislav Macháček indicated that family and mutual-assistance activities, known as *kaláka* in Hungary, were rather common, as were supplementary jobs (*fusi*).⁹

In the realm of domestic research, it is vital to acknowledge the highly comprehensive and still distinctive social stratification study conducted in 1967 on the Czechoslovakian population (Machonin et al. 1969). This study provided compelling evidence that there is no single, universally applicable leisure time model; instead, how people spend their leisure time is intricately linked to their social strata. The researchers identified six social strata based on socio-economic status: the first stratum comprised 2.3% of the population, the second 8%, the third 15%, the fourth 26.2%, the fifth 30.4%, and the sixth 18.1%. These strata, along with other characteristics, exhibited notable distinctions in their leisure activities. The lead researcher underscored that one's occupation and educational level had a more significant influence over their leisure time choices than involvement in political power and governance, such as Communist Party membership or holding related positions (Machonin 1969: 129). Additionally, in this stratification, although not dominant, ethnic differentiation still played a noteworthy role (Machonin 1969:126). Specifically, Machonin mentioned Hungarians as part of the fifth stratum (i.e., the second lowest), indicating that, in conjunction with Slovaks and other ethnicities, they constituted 40% of the stratum's composition. However, based on the descriptions of individual strata, there were also Hungarians in the fourth stratum in proportion to their national representation, whereas their presence dwindled in the higher strata, particularly in the top three (a pattern mirrored by the Slovaks). This foundational stratification closely correlated with a sixfold social stratification system derived from lifestyle patterns (Linhart 1969:219). The lower (9.6%) and the upper-lower (29.8%) strata predominantly occupied their leisure time with domestic work, house/apartment maintenance, and, for farmers, tending to their gardens and land. Their creative outlets were closely tied to these activities. Vacations were a rarity, with leisure hours filled by visits to pubs, rest, attendance at sporting events, or foraging in forests. In terms of media consumption, their interests leaned toward sports and crime news, pop music, and entertainment programs. The lower-middle (25.3%) and upper-middle strata (19.1%) exhibited a more active approach to their leisure compared to the preceding groups. They actively pursued diverse hobbies (e.g., stamp collecting, beekeeping, or hunting) and expanded their leisure beyond their homes through excursions and travel. Their media consumption displayed a broader appreciation for cultural events, especially in the upper-middle stratum, where theater, concerts, and art galleries garnered more attention. For the upper-lower (10.1%) and upper (5.2%) strata, leisure unequivocally

9 Source: (<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/jak-jsme-zili-7226867/6>).

revolved around travel, both domestically and internationally. While their leisure activities shared commonalities with those of other strata, what distinctly set these two strata apart, particularly the upper one, was their more frequent visits to cultural venues (Linhart 1969: 219–221).

Therefore, it can be observed that the utilization of leisure time varied among different social strata. This variation was closely linked to the nature of their occupations: the upper strata were primarily comprised of individuals engaged in intellectual work, and they exhibited distinct leisure patterns compared to the lower strata, which predominantly consisted of manual laborers. Farmers belonged to the lowest stratum. Hence, it is not surprising that the population of Slovakia, in comparison to the inhabitants of the Czech lands, had a higher representation in the lower strata. Additionally, it is worth noting that “the lowest forms of leisure time utilization are exceptionally prevalent among some minorities, especially Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Roma” (Linhart 1969: 226).

3. Leisure time of Hungarians in Slovakia during the 1960s and 1970s

Comprehensive research specifically focusing on the leisure time of Hungarians in Slovakia during this era is lacking. Nonetheless, there are three studies that touch upon the subject of leisure time. The first was conducted in 1963–1964, examining the quality of the life and cultural level of teachers in Hungarian-language primary schools, as well as the interests and health of educators. The second study took place in 1964–1965 and was titled *The Examination of the Cultural Life of Hungarian Ethnic Workers and the Economic Factors Influencing Cultural Activities*. Both studies were led by István Kardos, a sociologist and researcher at the Marxist-Leninist Department of the Faculty of Education in Nitra.

The third occurred several years later, between 1971 and 1975, at the Cultural Research Institute’s Cultural Theory and Sociology Cabinet in Bratislava. It was led by Milan Kašiak and László Végh and titled *The Socialist Development of Hungarian Ethnic Culture in Czechoslovakia*. This research was conducted in six ethnically diverse districts – Galanta, Komárno, Levice, Rimavská Sobota, Lučenec, and Trebišov – covering 57 settlements where the Hungarian ethnic population constituted at least 10% of the total population or where at least 100 Hungarians resided. Essentially, this was a comparative study aimed at both Slovak and Hungarian ethnic populations in the mentioned districts. The mixed sample included 2,000 respondents, with 45% being Hungarian and 55% Slovak, reflecting the actual ethnic proportions (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 30).

The research covered various topics, including leisure time. The research report emphasized leisure time as an urgent societal issue during that period, justifying its importance by stating that leisure time “profoundly influences the nature of individuals’ cultural lives, as people mainly fulfill their cultural interests and needs during their leisure hours” (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 177). The researchers defined leisure time as “the part of the

day that remains after the completion of work, household chores, and personal needs (sleeping, eating, taking care of health, hygiene, and appearance) have been satisfied. During this time, individuals can engage in activities of their own choosing and interest, including physical and mental relaxation, expanding their knowledge, participating in public and social life, and other activities that bring them joy or entertainment” (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 178). The section related to leisure time included two questions. The first inquired about the respondents’ engagement in specific activities during an average workday, Saturday, and Sunday, measured in minutes, as well as the total amount of their leisure time. The second question focused on how they spent their leisure time.

Now, let us delve into the quantity of leisure time. For the entire sample, respondents had an average of 4.26 hours of leisure time in a typical workday, 6.94 hours on Saturdays, and 8.92 hours on Sundays. Their average weekly leisure time amounted to 37.16 hours. Table 1 illustrates the quantity of leisure time by ethnic affiliation. These data reveal that the Hungarian and Slovak populations in the six districts of southern Slovakia had nearly identical amounts of leisure time, with only negligible and insignificant differences between them.

Table 1: Average leisure time of Hungarians and Slovaks, hours (Source: Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

Ethnicity	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
Hungarians	4.29	6.97	9.01	37.43
Slovaks	4.25	6.93	9.13	37.31

However, gender differences in the quantity of leisure time were evident in both the Hungarian and Slovak sub-samples (see Table 2). Hungarian men and women had the same amount of leisure time on weekdays, but on weekends, men enjoyed more leisure time than women, resulting in a weekly leisure time surplus of 2.4 of leisure time for men. In the Slovak sub-sample, a similar trend favoring men was observed. However, several distinctions emerged: 1. Slovak men had more leisure time not only on weekends but also on weekdays compared to Slovak (and Hungarian) women; 2. Slovak men had more leisure time than Hungarian men; and 3. Slovak women had the least amount of leisure time, even less than Hungarian women, resulting in a more substantial difference in leisure time between Slovak men and women compared to their Hungarian counterparts. On a weekly basis, Slovak men had 7.7 hours more leisure time than Slovak women, 2.6 hours more than Hungarian men, and 5 hours more than Hungarian women. The fact that Slovak women had less leisure time than Hungarian women was attributed to the higher employment rate among Slovak women in the sample.¹⁰

10 Economist Géza Mihály conducted a study that revealed the employment rates among working-age women in the late 1960s, broken down by ethnicity. The results were as follows:

Table 2: Average leisure time by gender, hours (Source: Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

	Hungarians				Slovaks			
Gender	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
Men	4.2	7.5	9.9	38.4	4.6	7.8	10.2	41
Women	4.3	6.4	8.1	36	3.9	5.9	7.9	33.3

Regarding age groups,¹¹ there were differences in the amount of leisure time among various age groups in both sub-samples, and when comparing the Hungarian and Slovak age groups, the differences between them also become evident. For example, in both sub-samples, individuals aged 60 and over (i.e., retirees) had the most leisure time – they had twice as much leisure time on weekdays as the other age groups. However, Slovak individuals in their 60s had more leisure time on both weekdays and weekends compared to Hungarians, resulting in a weekly surplus of 4.2 hours of leisure time for them.

Table 3: Average leisure time by age groups, hours (Source: Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

	Hungarians				Slovaks			
Age group	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
15–19	3.4	7.7	9.9	34.6	3.8	8.3	9	36.3
20–24	3.6	7.2	9.4	34.6	3.3	7	9.4	32.9
25–29	3.1	6.4	8.8	30.7	2.7	6.6	8.9	29
30–44	3.1	5.8	8.2	29.5	3.3	6	8.5	31
45–59	3.9	6.7	8.6	34.8	4.1	6.1	8.5	35.1
60 and over	7.2	8.2	9.7	53.9	8	8.7	10.1	58.1

The researchers did not extensively analyze leisure time by education level and occupation (Table 4 and Table 5) because the statistical test only showed weak significance. However, when examining the data, it is interesting to note that in both sub-samples, those without elementary school education had the most leisure time on a weekly basis, followed by those with an elementary school education (with only slight differ-

Czech 43%, Slovak 36.4%, Ukrainian 37.7%, and Hungarian 27.6%. The author emphasized that “the relatively low employment of female labor is closely linked to the agricultural nature of south Slovakia’s economy and the general shortage of local job opportunities. Due to the lack of industrial employment, we often find male workers in the south Slovak agriculture assigned to perform jobs traditionally designated for women” (Mihály 1969: 917).

11 Regarding age groups, it is interesting to note that children were included in the sample since the lower age limit for respondents was 15. This practice is rare nowadays and only occurs in targeted surveys, such as youth research.

ences between these two educational categories among Hungarians and Slovaks). This can partially be explained by the fact that some of these education categories included teenagers who were not yet working and were still attending school. Additionally, some of the retirees in this group may not have had an elementary school education according to the norms of the time. This is because, not to mention older individuals, those around 60¹² at that time were born before or during World War I, in a completely different world (both in a figurative and literal sense) and completely different country.

Table 4: Average leisure time by educational level, hours (Source: Kašiák-Végh 1976: 180)

Education level	Hungarians				Slovaks			
	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
Unfinished elementary	6.2	7.5	9	47.5	6	7.6	9.7	47.3
Elementary	4.5	6.9	8.9	38.3	4.6	6.2	8.9	38.1
Trade school	4	7	9.8	36.8	3.9	7.2	9.9	36.6
Vocational school	3.9	6.5	9	35	3.4	7.1	8.8	32.9
High school	3.3	6.8	8.9	32.2	3.6	6.9	9.1	34
Higher education	4.1	7.5	9.2	37.2	3.4	6.9	9	32.9

When it comes to the breakdown by occupation, I find housewives, especially Hungarian ones, particularly interesting. On workdays and Saturdays, they had more leisure time than workers and others, but on Sundays, they had less leisure time than the others. Slovak housewives show a different pattern: they had more leisure time on workdays, similar to Hungarian women, compared to other occupations, but on weekends, they had even less leisure time than Hungarian housewives. In the Hungarian–Slovak comparison, Hungarian housewives had an extra 8.8 hours of leisure time per week compared to Slovak housewives, which essentially equated to one workday. What could be the reason for this? We cannot know for sure in retrospect, but one hypothesis comes to mind: it is possible that Hungarian housewives did not consider the myriad of household tasks they performed as “full-fledged” work. One possible reason could be that the ideal of the woman of the time was not a housewife but one who contributed to the national economy, which could involve work traditionally done by men as well. Might they have thought that all the work they did at home was essentially done “only” in their free time? In other words, all this was “just” leisure activities and not real work?

12 Full retirement age at the time was 60 for men and 57 for women, with certain occupational categories having retirement ages of 55 and 58. The number of children a woman had also lowered her retirement age.

We could have partially answered this question by examining how much time the respondents spent on the 10 activities listed in the questionnaire, as household chores were on the list. Unfortunately, however, this data is not included in the research report, nor is the time spent by both sub-sample groups on work or school-related activities, other paid work, preparing for work at home, further training outside of work, commuting to and from work, childcare, sleeping, personal hygiene and grooming, as well as eating (these were the activities listed in the questionnaire).

Table 5: Average leisure time by occupation, hours (Source: Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

	Hungarians				Slovaks			
	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
Worker	4.1	7.1	8.8	36.4	4.4	7.5	9.7	39.2
Farmer	4.3	6.8	9.3	37.6	4.5	6.9	9.6	39
Employee (<i>zamestnanec</i>)	3.5	6.8	8.9	33.2	3.4	6.4	8.9	32.3
Student and vocational student	3.8	8.2	9.9	37.1	3.7	8.2	9.9	36.6
Housewives	5.5	11.2	7.8	46.5	4.9	5.6	7.6	37.7

The breakdown of leisure time by settlement size (Table 6) shows that there were no significant differences between the various categories in either the Hungarian or Slovak sub-samples, and this was even more pronounced in the Slovak sub-sample. The differences between the two sub-samples were also not statistically significant. The only striking data point was the 40.8 hours of leisure time per week for Hungarian residents of towns with over 5,000 inhabitants, a fact noted by the researchers but left unexplained. However, previous surveys¹³ mentioned that the residents of the two major cities, Bratislava and Košice, had an average of 37.4 and 33.5 hours of leisure time per week, respectively, whereas the rural population had only 26.8 hours of leisure time (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 181). Therefore, the average 37.16 hours of weekly leisure time for the studied population in southern Slovakia represented nearly a 10-hour surplus of leisure time compared to the entire country's rural population and rivaled the amount of leisure time enjoyed by urban residents (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 181).

¹³ One of the studies is *The Cultural and Social Profile of Rural Population in Slovakia* conducted between 1970 and 1972, and the other is *The Cultural and Social Profile of Residents in Bratislava and Košice* conducted in 1973.

Table 6: Average leisure time by settlement size/populations size, hours (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

Population size	Hungarians				Slovaks			
	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Whole week
0-999	4.1	6.6	8.9	36	4.3	7.4	9.3	38.2
1000-1999	4	6.6	8.7	35.3	4.2	6.6	9	36.3
2000-4999	4	7.3	9	36.3	4.1	6.4	8.9	35.8
5000 and above	4.8	7.3	9.5	40.8	4.3	7.3	9.3	38.1

After discussing the quantity of leisure time, let us take a look at how the respondents spent this time.¹⁴ In the corresponding question, the researchers listed nine activities as answer choices, and as a 10th option, respondents could specify an activity that was not included in the previous options (Table 7). So, the answers precisely indicate how much they favored these activities during their leisure time.

Table 7: Frequency of leisure activities (%) (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 179)

	Hungarians	Slovaks
Watching TV	77.4	78.4
Reading - book, newspaper, journal	67.8	56.6
Listening to the radio	63.2	61.8
DIY and handicrafts	34.6	32.3
Cinema visit	27.2	21.9
Theater visit	26.5	15.9
Exhibition visit	10.7	8
Going to concerts	8.8	4.2
Art club activities	7.9	5.5
Other	7.8	8.5
Did not respond	0.7	0.5

Both subgroups had a strong preference for media-related activities, with television watching being the most prominent, followed by reading, which also included newspa-

14 In István Kardos' survey conducted nearly a decade earlier, there was a question that, while not explicitly about leisure activities, still partially related to them ("What do you like among the following activities?"). The results were as follows: "1. hiking (104 points), 2. gardening (68 points), 3. going to the beach (67 points), 4. attending soccer matches (65 points), 5. solving crosswords (63 points), 6. knitting (51 points), 7. crocheting (38 points), 8. cycling (21 points), 9. painting (18 points), 10. hunting (16 points), 11. DIY (15 points), 12. organizing various collections (14 points), 13. fishing (11 points), 14. beekeeping (11 points), 15. car repair (10 points), 16. radio repair (8 points)" (Kardos 1965b: 644).

pers (reading books was included in this section, and also discussed separately in a chapter besides media-related activities), and listening to the radio. The activities related to media consumption characterized more than half of both Hungarians and Slovaks (TV watching by more than three quarters). Furthermore, DIY activities and handicrafts, as well as going to the cinema and theater, were among the most preferred leisure activities. Other activities, however, including sports, hiking, gardening, and fishing, were less common. The researchers also noted that older respondents and those with lower educational levels, especially farmers and housewives, showed less interest in the listed leisure activities, except for handicrafts, which housewives marked more frequently than others (Kašiak-Végh 1976: 153).

It is unfortunate that the research report does not specify the significance of paid work outside the workplace, unpaid work, and household chores because, as mentioned earlier, time-use studies from that era suggested that these activities significantly characterized the leisure time of both Western and Eastern bloc populations. There is no reason to assume that it would have been different for Hungarians in Slovakia. István Kardos' research, for example, supports the previously mentioned mutual assistance phenomenon: “Home construction projects are almost everywhere based on mutual assistance (by friends or possibly relatives)” (Kardos 1965: 537). Many people were involved in construction, so there were many such projects.

The conclusions regarding media consumption aligned with the findings of contemporary foreign and domestic research. Concerning Hungarians in Slovakia, Kardos had already pointed out in 1965 that 74.5% of the examined individuals regularly or occasionally watched television (Kardos 1965a: 540), and the favorite pastimes of teachers were television watching, theater and cinema visits, and dancing (Kardos 1965b: 643). These data prove that apart from work outside of regular working hours, from the mid-1960s onwards, similar to in other countries and regions in Czechoslovakia, media consumption was the most common leisure activity in the ethnically diverse region of southern Slovakia, regardless of ethnicity.

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