

# ***Speed, Adventure, Politics: Leisure Motoring in Interwar Slovakia with Regard to the Activities of the Autoclub Košice\****

Mikuláš Jančura\*\*

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The text concentrates on the interpretation of “free time” during the initial years of the twentieth century, and the role of motor vehicles as a “means of its consumption” within leisure activities is significant. However, the use of cars and motorcycles in leisure time was strictly determined by the specific economic and cultural conditions of interwar Czechoslovakia, particularly in the territory of Slovakia. Socio-economic barriers limited such activities to the upper and, in the case of motorcycles, middle classes. At the same time, leisure motoring was strongly linked with a novel form of tourism that was highly organized in interwar Czechoslovakia (particularly in Slovakia). Within this context, the association emerges as a recreational entity, fostering distinct connections and a collective identity. However, the process was significantly influenced by the politicization of organised free-time activities. Examining the role of cars and motorcycles in leisure activities during the researched period, the analysis will consider the definitions of free time and how these vehicles were utilized in their social and cultural context, specifically through the example of the activities of the Autoclub Košice. The presented text draws on previously published studies and the author’s monograph, as well as recent works and additional sources. Positioning this within the context of the historical-sociological discourse on leisure activities alongside the “consumption” of goods and experiences offers novel insights into the functioning of motoring associations in Slovakia, particularly in Košice. The Autoclub Košice is identified as a prominent organization that significantly impacted the local rise of motor tourism, sports and general recreational tourism in the observed period.

Keywords: Leisure time; Motoring; Car clubs; Motor tourism; 1. Czechoslovakia; Slovakia; Košice.

## **Leisure, things, and consumable experiences**

When attempting to define the concept of “leisure time”, a range of issues that highlight its complicated and fragmented nature become apparent. The aim of this section is to elucidate these issues and raise pertinent questions in relation to the topic under investigation. It is primarily observed that a definitive and unanimously accepted definition of leisure time remains elusive. This is mainly due to variations in the approaches taken by various scientific disciplines that examine or integrate leisure into their systems of inquiry. Sociology, pedagogy, applied ethics, philosophy, cultural

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\*\* Mgr. Mikuláš Jančura, PhD., Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic; mikulas.jancura@upjs.sk; ORCID iD: 0000-0001-6994-9458.

studies, economics, and history all study leisure with their own research frameworks, resulting in distinct definitions. Despite the difficulty in defining the issue universally, it presents the potential for a multi-perspective consideration and the identification of shared intersections, of which there are several. To align with this text's objective, we will use sociological definitions with reference to the cultural-historical and economic-historical specifics of the subject under examination. Within sociology, there exist more than ten definitions of leisure, which are shaped by diverse sociological-philosophical standpoints and the distinct levels of relations studied in the research environments of Europe and America.<sup>1</sup> In light of the concept of leisure in the first half of the twentieth century, two prevalent approaches or definitions can be embraced: the residual and normative approaches. The residual approach pertains to leisure time defined as non-work time or time "freed from work",<sup>2</sup> which "remains after the fulfilment of work and non-work obligations related, for example, to the necessity of maintaining one's biophysiological or family system".<sup>3</sup> The normative can be seen as a natural part of the residual and is related to "a certain semantic property of leisure, such as the subjectively free choice of an activity, its immediate non-utilitarianism, the generation of a certain type of positive experience".<sup>4</sup>

However, we must consider the conflict between passive and active leisure as well as the complex idea of "freedom". Additionally, we must address the misconception of leisure being leftover time after work. In the first chapter of *Histories of Leisure*, Rudy Koshar explains that leisure can also be viewed as "opportunity" or "time that passes before it is too late". He also notes that during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, leisure was considered as a preliminary activity before work. This differs from the current understanding and definition. Although reflections on leisure and its use can be traced back to antiquity,<sup>5</sup> its modern meaning can be based on the key concept of "work" and the concept of the "creation" of leisure by the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of capitalism.

The partition of time into work and leisure, resulting from the rise of industrial production, is a vital aspect. However, deeper investigation is required to uncover its true origins, which presents another contentious issue that must be highlighted. According to Milan Hlavačka, the gradual implementation of Greenwich Mean Time served as an essential prerequisite for the development of leisure as a fundamental aspect of social structure. He utilizes Émile Durkheim's concept of "social time" as the fundamental structure through which a civilized society arranges its actions.<sup>6</sup> According to Hlavačka, social time becomes an instrument of social integration and "the most important social institution, a means of orientation in society, its regulator and disciplinarian".<sup>7</sup>

1 See e.g.: PETRUSEK – MAŘÍKOVÁ – VODÁKOVÁ, *Velký sociologický slovník*; NEŠPOR, *Sociologická encyklopedie*; KOPP – STEINBACH, *Grundbegriffe der Soziologie*; FUCHS-HEINRITZ – LAUTMANN – RAMMSTEDT – WIENOLD, *Lexikon zur Soziologie*; BRUCE – YEARLEY, *The SAGE Dictionary of Sociology*; TURNER, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*.

2 FUCHS-HEINRITZ – LAUTMANN – RAMMSTEDT – WIENOLD, *Lexikon zur Soziologie*, 214.

3 PETRUSEK – MAŘÍKOVÁ – VODÁKOVÁ, *Velký sociologický slovník*, 156.

4 FUCHS-HEINRITZ – LAUTMANN – RAMMSTEDT – WIENOLD, *Lexikon zur Soziologie*, 214.

5 NEŠPOR, *Sociologická encyklopedie*.

6 HLAVAČKA, *Fenómén času ve zrychlené době*, 14.

7 HLAVAČKA, *Fenómén času ve zrychlené době*, 15.

Leisure time can be viewed as a product of the integration of social time, its structured nature, the advent of factory production and factors including contemporary transportation systems, communication technologies and the emergence of modern consumerism. Please note that this model cannot be generalized to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is primarily associated with the urban environment and specific social classes, as emphasized by Hlavačka. Nevertheless, these boundaries began to dissolve gradually under the influence of modernization and contemporary cultural and social trends. For instance, such tendencies are more evident in the interwar period.

Milan Hlavačka's concept of time and leisure correlates to some extent with the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen's definition of time and leisure. In his sociology of leisure at the end of the nineteenth century, he defined leisure as the "non-productive consumption of time".<sup>8</sup> In this context, a clear contrast was made between production and "non-production" as undesirable economic phenomena. Additionally, emphasis was placed on the distinct meanings of the term "spending" as a representation of consumption. Veblen's definition of leisure reflects the advent of industrial society and the interdependence of leisure with the economic value of the social division of labour. Additionally, it presupposes leisure as a commodity that is to be consumed. This notion is a significantly enriching factor. From an economic standpoint of industrial society, the definition of leisure implies that a range of products and services must fill the leisure time. Veblen not only analysed the social impact of machines and mechanized labour, but also highlighted the economic connection between leisure and the consumption of goods. At the same time, he anticipated the interplay between leisure and material culture and the intricate transformations that would unfold, encompassing both the economic and socio-cultural spheres.<sup>9</sup>

Leisure thus became a complex process resulting in an experience, better expressed as a "consumable experience", mediated using things. This trend has been greatly accelerated by the emergence of large-scale distribution systems such as convenience stores and large department stores, especially in Western Europe and the USA.

While the assortment of the mixed-goods stores tended to focus on food and daily necessities for the lower classes,<sup>10</sup> the assortment and sales policy of the large department stores was clearly aimed at the upper classes, but also at the newly emerging middle class, which was expanding rapidly, especially in the metropolitan areas.

As Timothy Dallen notes: "The intensification of industrialisation in the nineteenth century created more wealth for more people and social groups. [...] With wealth came changes in consumption patterns. It began to play a more central role in people's lives, allowing them to define themselves in relation to their surroundings".<sup>11</sup>

The unambiguous indicator was quality materials. Traditional social and economic mirrors of status, for example expensive clothing, jewellery, superior household furnishings and high-quality food and beverages, signify self-definition. However, the demarcation's motivations, methods and ontological aspects are unclear. Additionally, there is symbolic value in the consumed items, and more importantly, those displayed

8 TURNER, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 333.

9 DANT, *Materiality and Civilization*, 292.

10 PAQUET, *The Urge to Splurge*, 61.

11 DALLEN, *Shopping Tourism*, 2.

to society. Thorstein Veblen, quoted earlier, noted the issue of the external presentation of consumption in a particular social setting.

Contemporary authors also stress the fact that "the consumption of various goods is often based more on their social meaning than on their practical use".<sup>12</sup> This applies to the consumerism which emerged in the late eighteenth century and became even more prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century.

However, several other factors are relevant to the phenomenon of leisure. The active leisure trend has led to the development of a range of new products that have swiftly gained the attention of contemporary consumers from the middle and upper classes. This trend has fostered a modern lifestyle centred primarily on movement and experiential activities. It expressed the dynamization of daily life, wherein various products were perceived as instruments by which to attain or mediate experiences at individual or group levels. The means included individual will and purchasing power.

Products such as tennis rackets, gym equipment, hiking gear, specialized clothing, bicycles, motorbikes, and cars became the catalysts for an intricate web of contemporary meanings. What united them all was a common emotionality, whether shared or individual, that was primarily expressed through desire. Modern advertising played a pivotal role in hastening this process, as it relinquished its solely informative function during the period under examination. Given the contemporary formulation of modern regulations within the mass media environment, it could not solely inform about a product's existence. Instead, it became central to create a yearning for a product and the experience it can offer, rather than simply fulfilling a need.<sup>13</sup> This aligns with current approaches that distinguish symbolic consumption. The authors suggest involving oneself in an experience associated with a particular activity, to both participate and "consume". It is important to note that the presence and possession of a particular product is a prerequisite for the experience within the realm of symbolic consumption. This therefore largely shapes the correlation between leisure, its encounter, and tangible objects as a medium for its consumption. In relation to this, cars and motorcycles held a distinct position starting from the 1890s.

### **The thrill of automobility**

The rise of active leisure reflected the growing dynamism of daily life, with physical activity and personal experience at its core. Tourism emerged as a distinct form of leisure, marking a new social phenomenon of the era. While professional definitions of tourism abound, a similar problem arises from varying interpretive frameworks across scientific fields, paralleling the complexity of defining "leisure".

The definition provided by Marián Gúčik is acceptable to a certain degree. He defined it as "a set of activities aimed at satisfying the needs related to travel and stay of people outside their permanent residence and usually in their free time. Their purpose is rest, learning, health, amusement and entertainment, cultural and sporting enjoyment, business trips, i.e. to obtain a comprehensive experience".<sup>14</sup>

However, when defining tourism, it is essential to consider its historical framework and conditionality. Against a backdrop of cultural and social transformations, alongside the introduction of modern modes of transport, including railways, transcontinental

12 DALLEN, *Shopping Tourism*, 4.

13 TUNGATE, *Adland*, 11–14.

14 GÚČIK, *Cestovný ruch*, 22.

shipping and modern communication, tourism became more than just the technical bridging of distance.<sup>15</sup> In the abovementioned study, Milan Hlavačka identified four historical stages in the evolution of travel and tourism. During the initial phase, characterized as the mid-nineteenth century, road or spatial mobility was restricted to specific purposes, including political power actions, education, business, or religion. The second phase, starting from the mid-1800s, saw the gradual emergence of tourism, prompted by the need for dynamization and technological advancements in communication and transport. This affected the means of transportation and infrastructure, adhered more to the legal and economic framework, and became an integral part of the economic and social structures. However, it is necessary to consider the social status or lifestyle of travellers and differentiate their motivations from those of labour migrants. The third phase, which Hlavačka introduces with the onset of holiday travel, is linked to the definition of work and leisure time and their use,<sup>16</sup> which is the focus of the present text. In contrast to purposeful mobility, the metaphysical benefits of travel came to the fore, as expressed by the desire for leisurely exploration. This gradually intensified in the inter-war period, foreshadowing the trend towards mass tourism.<sup>17</sup> The fourth stage of the evolution is the era of modern tourism. Hlavačka highlights that this phase is primarily a post-war occurrence and a result of travel democratization and the substantial industrialization of the sector.<sup>18</sup>

It is necessary to revisit the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when railway transport established a comprehensive and systematized order over transport structures and mobility at ground level. Mobility was defined with a fixed boundary by mechanization, tracks, and maps, resulting in a strictly organized and collective character. The gradual introduction of cars and motorcycles, however, shattered these barriers and introduced a significant element of individualism into transportation. Automobility as “individualized movement” or the “bearer of a new psycho-mental social quality” has taken on new connotations, primarily associated with speed, adventure and a modern lifestyle based on success, modern tastes and, ultimately, the ownership and control of a modern machine.<sup>19</sup>

The car has also served as a reflection of social position, particularly in the European context. This was especially true in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and interwar Czechoslovakia. As a cultural and social phenomenon, the car garnered advertising and fashion-industry attention with relative promptness during the interwar period,<sup>20</sup> and it has even influenced the arts,<sup>21</sup> establishing itself as a sort of “trendsetter”. At the same time, the ownership of a car or a motorbike is a special means

15 HLAVAČKA, *Mobilita*, 11.

16 HLAVAČKA, *Mobilita*, 13–14.

17 JANČURA, *Kultúrne aspekty*, 62.

18 HLAVAČKA, *Mobilita*, 14.

19 SACHS, *For love of the Automobile*, 6.

20 A whole range of clothing for motorists has gradually emerged on the market, from protective clothing to protect the driver and crew from the weather, dust and wind in open cars, or motorcycle clothing, to clothing as a “fashion accessory” that became an “accessory” or an expressive element of the motoring image after the gradual closure of car bodies. See for example: VOTOLATO, *Transport design*, 75–76; HOŘEJŠ – KRÍŽEK, *Zámek s vůní benzínu*, 121–131; ŽÁKOVÁ, *První ženy za volantem*.

21 In the early days of motoring, cars and motorcycles became a common motif, for example, in the creative work of the Futurists. In the inter-war period, they were also the subject of good literature and, of course, films. ŠALANDA – ŠTEMBERK, *České století motorismu I*.

of self-expression and an object of desire.<sup>22</sup> Advertising, particularly visual advertising, during the inter-war period aimed to highlight the contemporary associations of cars and motorcycles. Visual advertising archetypes consistently featured several key motifs: the vehicles' technical prowess, the bodywork's beauty compared to the female body, and driving as an exploration and symbolic "mastery" of the landscape.<sup>23</sup>

On this basis, the automobile also came relatively quickly into the crosshairs of the social sciences, which already in the inter-war period defined the automobile as a "stereotyped source of mental excitement" or as a "bearer of metropolitan values",<sup>24</sup> but also took a critical stance towards it, especially in connection with tendencies towards fetishization techniques in everyday life and with consumption itself.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of leisure, it can be said that cars and motorcycles were inextricably linked to it in the early days, as they were primarily used for sport. According to Wolfgang Sachs: "The driver was first and foremost a sportsman, dedicated to technology, and racing made the automobile the theme of the day".<sup>26</sup>

Independent movement through the countryside was an integral component of motor sport, leading to a distinct form of personalised motor tourism. However, questions arise regarding the identity of the drivers, including both racers and leisure motor tourists, during the period under study.

In the American context, the introduction of mass-produced, affordable vehicles like the Ford Model T made motoring a relatively dynamic aspect of daily life for a broad spectrum of people, even prior to the onset of World War I.<sup>27</sup> On the contrary, across the European continent, excluding the United Kingdom and France, there has been a persistent emphasis on exclusivity. The cost of purchasing a car, coupled with high running expenses, and an unfavourable legal system, led to significant socio-economic restrictions that limited ownership to the upper and middle classes, particularly in the case of motorcycles. This trend persisted in Europe until the early 1930s.

### **From emotions to politicisation: The case of leisure motoring in Slovakia about the activities of the Košice Automobile Club**

In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, motoring and its recreational derivatives were primarily associated with the aristocracy as the economically strongest class. According to Miloš Hořejš and Jiří Křížek, in this context "the usual stereotype of the nobility as a conservative, closed society melts away and the image of a technically progressive layer of investors and patrons who kept up with the latest technological events in the world emerges".<sup>28</sup>

Although this statement cannot be fully generalized, it must be said that the aristocracy played a significant role in the development of motoring in the country and can rightly be regarded as a major driving force in this process. This was also reflected in the relatively dynamic establishment of motoring associations, which brought together car and motorcycle owners and enthusiasts interested in the developing

22 DANT – MARTIN, *By Car*, 143.

23 JANČURA – KATRIŇÁK, *Vizuálna prezentácia automobilizmu*, 165–180.

24 BEARD – BEARD, *Rise of American Civilization*. According to: BURKE, *Co je kulturní historie*, 26.

25 JÜNGER, *Perfektnost techniky*.

26 SACHS, *For love of the Automobile*, 6

27 SEILER, *Republic of Drivers*.

28 HOŘEJŠ – KŘÍŽEK, *Zámek s vůní benzínu*, 11.

motor industry. The establishment and development of their activities copied the general development of motoring, and their portfolio of activities included, among other things, the development of motor sport, closely linked to motor tourism, which was cultivated as a leisure activity. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the first automobile clubs were founded in 1898 (the Austrian Automobile Club in Vienna) and 1900 (the Kyrályi Automobile Club in Budapest).

This trend was relatively flexible on the territory of the Czech lands, where several automobile clubs were founded before the First World War, and most of them lasted until the interwar period in Czechoslovakia.<sup>29</sup> In the case of Slovakia, the cultivation and development of motoring also dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century and is closely linked to the aristocracy, which also used cars for leisure activities in connection with tourism and sport. In this context, noble families such as Andrassy, Zichy Windischgrätz, Csáky, Lónyay, Senney or Wieland can be mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

Motorized tourism and sport in Slovakia only became more dynamic in the 1920s and '30s. The inter-war period also saw a significant increase in the availability of leisure time in Slovakia, as well as the liberalization of cultural and social life. On this basis, for example, there was a relatively dynamic development of various associations and interest groups that also dealt with motoring. At the same time, however, it should be noted that although the automobile "philosophically" broke through the barriers created by the railways, in the inter-war period in Slovakia it remained stuck in bounds of a mainly economic nature. The prices of cars, their running costs, problematic legislation, and the state of the roads were not very favourable for the development of motoring in Slovakia.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, services for drivers, hotels and restaurants in Slovakia lagged the Czech countries in terms of quantity and quality, which to a large extent limited the more significant development of car tourism.<sup>32</sup>

Leisure use of cars and motorcycles remained a rather "elitist" activity that did not reach mass dimensions throughout the period under review, despite various factors and measures that had a relatively positive impact not only on the statistical increase of

29 It is possible to mention, e.g., the Czech Automobile Club (1904); Nordböhmischer Automobilklub (1905); Nordwestböhmischer Automobil-Club (1906); Mähnsich – Schläsischer Automobil-Club (1906); West Bohemian Automobile Club in Pilsen (1908); Automobile Club für Mittelböhmen (1909); Automobilclub zu Gablonz a. N. (1913); Egerländer Automobil-Club (1913) or Nordböhmischer Kraftfahrerbund (1913). TODT, *Almanach československého autoprůmyslu*, 16; RUDIČ, *Automobil Klub für Mittelböhmen*, 215. HOŘEŠ – KŘÍŘEK, *Zámek s vůní benzínu*, 133.

30 JANČURA – HROMULÁKOVÁ, *Automobilizmus a šľachta na Slovensku*, 53.

31 JANČURA, *Osobný automobilizmus na Slovensku*; SABOL, *Dejiny dopravy na Slovensku*; SABOL – ĐURČO – HALLON, *Automobilizmus na Slovensku*.

32 Regarding services for drivers, see for example: SABOL, *Služby motoristom*, 141–152; JANČURA, *Rozvoj sektoru služeb pro motoristy*, 299–314. Regarding hotel and restaurant services in Slovakia, it can be said that the majority of "standard" accommodation facilities in Slovakia, located outside larger cities, were not even connected to basic engineering networks such as electricity, water, or sewerage during the monitoring period, which is mainly true for the areas of eastern Slovakia. In addition, the inspections carried out during the updating of the statistics on hotels and restaurants revealed many other quality deficiencies, either at the level of the technical side of operations or at the level of the formal management of hotels and restaurants. Štátny archív Košice (hereinafter ŠA-KE), fund Košická župa 1923–1927 (hereinafter KŽ 1923–1927), box 525, Hotelová štatistika; ŠA-KE, fund Okresný úrad Košice 1923–1939 (hereinafter OÚ KE 1923–1939), box 486, Cudzinecký a turistický ruch, obliadka hostincov; ŠTEMBERK, *Fenomén cestovného ruchu*, 98–105.

motor vehicles in Slovakia, but also on the overall development of motoring, especially from the second half of the 1920s.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, leisure automobility was strongly linked to the activities of motoring organizations, thus relativizing the “individuality” associated with it. At the same time, space was opened for its considerable politicization. Individual driving without the auspices of a car club was possible, but subject to various restrictions, which were partially compensated for by the motorist’s membership of the relevant car club. For example, they could obtain the necessary government permits or, for example, member discounts at petrol pumps, service stations or even hotels, if they were contracted by the respective car club.<sup>34</sup>

At the national level, car tourism was mainly “patronized” by the Automobile Club of the Czechoslovak Republic (AKRČS), which issued documents and permits, as well as yearbooks, car maps and Baedekers. It also provided motorists with information on traffic problems, road conditions, accommodation, and places of interest. The Czechoslovak Tourist Club (KČST) was also part of this trend. It helped motorists to discover the natural beauties of the country by publishing maps, brochures, and guides, but also by marking out tourist routes and adapting forest roads so that they could be reached by car.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the activities of the AKRČS, it is necessary to mention that, in addition to motor tourism, it also covered motor sports. In Slovakia, motoring organizations began to emerge in the first half of the 1920s, initially reflecting more the “enthusiasm” and shared emotion of owning a car than its practical use.

The first automobile club, the Club of Slovak Motorists, was founded in Bratislava at the end of 1920. This was at a time when private motoring was still subject to Government Decree No. 258/1919 Coll., which is to say, to a strict licensing system and a ban on the free sale of petrol, which officially ended in March 1921.<sup>36</sup> This largely supports Tim Dallen’s point above about the socially conditioned meaning of the consumption of things and the notional triumph of their symbolic value over the practical. After the law was partly relaxed, the club started fulfilling its tourist role as well. At the beginning it was only about small club trips in the surroundings of Bratislava and Záhorie, but in a relatively short time it started to organize events across the whole territory of Slovakia with a distinct sport tourism character.<sup>37</sup> The Slovak Motor Club, established in 1924 in Bratislava, played a vital role in the advancement of motoring tourism in 1920s Slovakia. Its Star Tours to the High Tatras in 1930 and 1931 served as a promotional campaign to attract tourists to visit Slovakia as an enticing travel

33 Since the mid-1920s, cars have also become more affordable in Slovakia. The consolidation of economic conditions and the beginning of the economic boom, which partly increased real incomes and purchasing power, played their part. However, the abolition of the luxury tax, the relaxation of customs policy and the start of rationalised production had a direct impact on the availability of cars, which was reflected in a drop in prices, in some cases by as much as 50%. The emergence of modern forms of business, such as car services or the development of car sales, also played a role. JANČURA, *Osobný automobilizmus*, 45.

34 SABOL, *Počiatky mototuristiky*, 132–133; JANČURA, *S veselou myslou do dialľky*, 271.

35 ŠTEMBERK, *Fenómén cestovného ruchu*, 140.

36 ŠTEMBERK, *Automobilista v zajetí reality*, 86–87.

37 For example, the 930-kilometre Reliability Ride through Slovakia from 15 to 19 August 1923 was the first major event to be organized exclusively under its own flag. According to the magazine *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj*: “This first major project of the Slovak Automobile Club can be considered a great success and fulfilled its promotional purpose honourably.” [Note: English translation by the author.] Na slovenské súťaži spoľehlivosti. In: *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj*, 1923, vol. 1, no. 9, pp. 2–3.



destination.<sup>38</sup> The promotion of motor tourism in Slovakia was also undertaken by the League of Czechoslovak Motorists, the second largest motor club with nationwide reach. A notable publication in this regard is the two-part Baedeker "On Moravia, Slovakia and Sub Carpathian Rus", featured in the *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj* magazine. Alongside showcasing the natural beauty and attractions of the land, the series also provided a comprehensive overview of the road conditions, and options for gastronomic and hotel services.<sup>39</sup>

However, some critics argue that the condition of the roads and lower-quality services contributed to the adventurous nature of motor tourism in Slovakia.<sup>40</sup> Towards the end of the 1920s, there was a notable growth in general and motor tourism in Slovakia, particularly in the eastern region. In addition to the High Tatras, areas such as Spiš, Šariš, Gemer, Abov and Zemplín gradually became popular with motoring tourists. It is worth noting that Košice, being the largest city in terms of population and economic significance in eastern Slovakia, played a crucial role.

After the political upheavals of 1918–1919, Košice established itself as a vital economic hub and a dynamic and culturally rich city.<sup>41</sup>

The liberalization of cultural life led to the emergence of numerous interest groups and organizations in Košice, with a diverse range of objectives, including those related to tourism.<sup>42</sup> Urban transport in Košice has been developing since 1890,<sup>43</sup> with the departure station of the Košice–Bohumín Railway playing a particular role in boosting tourism in the region.<sup>44</sup>

From the late nineteenth century, suburban areas for leisure and relaxation started to become more significant, including the Wood Park of Bankov, the Čermel' Valley, and Herľany, with its captivating mineral geyser. The proximity to public transportation enabled these areas to be frequently visited by the residents of Košice, primarily on weekends and holidays. These localities offered a diverse selection of dining and lodging options, which extended throughout the city centre.<sup>45</sup>

38 "The purpose of this racing method is to evaluate both the reliability of the vehicle and the driver's skill. Additionally, it holds significant importance for the tourism industry. During the journey, the driver requests information about the areas they pass through en route to the destination, which is chosen based on its relevance to tourism and promoting foreign trade." [Note: English translation by the author.] Národní archiv Praha (hereinafter NA Praha), fund Ministerstvo veřejných prací (hereinafter MVP), box 1031, doložka k spisu č. 14-654/4/61690/1929, Zpráva o proponovaném závodu s cílem ve Vysokých Tatrách.

39 Na Moravu, Slovensko a Podkarpatskou Rus. In: *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj*, 1930, vol. 8, no. 8, p. 19.

40 An unnamed Czech motorist, e.g., expressed almost melodramatically about the roads in eastern Slovakia that: "Challenging driving conditions are prevalent on the roads of Slovakia, particularly in the east. Road users drive as they please and there is a degree of lawlessness. Furthermore, there is considerable risk due to the Hungarian law allowing wagons to be driven by loose colts under two years old." Note on the condition of the road in the vicinity of Trebišov (eastern Slovakia): "As can be seen [from the publication of the photo: author's note], it is not possible to drive the machine on the road without endangering life." [Note: English translation by the author.] Poměry na Slovenských silnicích. In: *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj*, 1928, vol. 6, no. 47, p. 2. From the latter half of the 1930s, we documented several grievances from motoring tourists regarding the vague depiction of hotel service charges or their unjustifiable sum. ŠA-KE, fund OÚ KE 1923–1939, box 510, Autoklub, sťažnosti na hotelové ceny.

41 FICERI, *Košice v slovenskej historiografii*, 191; HROMULÁKOVÁ, *Metodologické východiská Business History*, 70–83.

42 See e.g. JARINKOVIČ – KÁRPÁTY – DULOVIČ, *Košice 1918–1938*.

43 TATRANSKÝ, *Storočie košických električiek 1913–2013*.

44 ŠIMKO, *Košicko-bohumínska železnica*.

45 KUŠNÍROVÁ, *Košické dostavenička*.

At the start of the twentieth century, cars emerged in Košice, primarily owned by nobility. Count Géza Andrásy, a member of the Betliar family branch, notably supported the advancement of motoring among the nobility in eastern Slovakia during that time. The vehicle that he possessed became the inaugural automobile in Košice. Its ownership was noted in the *Kaschauer Zeitung* newspaper dated 9 October 1900, specifically in an article titled "Das erste Automobil in Kaschau".<sup>46</sup> It was probably a De-Dion Bouton car. Before the First World War, Košice played an important role in motoring. From 1910, Košice and Bratislava were the only places in the territory of present-day Slovakia where it was possible to register a car. Until then, only Budapest had this competence in the whole of Hungary.<sup>47</sup> The automobile in Košice started slowly, but from the very beginning it was technically reflected in the context of local motor tourism. This is evidenced, for example, by photographs of the Bankov Hotel and the recreational area of the Čermel' Valley from the beginning of the twentieth century, where roads were relatively flexible to be accessible by car.<sup>48</sup>

However, it was not until the inter-war period that motoring in Košice became more dynamic. On a mass scale, it was stimulated by the gradual growth of bus transport, which was significantly undersized because of the First World War.<sup>49</sup> The development of car sales and services for motorists became an important indicator of individual motoring. Until the mid-1930s, Košice was represented by authorized Tatra, Praga, Škoda, Brno "Z" and Wikov dealerships. One of the larger joint-stock companies specializing in the import of foreign cars was the Automobilia company, which had a representative office in Košice.<sup>50</sup> The servicing of motor vehicles in Košice was carried out either by authorized workshops, as in the case of Škoda,<sup>51</sup> or by various smaller commercial enterprises or large "car repair shops", including, for example, Auto-motor-garage.<sup>52</sup> For the sake of interest, it is worth mentioning that the average price of the services offered, e.g. car washing, ranged from CZK 5 to CZK 20, depending on the size of the car. The monthly fee for parking in a garage ranged from CZK 150 to CZK 400.<sup>53</sup>

In the case of petrol stations, several companies were represented, including Apollo, Bratři Zigmundovi, Naftaspol and Tatranaftha. Foreign companies included Vacuum oil, Standard oil, Shell, Vesta, and Anglo-Persian.<sup>54</sup> Among the foreign networks, Vacuum oil had the densest presence in Slovakia. In Košice, the company Juhokarpatská had the most petrol pumps.<sup>55</sup>

46 JANČURA – HROMULÁKOVÁ, *Automobilizmus a šľachta na Slovensku*, 56.

47 SABOL, *Dejiny dopravy*, 174.

48 ANNA – GAŠPAR – KUŠNÍROVÁ – PAPÁČ, *Hotel Bankov*, 55, 60, 61.

49 HOFFMANN, *Poštovní autobusy 1919–1932*; ŠA-KE, fund OÚ KE 1923–1938, box 134, *Autobusové spoje, evidencia*.

50 JANČURA, *Osobný automobilizmus*, 56.

51 Škoda dominated the network of sales and service outlets in Slovakia. By 1932, it had twelve service stations and garages and eleven sales offices in Slovakia. *Autojournal*, *oficiálny orgán Klubu slovenských automobilistov*, 1932, vol. 7, no. 5.

52 ŠA-KE, fund Krajský súd v Košiciach – Firemný register, no. 5515, sign. Cl.-24 1929, *Auto-motor-garage, technická spoločnosť s. r. o v Košiciach*.

53 *Autojournal*, 1933, vol. 8, no. 6, p. 21.

54 SABOL, *Služby motoristom*, 141.

55 Archív mesta Košíc (hereinafter AMK), fund Mestský notársky úrad v Košiciach 1923–1938, box 143, no. 43904/34, *Seznam benzínových čerpacích staníc a benzínových skladov v Košiciach*. ŠA-KE, fund OÚ KE 1923–1938, box 164, *Zoznam benzínových staníc a skladov*.

The Košice Automobile Club became an important driving force of motor tourism in Košice. It came into being through an organizational link with the older Motoclub, whose activity in Košice is documented as far back as 1925. However, the Motoclub did not have a wider membership base; it only brought together motorcyclists and their activities, but their activities were not generally known in Slovakia.<sup>56</sup> Autoclub Košice was founded in 1927. From the outset, the membership base demonstrated a dynamic increase.<sup>57</sup> This was caused, on the one hand, by the development of motoring in relatively freer conditions on a national scale during that period,<sup>58</sup> and on the other hand, by the club's large membership of motorcyclists. It was not one of the most prestigious motoring organizations, unlike the Slovak Motorists' Club, and was specifically targeted towards members of the middle class. This highlighted the liberalization and common passion for owning cars and motorcycles. Finally, this development further solidified the united identity of the members under the label "motorists", irrespective of whether they drove cars or motorcycles. The absence of an association formed on ethnic grounds was also a noteworthy factor.<sup>59</sup>

The *Vestník autoclubu Košice* club magazine has been published since 1933 and is bilingual in Slovak and Hungarian. It follows the Hungarian Magazine *Auto és Sport* and the Czech *Motor-touring*, in which it previously published its reports.

However, it is worth noting that in the socio-economic context of the eastern Slovak regions at the time, joining this type of club was indicative of a higher social status among its members. This is supported by the lavish social events held primarily at the Schalkház hotel, one of the most luxurious in Košice.<sup>60</sup>

The auto club's long-standing chairman was the lawyer JUDr. Jozef Farkas. Other members of the club included builder Hugo Barkány, psychiatrist and sociologist Dr. Jaroslav Stuchlík, and priest Mikuláš Lexmann. Lexmann was the first Czechoslovak pilot-priest and served as the club's vice-president after its reorganization in 1932.<sup>61</sup> Autoklub Košice was the sole representative of organized motoring in eastern Slovakia in terms of territorial coverage. Furthermore, his undertakings encompassed the areas of Gemer, Spiš, Šariš and Zemplín, in addition to Košice and its environs.

It was swiftly integrated into the national structures of organized motoring tourism and sports. Besides establishing formal relations with Bratislava clubs, the author acquired membership in the Prague Motor-touring club, granting him the privilege

56 According to the Czechoslovak Automobile Industry Almanac, there were only 34 members in 1926. TODT, *Almanach*, 20.

57 One year after its founding, the organization had 180 members. By 1934, the number had increased by more than two-fold. AMK, fund Magistrát mesta Košice 1923–1938, box 100, Autoclub Košice; *Vestník Autoclubu Košice*, 1934, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 8.

58 The average car price decreased by up to 50% compared to the previous period, due to production rationalization, customs policy easing and luxury tax abolition. The Škoda 420 convertible two-seater car price was below CZK 19,000, and the Aero 662 sports convertible was the cheapest car on the domestic market, with an introductory price of CZK 16,600. KUBA – SPREMO, *Atlas našich automobilů 3*, 14; ELSNER, *Aero, malý vůz pro velké cesty*.

59 During the 1st Czechoslovakia, several clubs, primarily in the territory of the Czech lands, profiled themselves, for example, as German. See: NĚMEC, *Motoristé na Šébru a pod Šébrem*. NĚMEC – ZOUHAROVÁ DYKOVÁ – RUDIČ, *Do houfu! 100 let organizovaného motorismu v Českých zemích*.

60 KUŠNÍROVÁ, *Košické dostaveníčka*, 87–91.

61 NĚMEC – ZOUHAROVÁ DYKOVÁ – RUDIČ, *Do houfu! 100 let organizovaného motorismu v Českých zemích*, 297. For more information on Mikuláš Lexmann's associational activities in the interwar period, see e.g.: TRESOVÁ, *Spolková a sociálne aktivity*, 74–88.

of publishing in the periodical – *Motor-touring*. The practical activities of car clubs, related to sports and motor tourism, commenced exclusively once the legislation was relaxed in 1921. This period, from the perspective of historical phases, can be constrained to 1921–1933 and recognized as the second phase. This period is marked by the individualization of clubs, the promotion of their brands, and their gradual convergence due to the emerging and subsequently culminating economic depression.<sup>62</sup>

During this period, Autoclub Košice gained attention through various activities. These include providing reliable rides to the High Tatras and back from 1928 to 1930, as well as organizing speed races up the Košice–Košické Oľsany mountain track and races on the flat track in Barca near Košice, which were held since 1931.<sup>63</sup> The winter motoring event, known as Motoskijöring,<sup>64</sup> was particularly notable. It resonated not only with motorists but also with the non-motorized public. During this period, Autoklub Košice largely followed the patterns set by motoring organizations in the Czech Republic and western Slovakia. However, it also illustrates the significant increase in the popularity of cars and motorcycles for leisure activities, even in the poor regions of the republic. The races up the hill and at the Košice speedway had significant resonance due to the emotions of experiencing speed and adventure. These events were not just for the active club members, but also for the public, making motorsports a popular passive leisure activity.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the development of leisure tourism involves the participation of “non-motorized” tourist associations, including organizations such as a branch of the Club of Czechoslovak Tourists or the predominantly worker-based cycling association Svornost.<sup>65</sup>

The trend of developing motor tourism in Slovakia persisted in the following period, largely marked by the economic crisis. An important organizational step occurred when Autoclub Košice joined the AKRČS Cartel, which by 1930 had united 32 auto clubs in Czechoslovakia, boasting a membership of 16,099.<sup>66</sup> The AKRČS cartel served as a robust platform for cooperation, communication, and mutual relations within the national context. Membership in the Kartel was a significant bonding element for car clubs in Slovakia, whose relations were mostly focused on individual club prestige until

62 JANČURA, *Počiatky motoristického športu*, 57–65.

63 Trips to the High Tatras have become increasingly popular, as demonstrated by the first years of this competition. The Autoklub Košice announced its second automobile and motorcycle reliability competition on 20 June 1929, which took place on 30–31 June 1929. According to a proposal sanctioned by AKRČS's sports commission and the international organization RIMS (Regulations international des manifestations sportives), the 382-kilometre track was bifurcated into two sections. The initial leg of the journey took us from Košice and comprised stops in Rožňava, Tornaľa, Rimavská Sobota, Tisovec, Poprad before arriving at Tatranská Lomnica. The next part of the journey was from Tatranská Lomnica with stops in Veľká Lomnica, Kežmarok, Spišský Štvrtok, Levoča and Spišské Podhradie, ending in Prešov and finally returning to Košice. The Barca Speedway stands as the initial Slovakian official racing circuit. The renowned Košice Speedway has been an annual occurrence for the Autoklub Košice since 1931, garnering recognition beyond the East Slovakian automobile community. *Autó és sport* journal stated: “This outlines the advancements in Eastern Slovakian motoring, driving ahead despite the unfavourable economic climate.” [Note: Translation to English by author.] SZABÓ, *Zabudnuté volanty*, 59. JANČURA, *Počiatky motoristického športu*, 61.

64 Motoskijöring presents a modernized form of the traditional Scandinavian sport where dogs or horses pull skiers. Here, a powerful motorbike substitutes the pulling prowess of animals. First held in February 1929 by Autoklub Košice, this competition garnered a favourable response from the audience. Since then, it has evolved into a routine event, continuing since the 1930s.

65 ŠA-KE, fund Úradné knihy, Evidencia spolkov podľa okresov.

66 O reorganizaci kartelu autoklubů. In: *Automoto Zpravodaj*, 1931, vol. 9, no. 49, p. 1.

the early 1930s. In the early 1930s, Slovak associations, such as Autoklub Košice, were crucial in the restructuring of the Kartel due to the discontent of non-Prague clubs with the centralizing policies of the Prague management.

The Cartel management oversaw organized motoring events in Czechoslovakia and represented Czechoslovak motorists domestically and internationally. According to Jan Králík, AKRČS was “objectively the strongest and felt called to play the first violin”.<sup>67</sup>

The dissatisfaction of smaller clubs led to the organization of a meeting for non-Prague clubs in Brno in December 1931. Autoklub Košice played a significant role in initiating this meeting. The *Auto-Moto-Zpravodaj* magazine provided a response:

At the Brno gathering of non-Prague auto clubs, objections regarding the leadership of the auto club cartel became more prominent and significant. Recently, complaints about the mistreatment of drivers and motorcyclists have been so severe that clubs outside of Prague, particularly, cannot stay passive, lest they forfeit their right to persist.<sup>68</sup>

The events were mainly related to sports and tourism and were held under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Automobile Association (ČSAZ), a new organization, created in 1931 and which also included Autoklub Košice.<sup>69</sup>

A notable media event, under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Automobile Association, took place in 1932 – the Reliability Ride in Slovakia, also referred to as the Slovak Eighth. It served as an important catalyst for the strained relations between the clubs during the crisis. From the perspective of promoting motor tourism, the two-stage route spanning 1,015 kilometres was of significance. The course was strategically designed to enable drivers to explore not only the High Tatras but also the lesser-explored natural beauty of Slovakia.<sup>70</sup> This aspect was also highlighted by the Reliability Ride across Czechoslovakia and the 24-hour long-distance ride through Slovakia in 1933.<sup>71</sup>

However, the downside of the establishment of ČSAZ was the strained relationships with AKRČS representatives. The economic crisis had a significant impact on the operation of motorcycle clubs at this time. Primarily evidenced by a decline in membership, clubs were also attempting to respond adequately to state measures aimed at mitigating the crisis’s effects on motoring.<sup>72</sup> The global economic crisis

67 KRÁLÍK, *Sto let klubového života*, 16.

68 [Note: The translation into English by author] O reorganizaci kartelu autoklubů. In: *Automoto Zpravodaj*, 1931, vol. 9, no. 49, p. 1.

69 The new organization stood out as a “democratic” counterbalance against the Cartel and positioned itself as an equal. O reorganizaci kartelu autoklubů. In: *Automoto Zpravodaj*, 4. 12. 1931, vol. 9, no. 49, pp. 3–4.

70 The route ran from Bratislava, via Senec, Sereď, Nitra, Vrábľe, Levice, Banská Štiavnica, Banská Bystrica, Ružomberok, Liptovský Mikuláš, Štrba, Štrbské Pleso, Tatranská Lomnica, Kežmarok, Levoča, Prešov, and concluded at Košice. The subsequent phase comprised a circuitous route from Košice to Rožňava, Dobšiná, Červená Skala, Brezno, Banská Bystrica, Martin, Žilina, Trenčín, Nové mesto nad Váhom, Piešťany, Pezínok and back to Bratislava. Slovenský národný archív, fund Policajné riaditeľstvo, box 122, no. 122/81, Propozície jazdy spoľahlivosti a vytrvalosti Slovenskom (Piešťany: Grafia 1932). In accordance: JANČURA, *Počiatky motoristického športu*, 63.

71 JANČURA, *Osobný automobilizmus*, 96.

72 A key feature of Czechoslovak car clubs during this period was undertaking surveys on the causes of the declining motoring industry and how to address it. These included the “How to help the Czechoslovak motoring industry” poll, whose unambiguous conclusions were to lower the operating costs, such as fuel prices and

impacted the nature of motor tourism. Even as a leisure activity, it became significantly economized, politicized and ideologicalized during this period.

Against this background, a more extensive reorganization of Autoclub Košice took place. In 1933, the Autoklub Košice presidency resigned its membership of ČSAZ, resulting in the club's independence. As reported by the club's general meeting:

In 1932, our committee made the decision for our club to withdraw from the group of car clubs at that time. We had hoped that this move would secure a brighter future for Czechoslovak and East Slovak motoring. However, we were disappointed to find that these hopes, which were anticipated during the founding of ČAS (ČSAZ, author's note), did not materialize. As a result, our club was required to leave the organization at the end of 1933. Our organization has achieved independence from both ČAS and AKRČS.<sup>73</sup>

From the late 1930s, prominent members of motoring organizations in western Slovakia began considering creating a central, exclusively Slovak motoring organization to set themselves apart from Czech influence. In the context of the developing political situation, the military and security aspects of utilizing cars and motorcycles had become increasingly significant in the realm of recreational motor tourism.

The Košice car club kept its distance from the event and resumed cooperation with the AKRČS, serving as its "Eastern Slovakian branch" and temporarily assuming control of the territory of Subcarpathian Rus under its organizational management.<sup>74</sup>

On this basis, they participated actively, for instance, in the *Small Agreement Competition* during the autumn of 1937. This sports and tourism event had a significant politically motivated character at the time.

According to the Prague headquarters, "The AKRČS wants to manifest with this international sports enterprise for the best friendly relations of Small Agreement countries in the field of sports and motoring."<sup>75</sup>

A total of 160 vehicles, mostly with two-person crews, set off from Prague and travelled through Brno, Bratislava, Košice, Užhorod, Cluj and Bucharest, before reaching their destination in Belgrade. The section of the journey between Bratislava and Košice, the area in Košice, and the stages through Subcarpathian Rus were organized by Autoclub Košice. The event's political significance is highlighted by the honorary patronage of Edvard Beneš, Carol II and Prince Pavlo.

According to Jan Tuček: "The Autoclub of the Czechoslovak Republic organized the largest motoring event in cooperation with the royal autoclubs of Romania and Yugoslavia. The purpose of the event was to showcase the unity of all three allied states and their armies. The focus of the event was on motoring, including military abilities".<sup>76</sup>

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legislative fees, and to decrease the purchase price of vehicles. NA Praha, fund Ministerstvo průmyslu, obchodu a živností, box 1004, sign. 30761/36, p. 3, Pamětní spis čs. autoklubu Moravy a Slezska v Brně, O příčinách úpadku čs. motorismu a o cestách k nápravě; Ako má byť pomôžené čl. Motorizmu. In: *Autojournal, Oficiální orgán Klubu slovenských automobilistov*, 1936, vol. 11, no. 4, p. 6.

73 [Note: The translation into English by author] *Vestník Autoclubu Košice*, 1934, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 1.

74 "Temporary" refers to the period until AKRČS creates its own branch in Užhorod. Stanovy Východoslovenského odboru Autoklubu republiky Československé (Autoklub Košice). In: *Vestník Autoclubu Košice*, 1934, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 3.

75 AMK, fund Národní výbor mesta Košice 1945–1948, box 206, no. 16337/937.

76 TUČEK, Soutěž Malou dohodou, 7.

In western Slovakia, motor tourism was increasingly succumbing to political and ideological pressures despite the allure of events like the 500-km City Race in Bratislava and the Piešťany Golden Ribbon Elegance Competition, which attracted participants from the Czech Republic and abroad.

Centralist tendencies in western Slovakia reached their peak in early 1939 with the establishment of the Slovak Auto Club, which was already under the control of HSL'S (Hlinka's Slovak People's Party) functionaries.<sup>77</sup> A program was established with the purpose of unifying motoring organizations in Slovakia. In addition, after the establishment of the Slovak State, membership became compulsory for all motor vehicle owners, under the possibility of facing sanctions; this ensured complete state control over motoring.<sup>78</sup>

The available sources on the activities of Autoklub Košice during this period are somewhat limited. However, it can be inferred from the context that leisure motor tourism in Košice was no longer warranted following the Vienna Arbitration. It is highly probable that Autoklub Košice ceased to exist, and the assets and membership of its branches located outside of the arbitration territory were transferred to the Slovak Autoklub.

### Conclusion

The proliferation of active leisure trends mirrors the dynamism of modern life. Part of this process also involved the presence of tangible items that occupied leisure time or served as a means of its digestion. Cars and motorcycles held a special position, reflecting emotional connotations linked to excitement stemming from speed and independent movement outside of the fixed paths dictated by charts or railway tracks. This trend was not overlooked by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy or the subsequent Czechoslovakia. Additionally, it evolved under the unique economic conditions of Slovakia. Motorized tourism in Czechoslovakia, and particularly in Slovakia, maintained an exclusive status during the monitored period and was primarily organized. This led to the rise of motoring associations because of the liberalization of cultural life and modern collective identities. This, however, also created the opportunity for strong politicization, which was most evident in the latter half of the 1930s. The Autoklub Košice research exemplifies and confirms the frameworks previously outlined. Their actions largely mirrored the trends established by motor organizations in Czech and West Slovakia. Additionally, it reflects the increasing trend towards modern forms of leisure activities, as well as the rise of car and motorcycle utilization in poor regions of the republic. However, as a pre-existing organization within the national framework, it was also susceptible to political and ideological pressures imposed on associations, particularly during the latter half of the 1930s.

77 JANČURA, *Osobný automobilizmus*, 86.

78 SABOL – ĎURČO – HALLON, *Automobilizmus na Slovensku*, 121–123.

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