

MOUNTAIN MEN ON IRON HORSES: NATIONAL SPACE  
IN THE REPRESENTATIONS OF NEW RAILWAY LINES IN  
INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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When Czechoslovakia was founded in October 1918, only a single main line connected Slovakia with the Bohemian Lands: the privately-owned railway between Slovak Košice (Kassa, Kaschau) and Silesian Bohumín (Oderberg). In order to address this problem and firmly link both parts of the country, the government launched a major construction program of fifteen new lines that transformed the railway network of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. The article focuses on the ceremonies that accompanied the opening of new construction projects and completed lines. It examines the projects as discursive events that shaped not only the Czechoslovak public's view of the railway network, but also of their country's territory and landscape. Outwardly, the ceremonies celebrated the new railway lines as expressions of the unity of the Czechoslovak nation. At the same time, the discourse created a geographical hierarchy by depicting Slovakia and Ruthenia as objects of a Czech civilizing mission. The article suggests that this Czech paternalism indicates the limits to Czechoslovak national unity in the interwar period.