

Czechs and Slovaks 1918-1938

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Abstract: This article analyzes the relations between Czechs and Slovaks as a problem of the position of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak Republic, that is, as a solution to the decentralization of administration and autonomy, which are underscored by the issues of the Pittsburgh Agreement, Prague centralism and "Czechoslovakism". A revision of the place of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak Republic was accepted in regard to the requirements of Slovakia (the absence of its own intelligentsia and the presence of the Magyar element in the civil service) and the conditions in the democratic state. When the Slovak intelligentsia finally came of age and wished to participate in public administration, the existential conditions of the Czechoslovak state had changed (Hitler's rise to power, the birth of the Henlein movement in the Czechoslovak Republic). The situation got worse socially as a result of the world-wide depression. Without the Munich Agreement and Germany's share in the birth of the Slovak State, the conditions for the break-up of the Czechoslovak Republic would not have been present. The population formed a consensus in favour of the state, as is clear from the electoral returns, especially the success of Slovenská jednota za Česko-slovenskú republiku a demokraciu [Slovak unity for the Czecho-Slovak Republic and democracy] in the local elections of May 1938.

Czech Sociological Review, 1993, Vol. 1 (No. 1: 23-42)

"If Czechs mean well towards us then let them help us to build up our own Slovak state along with a Slovak constitution, Slovak Parliament and Slovak government. The state will itself be an independent part, with equal rights, of a Czecho-Slovak Republic."

J. Hušek, February 12, 1919

Problems of mutual Czech-Slovak relations have been, and still are, treated, for the most part, from the political as well as the ideological point of view. This has been, to a large extent, given to the fact that this question depends upon a principle political variable both in time and for those who have formulated it. In order to assert scientific aspects of the question, not only knowledge of historical materials, knowledge of the functioning of a democratic national society, and knowledge of international circumstances of the formation and the build up of a common Czech and Slovak state were missing,¹ but also the need to present the problem this way.

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¹) Some good work has been done during the past couple of years by research workers of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, for historians, an

Among the fundamental problems of Czech-Slovak relations in the field of political systems, we consider the decentralization of the administration, the autonomy, the tension between them and the way to solve it. Thematically, problems inherent in the Pittsburgh Agreement, in Prague centralism and in Czechoslovakism are all part of it. Through those spheres pervades the question of Slovak political representation and its lawfulness as an upholder of the common will manifested in the elections and, consequently, the urgency for a solution to the question of the Slovak position. We may state this problem also as a question which depends upon the society's consent, or at least upon the consent of the majority of the state and system. This article describes the elections' results if Czechoslovakia with its democratic political system was a viable organism.

The Decentralization of Administration and Self-Administration

The question of administration, decentralization and of self-administration, regarding the twenty years of the First Czechoslovak Republic, proves to be the most significant one immediately after the problem of political partyism. This is true not only from the point of view of the Czech-Slovak relationship but also from the standpoint of a democratic society's structure and its functioning [Táborský 1945: 23]. The bond between decentralization and the autonomy of nations as well as of national minorities made this fundamental democratic question even more urgent. The problem of self-administration "casted its shadow on our public life... until, during the last years before Munich, it finally became a straight danger" for the Republic. "...this was not so much a question of a self-administration of citizens themselves." Slogans for autonomy became a power tool for many politicians in their political struggle. This was admitted by German politician K. Henlein and further confirmed by politicians in Slovakia when they had broke loose and abrogated even a limited self-administration provided by the so-called pre-Munich Republic and took the road not only towards Bratislava's centralism but even towards a totalitarian regime [Táborský 1945: 21-22; Kamenec 1991: 13-23]. The real objective of those politicians, into which they projected both efforts to gain power and to gain other's interests, was not a democracy nor a broader self-administration but an elimination of the Czechoslovak state. When reviewing the so called 'centralists' and 'autonomists' conflict, the relativity of the meaning of both concepts in a given context is omitted: so called 'centralists' were supporters of a more democratic regional system, while 'autonomists' were supporters of provincial centralization.

Prague Centralism

After the First World War, the peace conference invited the representatives for the formation of a new state and took up "a standpoint about the monolithism of our state. The only exception was allowed regarding Sub-Carpathian Russia" [Hoetzel 1920: 3]. This enabled politicians and constitution formulators to insist

unbiased and non-political opinion on Czech participation in the development of the Slovak nation and vice versa, along with the evaluation of results from the existence of the common state are all still expected.

upon the necessity of a consistent and inseparable state. The problem of integration had, for them, an imperative appearance with regard to a complicated national structure (whether given by objectivity or just felt as such). This was not only a question of Slovakia's position but also of an initial effort by the Sudeten provinces to break loose as well as centrifugal trends of other Silesian national minorities. In order to form and maintain an independent state, Masaryk stated a policy of having respect for the democratic principle internally as well as externally. The new state's regime should only evolve to be close to its Swiss model through its extreme liberalism and not through its structure.² From the international perspective, the new peaceful state was, within a short time, jeopardized by attempts to review the existing status quo.

We may judge the extent of centralization according to the range of self-administration. A successful democracy cannot, theoretically, correspond with an administrative institution for the existing officialdom dependent upon a central government but only through local self-administration.

In the field of administration, in 1918, it was possible either to stand up for the basis of self-administrative authorities and, through their reconstruction, build up a democratic administration or to dissolve the self-administrative authorities and to create, from the bureaucratic offices of former Austria, a new administrative system. They chose the second variant. The acts 1919 and 1921 started to change the content with the concept of municipal self-administration. The difference between state administration and self-administration by definition is not the only existing divergence the Slovak system. The Slovak government was based on a different form of organization and on the original standing of the members of authority. Democratic trends, historical traditions, and reasons for administrative effectiveness were setting the boundaries. The decentralization of the implemented public administration may have been an advantage, particularly for remote territories holding respect for local customs and interests. This decentralization could well be the first step to an independent public administration of the territorial districts. The administrative authority decides on particular questions only in the most complicated instances. Centralized government is usually mentioned when power, which regulates public interests, is concentrated at one single place or with limited individuals. The concentration of local interest regulation from one particular place may be considered a centralized administration.

The so-called Regional Act (February 29, 1920) restricted provincial autonomy by withdrawing legislative activities from the then existing Provincial Assemblies of the Czech Provinces. The Regional Act was a follow up to an effort to make the rise of Slovak separatism more difficult. Its opposition finally brought a compromise solution into play: regions for particular provinces formed Provincial Regional Unions (Czech, Moravian-Silesian and Slovak), all of which were allowed

²⁾ Archives of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (further, FMFA), Paris' Archives (further, PA), No. 340.

very insignificant responsibility. Slovak deputies considered the Regional Union in Slovakia as a kind of compensation for autonomy.³

With the realization of a self-administrated Slovakia with elected officials, during discussions of the Constitutional Committee of the Revolutionary National Assembly and on the Regional Act, the Deputy I. Dérer stood up on behalf of the Slovak Club. He referred to the Slovak experience with Hungary:

These fields of the state administration where the principle of appointment had been applied and worked much better... while in the sphere of public administration where the principles of eligibility had been applied this all had led to an anarchy... I believe a democratic spirit should be applied more in the jurisdictional administration and then in the administration in the strict sense of the word...⁴

With his views Dérer encouraged and strengthened the opinions of Mr. Švehla, Minister of the Interior, who was, in this respect, criticized by Social Democrats. This alternative solution would also accommodate the complete absence of Slovak bureaucrats because two-thirds of the administrative posts were in the hands of Hungarians.

When a regional system was introduced in Slovakia in 1923, administrative dualism was simultaneously being established, and then progressively eliminated only after launching an administrative reform in 1927. Regions were cancelled and four provincial districts established. Provincial political administrations and provincial committees resigned the exact same amount of power to and were replaced by newly formed provincial offices. The possibility to unite the state administration with autonomy was justified as a consequence of the Republic's democratic system:

...today that we have proportional representation,... parliamentary government that can be overthrown any time just by not giving an answer to whatever parliamentary question, that the state administration cannot be an administration over the parliament... the autonomy cannot be considered as a state defence anymore but it may only be considered as an integrative part of a democratic public administration that is supposed to have the equivalent presence of elements of an autonomy, brought up to the standard of a true democracy...⁵

Posts for self-administration bureaucrats were limited to the district and the provincial boards of representatives. Two-thirds of the personnel were elected, one-third was nominated by the minister of Internal Affairs.

This problem was in the form of a duel between parliamentarism and professionalism, hence, the Parliament and the bureaucracy were also mentioned by T. G. Masaryk in his Jubilee Address on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Republic. He wanted this dualism, inherent in the functioning of the government, to be in harmony. In regard to the national as well as cultural

³) From the letter to American Slovaks, Document No. 45 [Falt'an 1968: 25-26].

⁴) Archives of the Federal Assembly (further, AFA) f. RNS, Card 32, shorthand minutes 122 b., a session of the Constitutional Committee, p. 22.

⁵) AFA, Print No. 831/1927, Message of justification to the law, quoted by [Klapka 1928: 9].

heterogeneity of the population, he stuck to the requirements of self-administration and territorial autonomy but emphasized that "...a state, and, particularly a modern state, can't relinquish organizational centralism - harmony, centralization and autonomization are the aim of the modern democratic state. Democratic centralization is not absolutism, democratic autonomization is not atomization..." The need for "well-thought-out centralization" he considered to be very urgent considering the fact that "...the society is splitting into states, classes and various corporations..." As "...the new state... takes the administrative functions in the economic and social development..." he saw a source for strong centralization [Národní 1928: xix].

"The old Austrian bad habit to centralize everything..."⁶ on Czech territory and the "Calvinist regime of Budapest" against which Slovaks always fought, and "the rights of our Slovak language" [První 1931: 483] give evidence of the prevailing tendencies in governments of modern states, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the fact that Czechs and Slovaks met in a centralist system before they joined into a corporate state. "Prague centralism" as an excessive concentration of power on one single spot is usually comprehended as a result of some arbitrary rule or of some malevolence. Aside from this is the argument that centralization is a necessary procedure for the formation of every state, even Czechoslovakia's specific conditions. (And we have already mentioned the introduction of the decentralized public administration.)

In the field of creation of power, the source of centralism in Czechoslovakia, despite predicted effects, was the principle of proportional voting and, in relation to this, the multi-party system. The theory itself promised that proportional representation in the Parliament would represent on a small scale all the more important trends within the society. The proportional principle in Czechoslovakia was supposed to ensure the representation of national minorities.⁷ At the same time, it was necessary to limit, by some provisions of electoral legislation, the power of that principle which led after all to the shattering of political parties and to the devaluation of electoral votes. The disadvantage of small parties lies also in Hare's method of calculation of the electoral number. All these measures meant that small parties, and also some parties of national minorities, could hardly reach their representation in the Parliament. The proportional election thus, paradoxically and against the will of its legislators (to a certain extent) made the representation of minorities more difficult. Small parties thus had to join other parties which often had quite different programs.

We may find that centralization caused the strict obligation of listing candidates in the electoral system in Czechoslovakia. Therefore, the fact that the candidacy of a group of representatives of political parties can be promoted to a certain level means appointment on the principle of elitism substitutes democratic

⁶⁾ AFA, f. RNS, Card 28, No. 1157, shorthand minutes No. 33, the session of the Constitutional Committee, of April 2, 1919, p. 1.

⁷⁾ It does not specifically cite ethnic groups. Makers of the Constitution meticulously avoided any terminology encouraging the feeling of inferiority.

appointment on the principle of election. The oligarchic features of political parties, too, were creating discrepancies in the role of parties in a democratic society: from a factor facilitating election, they were gradually changing into struggling organizations for power. Therefore, their programs, too, aimed to follow "the higher objectives" and did not reflect the needs of their electors. This trend won recognition even in programs of communal election in which a struggle took place against "Magyarone clericalism". Elections were "Czechoslovak and under constitutional law," etc.

The state was forced, because of the predominant positioning of political parties, to unite the bureaucracy, i.e. to restrict the influence of political parties on the administration and this was, consequently, another cause of centralization. Among the positive effects of this process is the influence of non-politicized state authorities on the stability and the continuity of the democratic state regime.

The postulate of state power and authority in the social field and in the field of the economy was significant among centralization effects. Pressure upon the parliament and upon the government was exerted not only by masses of those who were losing because of economic liberalism, but also by power and business groups in efforts to promote and to force their interests which were insufficiently represented in the parliament, i.e.; representation did not correspond with the economic power of each individual capital group. All this raised the request for the state to take over leadership and for the elimination of all blights, already mentioned by T. G. Masaryk in the Jubilee Address. Social care for the needy thus became a priority of the state. Evidence of all requirements and their fulfillments may be found in Czechoslovakia in all periods of crisis between the First and the Second World War. The Slovak People's Party, as resulted from its first program, also shifted the majority of problems and their solution onto the government [Bartlová 1991: 55]. These requirements didn't correspond much with the requirements for autonomy. This pressure, on a worldwide scale, increased in strength in the context of the world economic crisis and, at the same time, enlivened autonomistic trends.

Only in comparison with the decentralization and the self-administration taking place in other countries may we come to the valid judgement of the degree of centralism during inter-war Czechoslovakia. This task is still waiting for historians to carry it out. We may still come, in general, to an important conclusion: Czechoslovakia was a democratic state and the unity of state and civic interests and the limitation of self-administration in the name of functionalism are always more acceptable in democratic regimes for they enable to verify, in election, the common will of electors. In addition to that, the decentralization in the field of public administration was sufficiently extensive and the two-third participation of elected members was significant as well.

The Pittsburgh Agreement

The request that was not fulfilled and included in the Pittsburgh Agreement, namely Slovak autonomy, was considered a part of the centralization efforts.

Problems with the Pittsburgh Agreement have not been solved and so far remain, even after more than seven decades of the Czechoslovak Republic. The last time the text of the Pittsburgh Agreement was referred to by Slovak deputies was the spring of 1990, in a so called controversy regarding the hyphen.⁸ With regard to the persistence of varying conclusions about its validity and various prejudices existing even among foreign historians, we consider it useful to clarify its meaning and its position.

In a general interpretation, the Pittsburgh Agreement was concluded before the formation of Czechoslovakia, on May 30, 1918, in Pittsburgh PA, between representatives of Czech and Slovak organizations in the United States, i.e. the Slovak League, the Czech National Association and the Union of Czech Catholics, in the presence of the chairman of the Czechoslovak National Council, Prof. Masaryk. The Agreement approved the political program aimed at the unity of Czechs and Slovaks in an independent state. According to the Agreement, "...Slovakia will have its own administration, own Parliament and own law courts... the Slovak language will be the official language at school, in the office and in public life in general... The detailed regulation of the establishment of the Czechoslovak state will be up to liberated Czechs and Slovaks and their legally binding representatives." It was signed by Albert Mamatej, T. G. Masaryk and others [*Idea* 1936].

The source of misunderstanding was the last statement mentioned. Supporters for the realization of the Pittsburgh Agreement concealed the last statement in compliance to their needs. It was not considered, anyway, that those who concluded the Agreement were not "legally binding representatives" either of the Czech or Slovak nations. Slovak historians consider it as improbable as the fact that participants of negotiations in Turč. Sv. Martin would not know about the Pittsburgh Agreement.⁹

⁸) In a text of the Pittsburgh Agreement they tried to find support for properly writing the name of the state Czechoslovakia, possibly the Czechoslovak Republic. But the Agreement doesn't justify their views. The text itself proves a fickleness of orthography (the use of capital letters and utterly illogical use of quotation marks). According to the orthographical standard of the Czech language, the composed adjectives are written with hyphens only while their components had proportional independence. The hyphen is not written in the case of both components forming a tight semantic unity. After the formation of the state, according to the mentioned standard, it was decided to write "československý" (Czechoslovak) as one word (without hyphen), the same way we wrote "angloamerická armáda" (Anglo-American army) without a hyphen. Slovak orthographical standard differs in this respect from Czech and all the misunderstandings thus were, in a way, unnecessary. In autumn 1938, the problem received the different interpretation.

⁹) Symposium "Slovakia in the Political System of Czechoslovakia, 1918 - 1938", November 11-13, 1992, a discussion. There exist, of course, a version that Slovak politicians learnt about the Pittsburgh Agreement not until the beginning of 1919 [Bartlová, 1991: 63]. This would correspond with a visit by Hlinka and Kmeťko to T. G. Masaryk. The president took the position that once they want the autonomy, let them have it. But when Kramář, also present to those negotiations, raised the straight question, Hlinka abandoned the requirement of autonomy considering it premature with regard to the fact that in Slovakia there was still a

I. Dérer, however, maintained that the title "Czecho-Slovak Agreement..." was added afterwards and that nobody knows who did it. He drew our attention to the fact that, actually, this concerned the minutes from a meeting about the political program. Masaryk was not consequently mentioned as a party but only as a person present. The resolution was adopted by representatives of the organizations. This was clearly confirmed by the text of the minutes:

"Representatives of Slovak and Czech organizations in the United States - of the Slovak League, the Czech National Association and the Union of Czech Catholics

"Negotiated in the presence of the chairman of the Czechoslovak National Council, Prof. Masaryk, the Czechoslovak question and our program's manifestations up to now, and decided as follows:

"We sanction the political program aiming at the unity of Czechs and Slovaks in the independent state that will consist of Czech Provinces and Slovakia." (Highlighting of text E. B.)

The additional text has been already mentioned above.

Regardless of whether somebody added the title or not, the text of the so-called Pittsburgh Agreement lacks the character of a treaty agreement¹⁰ and is only a resolution of representatives of Czech and Slovak organizations in the United States and an approval of a possible political program. As such, it had for Masaryk no obligatory character [Dérer 1938: 62].

This, of course, substantially changes the assessment of this "document" as the pillar for an autonomistic movement leaned upon for decades. The whole affair proves the evidence of stereotypes and inertia in its interpretation. In the case of the Pittsburgh Agreement this is almost inexcusable, especially when we take into consideration the malaise that the "Agreement" has stirred between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

It is worth mentioning that apart from the Pittsburgh Agreement there were several other attempts during the war to coordinate the aspirations of both foreign and native Slovaks. But as they had their own unambiguous "Czechoslovak" opinions they stayed out of the circles of autonomistic politicians. This regards, e.g., The Record of Principles of the Czechoslovak Campaign, of August 29, 1916, the author of which was M. R. Štefánik. This dealt with the resolution of one of the Kiev meetings, participants of which were both native Slovaks and legionnaire Slovaks, who fought for the freedom of Slovakia. American Slovaks also attached

lack of intelligentsia. He wanted to be sure, however, that when his nation grew stronger it would obtain its rights [President 1923].

¹⁰) T. G. Masaryk also writes about the Pittsburgh Agreement as a resolution, an agreement, and not a treaty [1925: 262]. In a preface he notes the fact (p. 7) that he was not able to keep the complete diary and, therefore, he mentioned "only main and general points." But in regard to the Agreement, he stated full particulars; especially a passage which explains that details of the Slovak political program will be decided by legally bound representatives of the Slovak nation. He wrote, too, that the Agreement was signed by others as well and in an illicit manner. The agreement he assesses as a retreat of excessive ideas on the Slovak independence.

great importance to the resolutions from Kiev meetings. The Record of Principles was signed by an envoy from the American-Slovak League in Russia.¹¹ Similarly, confidential and secret meetings in Vienna in 1916, 1917 and 1918, of native people who had been persecuted and imprisoned during the war, firmly maintained the idea of the state and national Czechoslovak unity. Among the participants, we may find names as M. Hodža, K. Stodola, A. Štefánek, V. Šrobár, M. Dula, I. Dérer and others. Under the influence of those meetings the most important public Slovak manifestations during the war were realized as, for example, The Resolution of the 1st May, 1918, in Liptovský Mikuláš, where Slovaks made it obvious that they wanted to live in the future as part of a Czechoslovak national union. The same regards the Martin Declaration [Dérer 1938: 60]. These manifestations stand, unfortunately, aloof from the interests of historians, despite the fact that they are well comparable with the so called Pittsburgh Agreement.

The Martin Declaration of October 30, 1918, is interpreted as a mark of an idea that, at that time, on the Slovak part prevailed. Namely, it was necessary to declare the Czechoslovak union. They spoke, therefore, about the "Slovak branch of the united Czechoslovak nation." The Martin Declaration is considered to be an act under constitutional law [Dějiny 1967: 449-450].¹² On the basis of it Slovakia was incorporated into the forming Czechoslovak state that was, according to the constitution, united and integral.¹³

In particular, T. G. Masaryk was reproached for the unfulfillment of the so called Pittsburgh Agreement. Masaryk as the president, however, had neither constitutional nor any other possibility of enforcing whatever he would have had considered necessary. Hlinka's journey to Paris in autumn, 1919, reopened in the Revolutionary National Assembly the question on Slovakia and the possibility of its autonomy. Dr. V. Šrobár, the minister with full power to administer Slovakia, gave his opinion on Slovak autonomy. He said that autonomy meant "...to leave Slovakia again at the mercy of Magyars."¹⁴

A possibility to include the Pittsburgh Agreement into the constitution was discussed on February 6, 1920, for the last time during a meeting of the Slovak Club with Prof. A. Mamatej, then the chairman of the Slovak League in the U.S.A. On this occasion, Dr. Juriga had worked out a new proposition for autonomy, the supporters of which were deputies of the People's Party. Despite this fact, the Slovak Club disapproved of the proposition. In a letter to American Slovaks, this decision is justified by the argument that "...Slovakia is, by former Magyar regime,

¹¹) In the conclusion of this record, it says: "Czechs and Slovaks being aware of the fact that they are closely linked both by living conditions and by culture and, particularly, related by blood, wish to grow into a united, politically integral and free nation..." [Dérer 1938: 59].

¹²) An interpretation has occurred that participants simply assumed that they were preparing documents for the session of the Peace Conference [Chaloupecký 1936].

¹³) This regards also the autonomous territory of Sub-Carpathian Russia.

¹⁴) AFA, Shorthand minutes of RNA, the session, p. 2268. Apart from other things he described a catastrophic state of schools in Slovakia and states that the elementary schools have about 300 teachers at their disposal while the secondary schools have roughly 20 professors.

culturally and materially so weakened it wouldn't be possible to build up and to preserve the autonomy without Czech support. The autonomy would bestow upon the Slovak nation an enormous financial burden. Slovakia still has not got enough professional workers to fill up the offices and the teacher's desks." Further, they explained that in exchange for autonomy there was to be a Provincial Regional Union in Slovakia and that this was a kind of autonomous institution but not a Parliament "...that would be to Slovakia, under the present circumstances, definitively a damage". The Slovak Club hoped for brotherlike sentiments from the Czech nation that would have sufficiently stood up for the interests of Slovakia. Representatives of the People's Party had their reservations on that point but, nevertheless, gave to Mamatej their certificate in which they stated a request for autonomy which did not imply to separate Slovakia from Czechoslovakia.¹⁵

During a general debate over the constitutional documents, deputy Dr. Markovič delivered a speech in the spirit of a unitary Czechoslovak state. He stated that the Club of Slovak Deputies unanimously decided to accept the constitution. For him, the self-administration of Slovakia was ensured by the acts which created a complexity within the constitution, especially in regard to the responsibilities of the regional institution.¹⁶ The People's Party, along with coalition, voted for a constitutional document that did not contain regulations on Slovak autonomy.

Propositions of autonomistic constitutional changes that followed shortly after the constitutional document had been approved (1921, 1922) testified not only about the political immaturity of those who had submitted it (because conditions in Slovakia could not have simply changed within such a short period), but also about straight efforts to destabilize the status quo and thus to harm the state in the eyes of an international public. The approval of Czechoslovakia or its ratification by the Peace Conference was not that easy and obvious as it may now appear. Numerous requests from Dr. E. Beneš during the period of October 1918 and the first half of 1919, which had not been taken into consideration may prove this fact.¹⁷ During the Peace Conference in Paris on March 14, 1919, K. Kramář asked Masaryk,¹⁸ in the interest of the future, not to undermine or to weaken the position of the nation in a moment when a decision regarding the integrity of the territory and when the future of our borders was expected. The American president Wilson considered it fair and reasonable to eliminate first elements of disturbance as well as any threat to world peace. Only then would super-power countries guarantee the division of territories. A later attempt of the ex-Emperor Charles to seize St. Stephan's crown didn't contribute much to the consolidation of

¹⁵⁾ Quoted extracts are, in the original, in the Slovak language [Falt'an 1968: 25-26]. Author doesn't mention the sources.

¹⁶⁾ AFA, Shorthand minutes, the 125th session of the RNS, p. 3718-3722.

¹⁷⁾ AFMFA, PA. English and American governments recognized the Czechoslovak National Council, before the formation of Czechoslovakia, as the Sovereign over the Czechoslovak allied armies, i.e. legions, based on the fact that, "Czechoslovakia lead the war". This, however, didn't mean the acknowledgement of precisely demarcated state territory.

¹⁸⁾ Ibidem, No. 12270.

the situation either. We may say, without exaggeration, that it was necessary to struggle hard for the state on many front-lines (December's events towards the end of 1920 included).

At the same time, continuous new propositions for autonomy serve as proof that autonomists did not consider the Pittsburgh Agreement as an agreement whatsoever and, therefore, not as a program to be supported or as an obligation to be fulfilled. Autonomists only used it for their own propaganda. This so-called Agreement even became a part of the German anti-Czechoslovak propaganda before the Second World War. Dérer's warning, his lecture "About The So Called Pittsburgh Agreement" was published in Prague, in 1938 [Dérer 1938], and probably vanished in the turmoil of requests in that period.

If we are to take the Agreement as a program under constitutional law we may observe that it is fairly vague, far more than the Declaration of Independence which Masaryk claimed just as an attempt to characterize the future constitution [Masaryk 1925: 263]. In particular, a detailed account of the functionings and responsibilities of the Parliament was missing. This allows, to a considerable extent, to claim that requirements of the period of the First Republic were, for the most part, fulfilled. At the heads of the Provincial Regional Unions existed Provincial Committees and, in 1927, Provinces as administrative units were established. This thankfully happened according to the requirements of the People's Party. Two-thirds of the provincial officials were elected. In regard to courts of law, the judiciary branch of the First Republic was sufficiently independent of state power: a judge was independent of the majority in the Parliament and of the government. The problem in the 1930s was the inability to fill respective posts in the judiciary branch and the administration branches with Slovak professional workers. After the formation of the Czechoslovak state and with the absence of Slovak professionals, these posts were held mostly by Czechs. The official position of the Slovak national language was granted by the constitution and therefore corresponded with the request for it in the Pittsburgh Agreement.

The Czechoslovakism

The most usual interpretation of Czechoslovakism suggests that Masaryk (and, according to Hitler, Beneš) conceived of it so that he could form the Czechoslovak state. Politicians, historians, ideologists in the role of historians or whoever else, according to their natural disposition and intention, placed into this idea contents that, more or less, caused harm to the intentions of our state's founders, both in regard to the formation of the state itself and, especially, in regards to the fate of Slovakia. For the purpose of our article it is neither purposeful nor necessary to go into the destiny of this term, which was thought out by members of the Slovak People's Party [Budování 1990: 8] probably after the Munich Treaty. It went through its original development even in the interpretation of the Communist Party. It has caught on and so we have to cope with it. In accordance with ideas supportive of the formation of the Czechoslovak state, we may thus define Czechoslovakism as a concept which considers Czechs and Slovaks as ethnically

close and divided by historical development and whose co-existence will form one single political nation. This interpretation encompasses Krofta's Czechoslovak patriotism, along with patriotism of Czechs and Slovaks, and finally Beneš's appeal for the incorporation of Slovaks into the whole state [Krofta 1936: 636; Edvard 1937: 331-334]. Czechoslovakism included, in this interpretation, good relations towards the national minorities in Czechoslovakia as well.

To call the beginning of the Czechoslovak state a lie as declared by its enemy A. Hitler on the eve of the Second World War [Mackenzie 1947: 9], means to refuse to respect the genesis and historical conditionality for the origin of the concept of the Czechoslovak nation and the Czechoslovak language in which participated both Czech and Slovak cultural and political representatives. So called Czechoslovakism in the 19th century got through the period of Czecho-Slovak mutuality and also through the period of the Slovak struggle for a "Czechoslovak" language and literary unity in the complicated and unclear situation of Slovak national movement.¹⁹ The Slovak national situation in Hungary called for the creation of a Czechoslovak national ideology. The former Czechoslovak split was, during the First World War, revised by Slovak politicians Štefánek, Hodža, Šrobář and Hušek when they sought redemption for the Slovaks in connection with the Czechs. European statesmen acknowledged the fact of the Czechoslovak national existence and adapted their political actions in this respect (Clémenceau, Poincaré, Lansing, Wilson, etc.).

By designating the Czechoslovak language as a national language, the official Slovak language was placed on par with the Czech language:²⁰

"By using the language as official and national, offices on that territory of the Republic that, before October 28, 1918, belonged to Kingdoms and Provinces represented in the Imperial Council or to the Prussian Kingdom use, for the most part, the Czech language and in Slovakia, for the most part, the Slovak language.

Official matters submitted to the attention of other parties will be attended to in the language of the submitter."²¹

As regards the actual term "the Czechoslovak nation," it is necessary to say that by this conception, from a formal point of view, Czechs are not superior to Slovaks but Czechs and Slovaks are declared to be branches of one and a single nation. The same is to be the interpretation of the Czechoslovak language as a language of Czechs and Slovaks.

The first decade of Czechoslovak existence was an important stage for the development of the Slovak nation and ended by the beginning of the 1930s when

¹⁹) The lingual unity, at that time, failed on the reluctance of Czech linguists to accept, for the united language, elements that were either archaic or were not considered as organic. Only for this price, the language unity could have been preserved.

²⁰) According to the St. Germain's Peace Treaty just one single language could be designated as "official." Therefore, the term "Czechoslovak language" was used (see [Broklová 1992, Doc. Nos. 5, 6, 17]).

²¹) The Act of February 29, No. 122 Dg. [*Ústava* 1920: 207-208].

Slovakia already felt it possible to take the administration into its own hands. Concurrently, however, consequences of the economic crisis had arisen and, across the border, the threat of German fascism was more and more evident. Germans in the Sudeten, once satisfied with the economic situation in Czechoslovakia, began, with admiration, to keep their eyes on the growth of the German economy enlivened by armament. Hitler promised prosperity while, in regions inhabited mostly by Germans, effects of the economic crisis, due to a predominantly light industry with export difficulties, became more evident than elsewhere. This was no longer a favorable time to make substantial changes in the political system.

In common knowledge and in the predominant parts of historical treatises, even of the most resent period, a view is consistently held that the idea which sparked the formation of the Czechoslovak state was the idea of Czechoslovakism. In this connection, Masaryk's conception of nations being kept by those ideas under which they emerged is often quoted. Therefore Czechoslovakia owes its foundation to the "idea" of Czechoslovakism and because the idea of the united Czechoslovak nation failed, its fall was thus inevitable. It is the fact that the formation of the state was accompanied by a feeling of rapprochement between Czechs and Slovaks, but the idea of a co-existence of nations and national minorities on the Czechoslovak territory in a democratic and civic society, which we consider as the fundamental ideal of the Czechoslovak Republic, had a more common and broader validity.

Czechs and Slovaks in the Common State

According to M. S. Ďurica, Slovak political representatives accepted the formation of the Czecho-Slovak state "...according to the proverb 'a drowning man grasps at a straw.'" Despite this fact they believed that "...whatever solution that disengages Slovaks from Hungary will mean the saving of the Slovak nation [Ďurica 1990: 20].

A letter from a signatory of the Cleveland and the Pittsburgh Agreement, J. Hušek,²² to a Czech priest, O. Zlámal, dated February 12, 1919, probably best grasped the contradiction involved in the anticipation of the Slovak representation in respect to the independent Czechoslovak state. We can hardly imagine, from the point of view of the constitutional law, a more controversial formulation of the objective. But it seemed that the life of that conception had more perseverance than the existence of the Czechoslovak state.

The formulation of ČSR was for Slovaks when one considers Hušek's wish or Ďurica's contention. And what did the Czechs expect? And how was it regarded by the authorities in Slovakia and the Slovak nation, Dr. Karel Kálal? He wrote: "The whole nation rejoiced over the liberation of Slovakia. Slovakia was the motto of

²²⁾ Ys. 1880-1947. A journalist, an associative functionary amongst Slovaks in the U.S.A. He was expelled from high school for Pan-Slavism. In 1903, he left for the U.S.A., became a bank clerk, an editor of "The Slovak" in America and chairman of the Slovak League in the U.S.A. His orientation had been sort of autonomistic. In 1938, he visited Slovakia with a delegation led by the chairman of the Slovak League that then supported the Slovak People's Party separatism. Before America entered the war, he supported the Slovak regime, after the war he then helped the emigration of People's Party's members.

that time..." [Kálal 1930: 6]. Kálal, of course, did not promise "...the full Czechoslovak conformity neither in a decade nor in five decades" [Kálal 1930: 5]. His reasoning for this was both ideological disunity, a different degree of culture, and, in particular, a different degree of democratism [Kálal 1930: 107]. This all, of course, is dependent on the condition of development for both nations in the common state.

Controversial standpoints pertaining to relations with Bohemia were formulated only after the formation of the state. During this period between the wars, Andrej Hlinka himself shifted reference frames. The unconditional pre-war friendship encouraged Hlinka to espouse the standpoint of the proponents of Czechoslovak unity at a meeting in Turč. St. Martin where attachment to the Czechoslovak state had been declared and where the Slovak National Council was proclaimed the representative of "the Slovak branch of the united Czechoslovak nation." At the beginning of the year 1919, Hlinka was received by President Masaryk in the presence of K. Kramář. He requested a guarantee for the rights to create strong Slovak nation. In autumn of 1919, he set out on a journey, with anti-Czechoslovak orientated F. Jehlička,²³ to Paris to take part in the Peace Conference where he demanded the implementation of provisions of the Pittsburgh Agreement. He was convinced that the co-existence of both nations in a common state meant the best solution for both Czechs and Slovaks; while at the same time, he agreed with the need of each nation to be an independent state. He was the author of the slogan 'It has been enough of Prague, forever!' His efforts reveal the paradoxes of Slovak politics, linked both to a struggle for independence and, at the same time, to recognizing the necessity and the benefits of the common state. From the start Hlinka claimed autonomy only for the Church, and still yet only for the Catholic one, while the other problems were shifted onto the state authorities' shoulders, as already mentioned above.²⁴

After the formation of the state, Slovakia looked a bit complicated and rather unconsolidated. The caretaker government of Šrobár undertook, in the middle of November, 1918, the task of consolidating the state. In a short time, V. Šrobár became head of the Ministry with full powers over Slovakia, the aim of whom was not to achieve the autonomy but the integration of Slovakia.

According to M. S. Ďurica "...broad strata of the Slovak nation could hardly identify themselves with the 'Czech state' that soon, by a constitutional act, sanctioning a fictional 'Czechoslovak nation' and proclaiming as the official language some non-existing language, 'Czechoslovak language'. This was the first time that Slovaks experienced a profound disappointment [Ďurica 1990: 21].

²³⁾ In 1938, Dérer describes him as Jehlicska.

²⁴⁾ Complication of Slovak autonomy by religious matters has, however, another side: against granting autonomy to Slovaks stood, e.g., Monsignore Jan Šrámek because he was afraid that, by this act, Catholic Moravia would suffer. With restricted self-administration granted to all Provinces, two Catholic Provinces, Slovakia and Moravia, stood against the one, atheistic, Bohemia.

We have already touched upon these problems. In this single case Ďurica and others are omitting a home source of "Czechoslovakism": the declaration under constitutional law of the Czech deputies on the Imperial Diet, in May 1917. Šrobár's proposition to annex Slovakia to Czech Provinces with the aim to unify all the branches of the Czechoslovak nation was incorporated into the mentioned declaration. In those days, there was less than two million Slovaks who could very well have acquired their education, until then, at Magyar schools only. A broad strata of the Slovak nation were just slightly aware of their Slovak national heritage. It had come about as a self-consciousness only during the twenties.

Because of ahistorical approaches to facts and even deliberate concealment, truth and fallacy can stretch political platforms' boundaries to the point where they cannot be deciphered. (This is true for the excesses from the part of Czechs functioning in Slovakia, too).

The Nation and its Representation

A very important aspect of Czech and Slovak relations in the pre-Munich Republic, reduced by us, to a certain extent, to the question of self-administration, is that the success of a party in an election, for the most part, represented the autonomous efforts, i.e. of the Slovak People's Party. Their electoral success corresponds with the provision in the Pittsburgh Agreement which shifts "...the detailed provisions of... establishment... of the state" onto the legal Czech and Slovak representatives. Thus we try to explain the answer to the question who were these winners of elections in Slovakia and, consequently, who were these legal representatives?

The question of representational ability as a justification to represent the Slovak nation is raised already with the evaluation of the historic roles of politicians who joined the Czech resistance movement, both abroad and home, and thus linked the destiny of Czechs and Slovaks together. The basis of their activities is supported, to a considerable extent, by the absence of other trends before the formation of Czechoslovakia which would change the position of the Slovak nation that had been exposed to persistent pressure lasting for decades, i.e., from the Hungarians.²⁵

Czechoslovakists, as a group of politicians who had linked together the lots of Czech and Slovak nation into one single state, were called and who, as we have already pointed out, A. Hlinka belonged to and who were not, of course, supporters of centralism. Most of them, on the contrary, preferred a regional institution which meant, with respect to provincial autonomy, considerable decentralization.²⁶ Representational ability of those so called centralists was very

²⁵) Only one Slovak Deputy in the Hungarian Diet, F. Juriga, requested before the end of the war the self-determination of Slovakia.

²⁶) [Dérer 1938: 55]. The author points out that a considerable difference exists even among the so called autonomists. The Slovak National Party, e.g., requests just the specific extension of the valid Provincial institution: this is true also of a part of Hlinka's Party. Hungarian autonomistic parties aimed for, by the autonomistic institution of Slovakia, a weakening of the

frequently questioned from indications that autonomists prevailed among Slovak politicians. When scrutinizing their representational power and, consequently, justifying the unified state we must refer to the results of the Parliamentary elections and to the ratification of the Constitutional Document by the Parliament.

To unambiguously evaluate the electoral results complicates the incongruity of parties' programs in a multi-party system where we may expect a disunity of ideologies consisting of a search for the fundamental endeavors of their activities to which others are subordinated. Stratification of citizens/electors does not correspond, according to the political parties, with the principles and shared areas of interest involved. In particular, evaluating electors of the People's Party might concern electors of a confessional party even though it seemed that this group was rather invariable and there was an increasing or decreasing number of those who were or were not supporters of autonomy. Simplification, incidentally, involves also the question of autonomy, the contents of which had changed as well.

I. The Approval of the Constitution

The constitution is considered to be the first manifestation of Slovak politicians' consent to a unified state. When approving the Constitutional Instrument all the Slovak deputies voted, i.e. deputies of the People's Party, as well, for the governmental coalition. In the same way, they accepted the Constitutional Language Act and the so called Regional Act, which regarded the public administration arrangement and self-administration.

II. The Parliamentary Elections 1920²⁷

In the first Czechoslovak Parliamentary elections, the People's Party stood candidate in Slovakia as part of the Czechoslovak People's Party. It received, in Slovakia, 190,506 votes but not as an autonomistic party. The Hungarian Agrarian Party received 40,302 votes and the Hungarian-German Christian Social Party 100,658 votes.

The Czechoslovak parties received: the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party of Labour 497,981 votes, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party 5,697 votes, the Slovak National and Agrarian Party (Hodža/Šrobár) 181,289 votes, and the United Jewish Parties 36,251 votes.

The election thus ended with the victory of the Czechoslovak parties.

III. The Parliamentary Elections 1925

The number of votes for the Slovak People's Party, which ran separately, increased in those elections to 489,111 votes. German and Hungarian autonomistic parties received, in all, 207,972 votes.

Czechoslovak state. On the contrary, Slovak autonomistic groups, under the guidance of Hlinka and of "Patriots," presumed that the autonomy of Slovakia would strengthen the positions of the Czechoslovak state [Dérer 1938: 56].

27) We are presenting only the results of elections in the Chamber of Deputies. We skip over smaller parties. To have a full picture, we also present the number of votes received in elections by more important non-Slovak parties.

The Slovak National Party received 35,435 votes, the Agrarian Party received in Slovakia 248,034 votes, the Czechoslovak People's Party 18,036 votes, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party 60,635 votes, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party 36,909 votes, the Tradesmen's and Businessmen's Party 11,576 votes, candidates affiliated with the National Democratic Party 24,954 votes, and the National Party of Labour 13,608 votes.

Jewish parties received 38,442 votes. The Communist Party received 198,111 votes.

The results of these elections joined the Slovak People's Party with the governmental coalition. On this occasion, the typical disunity of the Slovak representation arose. The Slovak Agrarians hindered the representatives of the People's Party from joining the government.²⁸ One of the conditions of its participating in the government was to dissolve the Ministry holding full power in Slovakia. This was put into effect by the Government Decree of June 28, 1928, when the responsibilities of the Ministry were handed over to the Regional Council in Bratislava. The governmental coalition accommodated the People's Party, too, by a reform of the public administration, a part of which included the establishment of four Provincial Districts, including Slovakia. On October 28, 1928, the People's Party declared loyalty to the Republic.

IV. The Parliamentary Elections 1929

In these Parliamentary elections, the People's Party's votes decreased to 403,683 votes. For this reason they mentioned Tuka's speech on an alleged ten-year validity term given to the Martin Declaration.

The German Electoral Community received 14,704 votes, Hungarian and Spiš-German parties 226,917 votes.

In Slovakia, the Agrarians received 278,979 votes, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party 135,506 votes, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party 43,968 votes, the Czechoslovak People's Party 35,548 votes, the National Democratic Party 53,745 votes, the Tradesmen's and Businessmen's Party 30,134 votes, the Association of Polish and Jewish Parties received 33,679 votes.

The Communist Party received 152,242 votes.

V. The Parliamentary Elections 1935

Parties standing against political autonomy received as follows: the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party 286,739 votes, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party 184,389 votes, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party 51,924 votes, the Czechoslovak Tradesmen's Party 41,996 votes, the Czechoslovak National Union 24,490 votes, the Czechoslovak People's Party 37,515 votes, the Communist Party 210,490 votes, the German Social Democratic Party 5,409 votes, the National Fascist Community 33,609 votes.

²⁸) Contrary to this, the motive of Hlinka's decision to participate in the election of E. Beneš was fear for the strengthening of the Agrarians headed by Hodža.

Autonomistic parties received the following votes: the Autonomistic Bloc of Hlinka's People's Party, the Slovak National Party and the Carpatho-Ukrainian Parties 489,641 votes in all, the Regional Christian Social Parties and the Hungarian National Parties 230,719 votes in all, the Henlein's Party 27,651 votes.

We may deduce from that constellation that most of the voters in Slovakia did not speak out for autonomy. The Autonomistic Bloc was, moreover, incoherent and had broken up. The People's Party supported in the same year the election of E. Beneš as president.

VI. The Communal Elections in May 1938

The very revealing results of the elections in May 1938²⁹ will help us to judge the context of the formation of the Slovak state and the development of a common will towards cooperation with the Czechoslovak state. The most successful parties were Slovak political movements runnings on a platform of Slovak Unity for a Czecho-Slovak Republic and Democracy (the Agrarian Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party, the Tradesmen's Party, Slovak members of the People's Party, the Slovak National Party and the Czechoslovak National Union Party). They received 43,93 % of the total votes while Hlinka's Slovak People's Party received 26,93 % (in 1935, 30,12 % of votes). Even in 1938, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party was the biggest political party. It did not represent, however, a majority of voters in Slovakia and, consequently, it did not have their support.

Epilogue

When considering the creation of a Slovak population consensus, the First Republic regarded those results differently from how they are thought about today. This was apparently caused by methodological inaccuracy in analyses and the fact that results were not split according to separate elections in Slovakia and Czechoslovakia. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party was the only one presented separately. The votes of Slovaks drowned among the Czechoslovak parties and, subsequently, the strongest party in Slovakia appeared to be the People's Party.³⁰ This greatly distorted the overall view on the creation of a consensus and on the possibility of creating a Czechoslovak political nation. Thus, the more evident became the assumption that the decisive moment of disintegrating Czechoslovakia would be under speculation of outside nations as well as any foreign assistance during the actual split.

In a democratic society, political representation has the right to force through its program only in the case that it has the support of the majority of voters or in the case that it will succeed to form a coalition with other parties with similar programs in order to win support in the Parliament. In spite of the events we have reexamined, history probably has developed much like political representation forcing through a program which leaders declare to be in the

²⁹) The newest results of this research are present in [Bartlová 1991: 106].

³⁰) This circumstance was stressed out by I. Dérer [1938].

interest of the nation, even while voters had not accepted it. The political representatives often make steps which do not correspond with the will of the voters. Obviously, they have not always been aware of the consequences of their actions. Sometimes, political representatives took steps which were subsequently approved by the nation. The evolution of history points to the fact that the necessity for the self-determination of a nation is somehow connected with the origin of a national intelligentsia, which requested for itself the commensurate position in society comparable with the position of the same group in other nations. Such a program is always formulated in an adverse situation of the nation, whether it is the economy, foreign policy or other political issues. Nevertheless, the results of the elections in inter-war Slovakia justifies the view, to a considerable extent, that Munich and the following dissolution of the state broke the respective evolution that had, itself, all the relevant preconditions to create a harmonic, democratic society in which the national ambitions of Slovaks, too, would have been accomplished.

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