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*The Slovak Question and its International Context during World War Two***

During the seven years of World War Two, more concepts, drafts and projects dealing with Slovakia and the Slovak question were created than ever before. Some of them had no basis in reality and appeared to be little more than political science-fiction, while others deserve serious consideration. The latter may be placed into two categories: the first assuming a victory of Germany and the Axis powers and the second assuming a victory of the Allied troops over Nazi Germany and her satellite states.

First, it is necessary to explain what is meant by the term 'the Slovak question'. The Slovak question encompassed the various concepts and proposals regarding Slovakia generated by the British Foreign Office, the French Quai d'Orsay, the Polish Government (and particularly the Foreign Ministry led by Minister Spraw Zagranicznych), the Czechoslovak Government in Exile, and the German Auswärtiges Amt (insofar as the evaluation of Slovak 'independence' acquired on March 14, 1939 – the establishment of the Slovak Republic – was concerned). More specifically, the Slovak question deals with the evolution of the Slovak nation-building process in the twentieth century, with possibilities for preserving an independent Slovak state after World War Two, and last but not least, with the cultivation of diplomatic contacts with Slovak politicians in exile during World War Two. Opinions concerning the Slovak question and its possible solutions were as different as the political programs of individual Slovak leaders.

1. During World War Two, there were many Slovaks who collaborated with the German Third Reich; there were also many Slovaks who were leaders of the Slovak resistance abroad and fought alongside the Allied forces. A special phenomenon, sometimes referred to as the polarised historical memory of the Slovaks, emerged from this division. Let me start with the Slovak state, or the Slovak Republic. On March 14, 1939, Czechoslovakia was divided and the Slovak Republic was established as an independent state. The new entity was recognized by more than twenty countries, either *de jure* (by Poland and Hungary) or *de*

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facto (by France and Great Britain) and had become a subject of international law.¹ But the political reality in Slovak Republic was far beyond the recognition of any democratic regime. There was the ongoing persecution of political opponents, the establishment of the so-called 'Jewish Codex' in September 1941,² and the forcible deportation of nearly 80,000 Slovaks of Jewish descent to concentration camps despite the protests of the Holy See. The latter is one of the most tragic episodes in modern Slovak history. Nazi Germany concluded a series of 'protective' treaties with the Slovak government, thus creating a foundation to control all aspects of life in Slovakia. The Slovak Army joined the German Wehrmacht (and the Soviet Red Army) in the attack on Poland in September 1, 1939.³ Though Slovak soldiers took an active part alongside the German Wehrmacht on both the Eastern and Western Fronts, at the end of the war there were more Slovaks fighting on the Allied side than on the German or Axis side. There were thousands of Slovak volunteers fighting against the Axis – with the Czech and Slovak Legion in Poland in 1939, with Czechoslovak troops in France, the Middle East and Great Britain, the First Czechoslovak Army Corps formed in the Soviet Union, the Slovak Platoon 535 fighting in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Germans, and most importantly of all, the approximately 75,000 Slovak partisans fighting in the Slovak National Uprising that broke out on August 29, 1944.⁴

¹ For recognition by Great Britain: Edita Ivaničková: *Britská politika a Slovensko v rokoch 1939–1945* [British policy and Slovakia in 1939–1945]. In: *Slovensko na konci druhej svetovej vojny*, Bratislava 1994, p. 126; František Vnuk: British Recognition of Independent Slovakia in 1939. In: "Slovak Studies", *Historica*, Vol. IX, 6, p. 61. For recognition by Poland: Martin Holák: *Slovensko-poľské vzťahy od marca do septembra 1939* [Slovak-Polish Relations from March to September 1939]. In: *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov IV* [The Slovak Republic as Seen by Young Historians, Vol. IV], Banská Bystrica 2005, pp. 317–318; Dušan Segeš: *Vojensko-politické aktivity Karola Sidora od 14. marca do 1. septembra 1939 na pozadí slovensko-poľských vzťahov* [The Military and Political Activities of Karol Sidor from March 14 to September 1, 1939 against the Background of Slovak-Polish Relations]. In: "Vojenská história", Bratislava, 2005, No. 1, pp. 3–6. For the attempts of the Slovak diplomacy to achieve the recognition of the Slovak Republic by the United States of America: Slavomír Michálek: *Vstup do niektorých problémov slovensko-amerických vzťahov (1939–1945)* [Introduction to Issues Concerning Slovak-American Relations (1939–1945)]. In: *Slovenská republika..., op. cit.*, pp. 144–155. Also: Pavol Petruf: *Vichystické Francúzsko a diplomatické uznanie Slovenskej republiky* [The Vichy-France and the Diplomatic Recognition of Slovak Republic in 1939–1945]. In: "Historický časopis", 2000, No. 1, pp. 131–152; *idem*: *Politické vzťahy medzi Francúzskom a Československom a Francúzskom a Slovenskom (1939–1948). Výber z dokumentov* [Political relations between France and Czechoslovakia and France and Slovakia (1939–1948)]. Martin 2003.

² Nariadenie o právnom postavení Židov (Dokumenty). Edícia Judaica, Vol. 43, Bratislava 2000; Ivan Kamenec: *Po stopách tragédie* [Pursuing the Tragedy]. Bratislava 1991.

³ For a detailed description of this issue: Igor Baka: *Slovenská republika a nacistická agresia proti Poľsku* [The Slovak Republic and Nazi Aggression against Poland]. Bratislava 2006.

⁴ See i.e.: *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty*. [Slovak National Uprising. Documents] Bratislava 1965; Jozef Jablonický: *Z ilegality do povstania* [From Illegality to Uprising], Bratislava 1969; *idem*: *Povstanie bez legend* [Uprising without Legends], Vol. 1, Bratislava

But what was the response of the officials of the Slovak government in Bratislava when faced with the military defeats of Wehrmacht and the Slovak Army on both the Eastern and Western Fronts and in North Africa? First of all, I would like to state that the persistent claim that Slovak authorities made no attempts during the war to contact the Allied governments is untrue. In 1943, a memorandum entitled "La Question Slovaque" was compiled by the Slovak Envoy to the Holy See, and by Karol Sidor, former Prime Minister of the Slovak independent government (during 1939), and sent to the State Department in Washington (for details see Point 2 and Supplement B). A year later, in July 1944, a similar attempt was made by General Ferdinand Čatloš, Slovak Defence Minister and Supreme Commander of the Slovak Armed Forces. General Čatloš' plan included a *coup d'état* and the installation of a pro-Soviet military dictatorship under his command. He offered the Red Army transit through the territory. When the memorandum was finally delivered to Stalin, the plan was already obsolete because of the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising.⁵ Any other attempt by Slovak officials had no time to succeed as the Allies announced the unconditional surrender of the Axis states at the Casablanca Conference in February 1943. The restoration of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic had already been assured by Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

There is another aspect of the situation that deserves mention: namely, the persecution of the political opposition in the Slovak Republic. In comparison with neighbouring states and especially Germany, the Slovak regime proceeded slowly dealing with its opponents – though it should be noted this is not true of the Jews and Roma who were summarily deported to concentration camps. The prosperity generated by the war all but eliminated unemployment, and supplies for the population were plentiful despite wartime conditions, a situation which later spawned the myth of Slovakia as a Central European Switzerland. Slovakia as a German *Muster Staat* was an attractive example to other countries in similar situations, such as the NDH (Independent State of Croatia), Lithuania (in the 1939–40 period), and even to some individual politicians (such as Slovene Anton Korošec who in the summer of 1940 visited his old friend, Jozef Tiso, who had been Slovak President since 1939). In this context, a few remarks concerning the political contacts between Slovenian and Slovak politicians during this period would be appropriate. Just a few days before the German and Hungarian invasion of Yugoslavia, Fran Kulovec and Miha Krek visited Ivan

1990; Alan Clifford Brown: *The Czechoslovak Airforce in Britain, 1940–1945*, Southampton 1998, available under <http://www.ssci.freemove.co.uk/airmen.html>; Jiří Friedl: *Na jedné frontě : Vztahy československé a polské armády (Polskie Siły Zbrojne) za druhé světové války* [On one Battlefield : Relations between the Czechoslovak and the Polish Army during the Second World War]. Praha 2005.

⁵ Jan Rychlík: *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století : Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914–1945* [Czechs and Slovaks in the 20th Century : Czecho-Slovak relations 1914–1945], Bratislava 1997, Document No. 23, pp. 350–351; Václav Štefánský: *Generál Ferdinand Čatloš*. Bratislava 1998, pp. 58–73.

Milecz, the Slovak *chargé d'affaires*, in Belgrade in order to survey the attitude of the German government towards a possible declaration of an independent Slovenian state, which would eventually be a common state of Slovenians and Croats. The proposal was rejected by Adolf Hitler.⁶

There is no doubt that the degree of Slovak independence was absolutely dependent upon the will of Berlin. The attempts of Slovak leaders to reduce the overwhelming German influence in almost every sphere of quotidian life in Slovakia (by reaching out to the Allies, by trying to develop economic, cultural, and political ties with other states such as Poland and the Soviet Union) ultimately failed due to German pressure. This failure resulted in the participation of the Slovak Republic in Nazi Germany aggression against Poland in September 1939 and the Soviet Union in June 1941.⁷

Another point of interest is how the Slovak question was dealt with in exile. By late 1938, many Slovak politicians were active abroad. Some had been prominent figures and officials in the Czechoslovak State during the interwar period. These included Štefan Osuský, the Czechoslovak ambassador to France, Vladimír Hurban, the Czechoslovak ambassador in Washington, and Milan Hodža, a former Prime Minister. Later, a number of officials of the independent Slovakia became part of the political opposition and joined political movements in exile. They included Peter Prídavok, Rudolf Viest, the first Slovak General, Ján Lichner, Ján Pauliny-Tóth, and some diplomatic representatives of the independent Slovak state such as Ladislav Szathmáry (Slovak envoy to Poland until September 1939), and Milan Harminc (Slovak *chargé d'affaires* to Great Britain until September 1939). Many of these figures went through a complicated process, a kind of political metamorphosis and represented a number of different political options and programs along the way. Hodža regarded himself as the leader of Slovak political emigrés and tried to reach an agreement with Edvard Beneš, the former Czechoslovak president, in order to attain unity within the Czechoslovak foreign resistance movement. When this attempt failed, Hodža established the Slovak National Council that was reorganized into the Czecho-Slovak National Council (Česko-Slovenská národná rada) in January 1940. It is worth noting that the first diplomatic act confirming the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic was an agreement signed by Štefan Osuský, ambassador to France, and the French government. This agreement, signed in October 1939, allowed the organization of Czechoslovak military troops on French territory and opened the door for the establishment of the Czechoslovak National Committee (Československý národný výbor). Despite the fact that the political position of Osuský

⁶ Bojan Godeša: *Jozef Tiso a Anton Korošec – vzťahy medzi Slovákmi a Slovincami* [Jozef Tiso and Anton Korošec – Relations between Slovaks and Slovenians]. In: *Historický časopis*, 2005, No. 2, pp. 365–379.

⁷ A detailed analysis of German policy in Slovakia is offered in the recent work of Tatjana Tönsmeier: *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939–1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn*. Paderborn 2005.

within the Czecho-Slovak resistance was strong at the outset – this was largely because of his contacts at the Quai d'Orsay and the existence of Czecho-Slovak National Council headed by Hodža–Edvard Beneš managed to establish himself as the leader of the Czecho-Slovak resistance movement-in-exile. As Beneš had more influence in London than in Paris, one circumstance that led to this situation was the fall of France in June 1940. Furthermore, Beneš satisfied both the British and French governments by calling for an appropriate solution to the Slovak question in the exile community. This meant above all an agreement by the Slovaks led by Hodža. When members of Hodža's Czecho-Slovak National Council were arrested by British authorities upon their arrival from France (on the basis of information forwarded by the Czechoslovak Secret Service), Hodža lost his political platform and agreed to accept the office of Vice President of the State Council, a Czechoslovak quasi-parliament in exile, though he never took an active part in executing this function. In October 1941, he decided to leave London for the United States where he made several attempts to unify under his political programme both Americans of Slovak descent and Slovaks living in America. But Hodža's plans to establish a Slovak National Council in the United States failed and until his death in June 1944, he represented the political programme of an autonomous Slovakia with its own parliament and ministries within Czecho-Slovakia. Since the outbreak of World War Two, he had been advocating for a Central European federation (in 1942 he published a book entitled *Federation in Central Europe*⁸) and warned of the dangers of dividing the world into spheres of influence (in the memorandum "Europe at the Crossroads" delivered to the Department of State, to name one example⁹). Osuský was also in conflict with Beneš, criticizing his approach to the Slovak question and objecting to Beneš' insistence on calling himself president.¹⁰ Beneš' conflict with Osuský ended in March 1942 when he resigned from the Czechoslovak provisional government. Later, in 1944, the Slovak National Council (Slovenská národná rada) also repudiated Beneš' ideas for a postwar settlement of the Slovak question.

Another issue requires attention: was the Slovak question an internal Czecho-slovak or an international one? While Edvard Beneš succeeded in convincing both the British and French governments in 1940 that unity between Czechs and Slovaks had already been achieved under his leadership, the Polish government in exile had a different response. Some historians suggest that at the end of 1939

⁸ Milan Hodža: *Federation in Central Europe. Reflections and Reminiscences*, London : Jarrolds Publishers 1942 (Slovak translation Milan Hodža: *Federácia v strednej Európe a iné štúdie*, Bratislava 1997).

⁹ Pavol Lukáč: *K osudom Hodžovho memoranda* (Čo predchádzalo zaslaniu Hodžovho memoranda Europe at the Crossroads State Departmentu v zime 1944). In: *Střední Evropa*, 1996, No. 62.

¹⁰ Osuský published some pamphlets criticizing Beneš' theory of legal continuity, his presidency, and his attitude to the Slovak question. Štefan Osuský: *Beneš a Slovensko* [Beneš and Slovakia], London 1943. Some of Osuský's pamphlets were translated into English. Štefan Osuský: "Truth Conquers" (A Glance into the Mirror of the Second Revolution), New York 1943.

and beginning of 1940, Hodža enjoyed broader support among Polish officials than Beneš.¹¹ One of the main goals of the Polish government, as can be read in an official proclamation from October 1939, was the liberation of 'Czech lands and Slovakia' – not Czechoslovakia.¹² When the Poles recognized the Czechoslovak National Committee as the Czechoslovak provisional government in July 1940, they emphasized that the problem of Slovakia should be settled only in accordance with the wishes of Slovaks and in the interest of Central European stability after the war. On the other hand, Milan Hodža, in a memorandum dated November 1939, expressed his conviction that the Slovaks could play a crucial role in minimizing the traditional animosities between Czechs and Poles that had rendered impossible neighbourly relations in the interwar period. He forwarded this memorandum to the Polish and British governments.¹³ To the contrary, Beneš, during talks with Polish Prime Minister General Władysław Sikorski and Count Edward Raczyński, Polish Ambassador in Great Britain, emphasized that under no circumstances would he give another 'Pittsburgh Agreement' to the Slovaks (signed in 1918 by the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš G. Masaryk and Americans of Slovak descent and promising the Slovaks political autonomy within Czechoslovakia, a situation which wasn't realized until November 22, 1938). The Poles—said Beneš—must understand that there are only Czechoslovaks, no Czechs or Slovaks.¹⁴ This thesis was accepted by Polish officials in exile and was the general line of Polish policy during the negotiations on Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation that began in November 1940. This changed, however, when the Czechoslovak government-in-exile cancelled negotiations in May 1943, three weeks after Stalin's decision to break off diplomatic relations with Poland. In 1943, Slovakia began to appear as an independent unit in the plans of an anti-Soviet and anti-Bolshevik Central European federation considered by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It also came up during secret Polish-Hungarian negotiations in Lisbon and Stockholm toward the end of 1943.¹⁵ However, the possibility that this plan would become reality was greatly reduced by the

¹¹ Maria Turlejska: *Spór o Polskę. Szkice historyczne* [Dispute about Poland. Historical Sketches]. Warsaw 1981, p. 107; Tadeusz P. Rutkowski: Stanisław Kot 1885–1975. Biografia polityczna, Warsaw 2000, p. 208.

¹² *Sprawa polska w czasie drugiej wojny światowej na arenie międzynarodowej : Zbiór dokumentów* [The Polish question in the international arena during the Second World War : Collection of documents], Warsaw 1965, Document No. 79, pp. 125–126.

¹³ Memorandum by Dr. Hodza on Collective Security in Central Europe, 28. 11. 1939. *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky, Od rozpadu Česko-Slovenska do uznání československé prozatímní vlády 1939–1940* (16. března 1939–15. června 1940), Vol. B/2, Praha 2002, Document No. 152, pp. 320–324.

¹⁴ Sikorski-Beneš talk, September 5, 1940. *Czechoslovak-Polish Negotiations of the Establishment of the Confederation and Alliance 1939–1944*, Praha 1995, Vol. 1, Document Nr. 23, p. 70.

¹⁵ See also Hungarian memorandum by Károly Schrecker and Aladár Szegedy-Maszák delivered to the Allies in 1943. Gyula Juhász: *Hungarian Foreign Policy 1919–1945*. Budapest 1979, pp. 243–245.

decision of the Allies to invade Italy rather than the Balkans. The decision meant that Central European countries would be liberated by the Soviets. Nevertheless, the plan emphasized the importance of Slovakia and the attention given to it by its neighbours in their hopes of creating a defensive north-south vertical axis (from the Baltic to the Black Sea). This geopolitical concept intersected the horizontal line that President Beneš (motivated by the so-called 'Munich complex') considered the direct shared frontier with the Soviet Union, his *conditio sine qua non* being the viability of a restored postwar Czechoslovakia. Hence his feverish efforts to secure a political alliance with the Soviet Union.

Because of his specific political orientation, Edvard Beneš was unable to understand the evolution of the Slovak question and the stage it reached during World War Two. Despite the authoritarian regime ruling the country, the reality of an independent Slovakia had become important to most Slovaks. It played a crucial role in the process of national emancipation. Beneš, therefore, staked his political and ethnic positions on a 'Czechoslovakism' that the majority of Slovaks did not accept. All the same, in the context of the international political situation at the end of World War Two, Beneš' political program put forth the possibility of a positive territorial solution for Slovakia. This laid the groundwork for one of the great paradoxes of the whole controversy surrounding the Slovak question as it was perceived by Czecho-Slovak exiles. Hodža, whose political program concerning the political future of Slovakia was based on a fully autonomous Slovakia within a reconstituted Czecho-Slovakia, was prepared to accept as the basis for a postwar settlement the frontiers established during the Vienna Arbitration in November 1938 (which meant the loss of one-third of Slovakia's territory and more than 850,000 of its inhabitants). On the contrary, Beneš, long suspected of being 'anti-Slovak', stated that the restoration of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia was his most important political goal, which in effect meant the restoration of Slovakia's frontiers as they existed prior to September 1938.

2. Taking into consideration the international political situation during World War Two, opinions concerning the Slovak question and possible solutions to it were generated in two separate and antagonistic camps, in other words in two different worlds.

The concept of the National-Socialist 'New Order', sometimes called 'New Europe', appeared in the summer 1940 and was based foremost on economic considerations. First in the deliberations of the committee for Southeast Europe of Reichsgruppe Industrie (headed by Wilhelm Voss) and later in the outlines of the planning board of the Gesellschaft für Südosteuropa, Slovakia figured not as an independent state but as an affiliated region of the Grossdeutsches Reich. Two approaches prevailed in the general assessment of the Slovak political situation among the German officials and their advisers in the Slovak ministries: the first called for the preservation of Slovakia as an independent state that would occupy the position of *Hilfsnation* (helping nation), and the second emphasized the importance of assimilation of suitable Slovak national elements

into the German population, a process that would last several generations.

However, these were not the only approaches to Slovakia and its territorial issues discussed in the Axis camp. In late December 1939, Arthur Bliss-Lane, the American Ambassador in Belgrade, had a talk with Tibor Eckhardt, the leader of the Hungarian Smallholders Party. Eckhardt informed Bliss-Lane about the plans of Italy to build – together with Hungary – a "union of Roman Catholic peoples, i.e. Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Slovakia, the end of the axis being in Rome."¹⁶

There were other plans generated and discussed in exile as well as in the framework of the resistance movement in Slovakia. Edvard Beneš' point of departure was based on the legal continuity of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic. This point of departure was shared by many Slovak ministers in the Czechoslovak National Committee (that had become the Czechoslovak government-in-exile following recognition of the British government), including Juraj Slávik, former Czechoslovak Ambassador in Poland (later Minister of the Interior), General Rudolf Viest, and others. This meant that anything that happened after the Munich Agreement was void, the consequence being that Slovakia would have no special position as far as local political autonomy was concerned within the reconstituted Czechoslovak Republic. However, a number of prominent Slovak politicians in exile (including Milan Hodža and Štefan Osuský) and the Slovak National Council constituted in December 1943 by the representatives of almost all resistance groups in Slovakia (including the Communists) insisted on granting broad political autonomy to the Slovaks in a reconstituted Czecho-Slovak Republic. Last but not least, Slovak political organizations acting in the West were making demands for an independent Slovak state after the war. This included the Slovak League in the United States which represented the majority of Americans of Slovak descent (see Supplement A) and the Slovak National Council in London established on January 9, 1944 and headed by Peter Prídavok (see Supplement C). Insofar as the postwar European security system was concerned, a number of advanced political talks took place between the Czechoslovak and Polish governments in exile that might have led to the creation of a Czechoslovak-Polish federation, or – as Edvard Beneš preferred to call it – a *confederation sui generis*. The Slovak question played an important role in these negotiations. These ambitious plans were followed by the Kremlin with a keen eye and both governments were on the receiving end of Soviet pressure. In the end, Beneš decided to drop these plans and signed a political agreement with the Soviet Union in December 1943.¹⁷

¹⁶ Memorandum on the conversation between Bliss-Lane and Eckhardt, Budapest, December 23, 1939. National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), Washington, Microcopy 59 (Decimal Files), roll 3, file 760H.64/199. Eckhardt, who emigrated in 1941 to the United States, also discussed with Bliss-Lane the talks he had in Yugoslavia with Vladko Maček, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS).

¹⁷ For detailed information concerning the Czechoslovak-Polish confederation plans Piotr

After 1942, another possibility for a postwar European settlement was discussed – namely, a Catholic Federation that would include Poland, Czech lands, Bavaria, Hungary, Austria, Croatia, and an independent Slovakia. Though it was said at the time that the plan enjoyed the support of the Vatican, it was always more of a journalistic notion than a real political project.

Another aspect that deserves mention is the political contacts between Slovak politicians acting in opposition to the Czechoslovak government, the diplomatic representatives of the Slovak Republic, and the Polish government in exile. In March 1943, Karol Sidor, the Slovak Envoy to the Vatican, who maintained close contact with Polish Ambassador Kazimierz Papée, received a message from Count Edward Raczynski, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, demanding a political declaration supporting the idea of a Central European federation.¹⁸ The declaration should be submitted to the Allies. In this context, it should be noted that the Polish Ambassador to the Holy See served as an intermediary between Sidor and the American officials – similar to the role that Polish diplomats played in neutral states such as Portugal and Turkey and as mediator between Hungarian officials and the Allies.¹⁹ In June 1943, Sidor re-

Wandycz.: *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers*. Bloomington 1956; Detlef Brandes: *Großbritannien und seine osteuropäischen Alliierten 1939–1943 : Die Regierungen Polens, der Tschechoslowakei und Jugoslawiens im Londoner Exil vom Kriegsausbruch bis zur Konferenz von Teheran*. München 1988; Tadeusz Kisielewski: *Federacja środkowoeuropejska. Pertraktacje polsko-czechosłowackie 1939–1943* [Central European Federation. Polish-Czechoslovak Negotiations 1939–1943]. Warsaw 1991; *Czechoslovak-Polish Negotiations of the Establishment of the Confederation and Alliance 1939–1944*. Praha 1995; Jan Němeček: *Od spojenectví k roztržce : Vztahy československé a polské exilové reprezentace 1939–1945* [From Alliance to Discord : The relations between the Czechoslovak and Polish Governments in Exile 1939–1945]. Praha 2003; Marek Kazimierz Kamiński: *Edvard Beneš kontra gen. Władysław Sikorski : Polityka władz czechosłowackich na emigracji wobec rządu polskiego na uchodźstwie 1939–1943* [Edvard Beneš versus General Władysław Sikorski : Policy of the Czechoslovak Emigré Authorities towards the Polish Government-in-Exile 1939–1943]. Warsaw 2005. The most recent work on the 1943 Beneš-Stalin agreement is Dušan Segeš: *Edvard Beneš a sprawa polska w kontekście podpisania układu czechosłowacko-sowieckiego z 1943 r.* [Edvard Beneš and the Polish question in the context of signing of the Czechoslovak-Soviet agreement in 1943]. In: *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 2006, No. 3, pp. 17–55.

¹⁸ Dušan Segeš: *Wspólna droga Kazimierza Papée z Karolem Sidorem – z historii stosunków polsko-słowackich w okresie II wojny światowej*. [The Common Way of Casimir Papée and Karol Sidor – from the Unknown History of the Polish-Slovak Relations during the Second World War]. In: *Niepodległość*, Warsaw-New York, 2005, pp. 284–316. The Sidor-Papée talks in the Vatican City were like a *déjà-vu*: it should be mentioned, that the plan for a Slovak-Polish union has already been discussed in September 1938, in Prague, when Papée was Polish Envoy to Czechoslovakia. Pavol Čarnogurský: *Deklarácia o únii Slovenska s Poľskom z 28. septembra 1938* [Declaration of union between Slovakia and Poland from September, 28, 1938]. In: *Historický časopis*, 1968, No. 3, pp. 407–423; Valerián Bystrický: *Slovenská otázka v medzivojnovom Československu* [The Slovak question in inter-war Czechoslovakia]. In: *Národnostná otázka v strednej Európe v rokoch 1848 – 1938*. Prešov 2005, pp. 245–246.

¹⁹ See e.g. Gyula Juhász: *op. cit.*; Laura-Louise Veress, Dalma Takacs: *Clear the Line: Hungary's Struggle to Leave the Axis During the Second World War*. Cleveland 1995.

sponded to the demand with a memorandum titled "La Question Slovaque" (see Supplement B) delivered to Harold C. Tittmann, American *chargé d'affaires* to the Vatican (and chief Assistant to Myron Taylor, Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal representative to the Vatican) and, was addressed to the Department of State in Washington. In the document, Sidor defended Slovakia's right to self-determination and left the door open to the possibility of a confederation of Slovakia, Poland and Czech lands.²⁰ But Sidor received no answer from the American State Department. His further political efforts with the Polish government aimed at finding a common political platform failed because of differences concerning territorial issues (specifically the Slovak-Polish frontier). Talks between the Slovak political opposition and the Polish government in London resulted in a memorandum by the Slovak National Union (a political organisation headed by Peter Prídavok) and delivered to Minister E. Raczynski in June 1943.²¹ These contacts continued after the war in the context of the Central European Federal Club (CEFC) that met in London.²² All of these initiatives were carried out with the goal of preventing the communisation of Central European states, including Slovakia.

But Slovak Communists had their own plans and political ideas. One of them was the creation of a Soviet Slovakia that would be an integral part of the Soviet Union. The Slovak communist resistance drew on the slogans coming out of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa) acting in Moscow, and Comintern, which was formally abolished by Stalin in May 1943. Nevertheless, the 'Baltic scenario' (i.e. the occupation and annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union) was more of a political gambit to put Beneš under pressure than a real program to be realized after the war.²³

Supplemental material

Documents submitted to the governments of the Allies during World War Two by prominent Slovak organizations and politicians for the creation of an independent postwar state of Slovakia.²⁴

²⁰ Pavol Petruf, Dušan Segeš: *Memorandum Karola Sidora Slovenská otázka z júna 1943* [Memorandum by Karol Sidor Slovak Question from June, 1943]. In: *Historický časopis*, 2005, No. 1, pp. 123–150.

²¹ Memorandum by Prídavok to Raczynski, June 16, 1943. Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), Stanford, Collection Poland. Poselstwo Czechoslovakia [Polish Legation to Czechoslovakia], box 14.

²² Prídavok was the President of the CEFC, an organisation of Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Croats and Serbs.

²³ Dagmar Čierna-Lantayová: *Pohľady na Východ (Postoje k Rusku v slovenskej politike 1934–1944)* [The View to the East. The Attitudes to Russia in the Slovak Politics in 1934–1944]. Bratislava 2002; Toman Brod: *Československo a Sovětský svaz v letech 1939–1945* [Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in 1939–1945]. Praha 1992, p. 264.

²⁴ Some parts of the presented documents may seem naive, and some of the premises or expectations they include, unrealistic; nevertheless, they allow us to penetrate the mental and

Supplement A)

Memorandum "Slovaks and Their Right to Nationhood" issued by the Slovak League of America and addressed to Cordell Hull, American Secretary of State, on May 10, 1943 (excerpt).

(...) Conclusion

To the majority of Americans of Slovak descent the problem of the future of Slovaks abroad is only one of many problems that will have to be solved after the war is won. We are engaged in a monumental struggle for survival and for the preservation of democratic principles. We are determined to end once and for all the imperialism and tyranny that have brought so much suffering and anguish to individual nations and to humanity as a whole. We make sacrifices, willingly and cheerfully, in order that truth and justice may prevail in this world, despite (and contrary to) the selfish aims of one or more particular groups. We know that only in this way can the peace and happiness of mankind be assured.

The present war is a war of Principles: Liberty against Tyranny; Freedom against Oppression and Persecution; Peace against constant Strife. No exception can be made in the application of the principles for which we are fighting. If we should fall into this trap, our victory will turn into defeat. Seeds of discord and the foundation for more devastating future wars will be planted.

For us, the Slovak question is not one of whether or nor Czecho-Slovakia should be reconstituted. It is not a question of whether Slovakia should be formed into a politically independent state. Higher and more sacred aims concern us; aims which are important not only to us because of our Slovak descent, but which are important to every man and woman prepared today to make the supreme sacrifice in order to assure the happiness of future generations.

"Every nationality, no matter how small, has the inherent right to its own nationhood". This was the pronouncement of our President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. This principle, so clearly setting forth one of the aims of the present struggle, is embodied in the Atlantic Charter. It has been reiterated time and again, in the public utterances made by our leaders and statesman.

We, Americans of Slovak descent; we, who sacrifice and fight today side by side with all peoples who have dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom, appeal to leaders in the name of this sacred cause,

That, considering the fate of Slovakia, they will not permit themselves to be led by those who would deny and who have denied Slovaks the right to their national existence;

That, liberty and freedom and the means to a democratic life be granted to the Slovaks in the same full measure as they shall be granted to other nations. (...)

moral framework of the authors, who represented an important part of Slovak political thought at that time.

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Supplement B)

Memorandum "La Question Slovaque", issued by Karol Sidor, Slovak Envoy to the Holy See, and submitted to Harold C. Tittmann, American chargé d'affaires, and to the Polish Government-in-Exile, June 1943 (excerpt translated from the French).

(...) Slovakia after the War

Slovak patriots know very well that a small nation cannot always determine the forms of its future life entirely in accordance with its own will and wishes. For a small nation, it is necessary to adapt itself to the general trends of development in Europe. Nevertheless it is hoped that the future of Europe will be just and honest, and that it will be able to find a place for the small nation of Slovakia. Slovaks regard an independent Slovak State as the best guarantee of satisfactory national development in the future. For this reason, they act in a way that would not give any reason to the Germans to destroy the independent Slovak state by force. In several areas – for example, the Jewish question and the question of racism – Slovaks must consider directives coming from Germany; otherwise they risk angering the Germans, the armed forces of which surround Slovakia along its frontiers with Austria, Moravia and Poland.

Thus the Slovaks are forced to act this way in order to retain their small state and to exist as an independent state after the war.

To organize sabotage against the Germans or begin to kill them would mean the end of Slovak independence.

There is the hope that Slovakia can survive the war by pursuing its present policy.

If the small states of Europe build a greater coalition in the future, Slovaks would be pleased to enter such a coalition as an independent political unit, that is to belong to a federation with their Slavic brothers, the Poles and Czechs, and even with other neighbouring nations, to create a federation. (...)

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Supplement C)

Open Letter from the Slovak National Council in London to Anthony Eden, January 1944 (excerpt)

Sir,

WE, the undersigned, Slovaks living in Great Britain, who are in the position to speak independently, make in the name of the SLOVAK NATIONAL UNION in London, of which we are members, and in our own name, the following Declaration:

Whereas we certify that we agree to all arrangements made to attain the victory of the Allies in this war, to secure a lasting peace and freedom in Europe, delivered from the constant threat of German aggression, emphasise the un-

avoidable necessity of a new European organisation (especially in Central Europe) in the closest cooperation with the Allied Nations and under the leadership of the Allied Great Democracies, welcome everything which could bring together all the nations of Central and Southeast Europe with the Great Democratic Powers, we declare most solemnly that the "Treaty of friendship, mutual help and postwar cooperation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Republic", agreed in Moscow on December 12, 1943, by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and M. V. M. Molotov on the one side and by the "President of the Czechoslovak Republic" and M. Zdeněk Fierlinger on the other side, *is null and void and does not bind the Slovak nation at all.*

(...) We insist that Dr. Edvard Beneš and M. Zdeněk Fierlinger acted as unauthorized negotiators and attached the seals illegally.

Neither of these persons can be regarded in any way whatsoever as authorised negotiators with juridical or political title to represent the Slovak nation.

(...) Our reasons for defending the maintenance of the Slovak State as a unit in a future federation – apart from the reasons mentioned above,^{*} which led to total internal disruption of former Czecho-Slovakia – are as follows: The Slovak State – as has already been said – was proclaimed by a body of legal representatives of the Slovak nation, the Slovak autonomous Parliament. The day that the foundation of the Slovak State had been proclaimed, there had not been on Slovak territory any foreign army under whose pressure this proclamation might have been made. The Government of the new State had from the very beginning maintained an uninterrupted course of administration as well as legal order and security. The Slovak people, though disapproving of the totalitarian methods of the present Government, are wholeheartedly in favour of a State of their own. They see full well that the new Slovak State, in spite of the present totalitarian régime imposed on it by the Germans, has many positive features, having proved its fitness to live in the most difficult period of history and realize that it is in any case better to live under a Slovak Government than under a foreign one. The best proof of this attitude of the Slovak people is that Dr. Beneš's propaganda has found so far no response at all in Slovakia. It is true that today the Slovak people have to endure many political and economic limitations imposed by the war, but in spite of all these limitations they have under the present régime more national freedom than they had ever dreamed of in Czecho-Slovakia. (...)

According to information at hand, though there are many differences of opinion among the leading Slovaks – especially the totalitarian form of government is being strongly resented by the overwhelming majority of them – they are unanimous in demanding that Slovakia should continue as an independent State, as a free and equal partner of a greater community of Central European nations. (...)

* Not published.

Povzetek

Slovaško vprašanje v mednarodnem kontekstu v času med drugo svetovno vojno

Znano je, da je po padcu Češkoslovaške marca 1939 in proglasitvi Slovaške republike (imenovana Slovaška država) nova država prišla delno pod nemški vpliv, kjer je ostala skozi večino druge svetovne vojne. A vlada Slovaške države je predstavljala le en del slovaške politične miselnosti tistega časa, saj so obstajale tudi opozicijske skupine (posamezniki in organizacije), ki so delovale v izgnanstvu. V tem prispevku, ki se osredotoča predvsem na slovaško vprašanje v izgnanstvu, so obravnavana naslednja vprašanja:

- dejavnosti in politične programe Slovakov, ki so sodelovali pri češkoslovaškem odporu v izgnanstvu: Milan Hodža proti Edvardu Benešu pri vprašanju vodstva češkoslovaških političnih emigrantov – Češkoslovaški nacionalni svet proti Češkoslovaškem nacionalnem odboru;
- Štefan Osuský proti Edvardu Benešu; razlikovanja glede pravne kontinuitete Češkoslovaške;
- slovaško vprašanje: Češkoslovaška notranja zadeva ali mednarodno vprašanje? Mnenja britanskega zunanjega ministrstva, ameriškega zunanjega ministrstva in poljske vlade v izgnanstvu;
- stiki med poljsko vlado v izgnanstvu in slovaškimi politiki v izgnanstvu (Milan Hodža, Peter Prídavok, Štefan Osuský);
- neodvisna Slovaška republika, slovaška samouprava znotraj Češkoslovaške, Slovaška-Poljsko-Češka federacija, ali Sovjetska republika? Politični načrti in koncepti poveljne Slovaške;
- slovaško vprašanje in načrti za Češkoslovaško-Poljsko konfederacijo;
- "Musterstaat" Tretjega rajha ali "neubogljiv" nemški satelit? Poskusi predstavnikov Slovaške države da bi prišli v stik z zavezniki med drugo svetovno vojno, Slovaška nacionalna vstaja leta 1944;
- Slovaška in druge srednje evropske države – načrti za poveljno obdobje med drugo svetovno vojno. Možnosti, paralele in razlike.