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Studia Carpathico-Adriatica, Vol. I.
The Slovaks and the Croats on their Way to Independence: History and Perspectives

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Vol. I.

The Slovaks and the Croats on their Way to Independence: History and Perspectives

Edited by
Martin Homza a Željko Holjevac

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*The motif on the cover is motivated by the first silver denarius of Coloman of Galitia (*MONETA REGIS P SCLAVONIA*, around 1235). The motif from the front script comes from the tombstone of Stephan Zápoľský (after 1499).*

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Željko Holjevac*

Editorial

Úvodník / Uvodnik

The first volume of the journal *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica*, which is in hands of the readers, contains articles written on the basis of papers presented at the scientific conference *The Slovaks and the Croats on their Way to Independence: History and Perspectives*. The conference was held on 18 June 2019 at Comenius University in Bratislava. In this volume, six Slovak and five Croatian authors analyze the Croatian and Slovak road to independence, having in mind both the historical roots and future perspectives.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, democratic elections, the break-up of Yugoslavia in a bloody war and the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia were the framework conditions in which Croatia and Slovakia evolved from federal units of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia into independent states in the early 1990s. On their path to independence, among other aspects, the Slovak and Croatian political exile played an important role, as well as the Catholic Church and other factors. Today both countries are members of the European Union facing new challenges and new horizons.

In his introductory article on Croatia's way to independence, Nikica Barić, in the most concise terms, chronologically presents the major events that led to the deep economic, social and political crisis in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. The crisis in the early 1990s led to the disintegration of the common state of the South Slavs and the international recognition of the Republic of Croatia as a new state forged in the war for independence.

Emília Hrabovec in her paper on Slovak exile and the path to Slovak independence notes that the initial political situation of the Slovak exile was much more complex than the situation of most other nations in Central and Eastern Europe. The Slovak exile – similar to the Croatian exile – had to struggle not only against the communist regime, but also for the return of its own statehood. In this light, the establishment of the World Congress of Slovaks, which advocated the idea of state independence of Slovakia, was of particular importance, invoking the universally recognized principle of self-determination and the principle of full equality of nations.

Analyzing the most significant activities and attitudes of the Catholic Church in the last years of Yugoslavia, and major turning points in Croatia in the first half of the 1990s, Julija Barunčić Pletikosić emphasizes in her article an important role that the Catholic Church played in the creation of the Republic of Croatia as an independent state.

Describing the Slovak early spring as a catalyst for the Czecho-Slovak spring of 1968 and the federalization of Czechoslovakia, Miroslav Londák and

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Elena Londáková note in their article that, in addition to liberalizing the communist regime and creating socialism with a human face, another often omitted major topic was the Slovak national emancipation process that culminated in the federalization of Czechoslovakia of that time.

In his article, Peter Jašek portrays the contacts of Slovak and Croatian political exile in the 1970s and 1980s. The text deals with the broader context of relations between the World Congress of Slovaks and representatives of emigrants from various Central and Eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc. The study also includes the reconstruction of specific cases of co-operation between Slovaks and Croats in the West.

Beáta Katrebová Blehová presents the issue of the divorce of Czechoslovakia during 1992 in an international context. Documents stored in the archives of the former Ministry of International Relations documenting Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar's meetings with diplomatic representatives from Europe and Israel show that the Slovak government was not ready enough to divide the common state of Czechs and Slovaks and initially preferred a confederation instead of an independent state. The documents also show that the governments of Slovakia's neighboring states, as well as those of some great powers, had in mind the possible disintegration of Czechoslovakia, but advocated for constitutional action, which was more than understandable in the context of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia.

In his article on the milestones of the development of Slovakia's state-legal status in the 20th century, Ondrej Podolec notes that Slovakia, like Croatia, was part of multinational states – Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovakia – within which autonomy was the highest ambition of Slovak political representations. On the eve of World War II, independent Slovakia was established under German auspices. After the war, communist Czechoslovakia experienced development from a centrally governed state to a federation. As a result of division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, an independent Slovakia emerged as a modern European state.

After stopping Serbian and Montenegrin military aggression by the end of 1991, and achieving international legitimacy by recognition by the European Community and accession to the United Nations in the following year, the fundamental goal of Croatian politics led by President Franjo Tuđman was to achieve full sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized Croatian borders. In her article on the end of the Croatian Homeland War, Ana Holjevac Tuković focuses on military operations, primarily the Croatian military-police operation „Storm" in August 1995, as well as the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Croatia under the jurisdiction of Croatian authorities.

Tomáš Černák's study outlines the political situation and violence at football stadiums in the early 1990s in Croatia and Slovakia. He takes into consideration the example of a football match between *Dinamo* from Zagreb and *Crvena zvezda* from Belgrade in 1990 and the matches between *Slovan* from Bratislava and *Sparta* from Prague as well as *Ferencváros* from Budapest in 1991 and 1992.

Albert Bing's article deals with the long process of Croatia's accession to the European Union. In addition to reviewing the most significant events and transition processes before the accession in 2013, various problems that Croatia faced in its „European path" were

emphasized, keeping in mind the oscillations in the mood of Croatian citizens and the attitudes of the international community towards the Republic of Croatia.

In an article on the challenges of dealing with the problematic past in Croatia, Aleksandar Jakir points to conflicting interpretations of „painful" or „sensitive" topics in Croatian history of the 20th century. Such topics provoke not only debates in historiography but also debates in public life in Croatia. Moreover, disputes over different interpretations of the past are often used as a kind of competition among individuals and groups in the domestic political arena.

The *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* is a comparative Slovak-Croatian journal. Bearing in mind the multiple Croatian-Slovak parallels and connections in the past and present, the journal is a step forward in the mutual networking of Croatia and Slovakia in the field of humanities and their joint presentation to the European and world scientific community. Appreciating the fruitful cooperation of all the authors and partners, as well as all those who helped in any way, we are pleased and proud to provide the first volume of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* to the scientists and the widest interested public.

Martin Homza*

A Few Words on the Establishment of the Slovak-Croatian Commission for Humanities

Niekoľko slov k vzniku Slovensko-chorvátskej komisie humanitných vied / Nekoliko riječi o postanku Slovačko-hrvatskoga odbora za humanističke znanosti

The twentieth century in Europe began with the first war in the Balkans in 1912. It also ended with a series of wars in the Western Balkans between the nations that had formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s, and the bombing of the rest of Yugoslavia by NATO troops in 1999. That century saw two world wars begin and end. It also saw social experiments being introduced with great splendour, carried out with less glory to finally end up in the dustbin of history in the form of totalitarian regimes. The 20th century undoubtedly witnessed a significant improvement in the standard of life of people. On the other hand, it was in this period that human reasoning reached its highest pride. However, some big plans of Man did not come out. For example, Man was not able to reverse the course of rivers. Fortunately. Therefore, the history of Slovakia and Croatia can flow down its natural course. The Danube undoubtedly personalises the soul of Europe's biggest people, the Slavs. And just as the river has right and left tributaries, this imaginary body has left and right limbs. All of Slovakia's rivers, but the Poprad, flow into the Danube to become its left affluents. Likewise, a substantial part of the river network in present-day Croatia also flows into the Danube as its right tributaries. Like it or not, this natural water system conditions the people living on its shores to interact with each other at many different levels. This was already known to the Romans, the first to integrate the Danube world politically, culturally, religiously, as well as economically and militarily. Likewise, it has always been clear to the Holy See, which still dreams of restoring the province of Illyricum. And it was also clear to the king of Panonnia and later saint, Ladislav I, the most outstanding representative of the Nitra line of the Arpads, whose political career began in Poland. In fact, in 1091 Ladislav I managed to annex the Kingdom of Croatia to his realm – the crystallising Slavic-Hungarian-Romanian "commonwealth". His successor,

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King Coloman the Learned, gave this union a legal framework.[1] This is how Slovaks and Croats became part of one and the same kingdom, in which they lived, created spiritual and economic values, and coexisted among other nations until 1918.

Of course, this over-eight-hundred-year-long coexistence left lasting marks. Over this timespan, Slovaks and Croats developed multilateral and multi-layered bonds. Therefore, it is no coincidence that several Slovaks traveling to Croatia experience a kind of *deja vu* there. The same happens with Croats coming to Slovakia. However, feelings need to be expressed. From looking for words to describe and verbalise it, it is necessary to move on to understanding why it is so.[2] And this is the main reason why the Slovak-Croatian Commission for Humanities (hereinafter SCCH) was actually established. The following lines describe how it happened, how the public should understand this commission, and what its goals are about.

It was not easy at all for the initiators of the SCCH to revive the mutual ties of Slovaks and Croats in the field of the humanities. For several reasons. Probably the most serious was the older split within the Communist International (Comintern), after Josip Broz Tito, the communist leader of Yugoslavia, broke up with Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Tito's Yugoslavia became *de facto* an enemy of the regimes the soviets had established in East-Central Europe. One of them was Post-February Czechoslovakia.[3] Although the mutual ties between the two countries began to recover after Stalin's death, they never really reached their pre-war level, or even the level from 1945 – 1948. The creation of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Commission in times of political recession in the 1960s was a sign that the relations between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia were improving.

This happened in 1966. However, its activities were characterised by excessive formalism resulting from the official communist worldview. As a matter of fact, this ideology covered the national character of the historical ties, rather than addressed them.[4] No wonder the Commission stopped working when both supranational entities, namely Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, ceased to exist. Another weak point of the commission was the fact that it predominantly focused on history and neglected the rest of the humanities. Nevertheless, it can be said that

[1] See Andriana Steta: The Pacta Conventa as the Result of the Arpadian Dynasty's Policy. In: *Slovakia and Croatia*: *Historical Parallels and Connections*. Ed.: Martin Homza – Ján Lukačka – Neven Budak. Bratislava – Zagreb: Department of Slovak History, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava – PostScriptum, 2013, p. 81 – 84.

[2] On motivation to the cognitive process, see *Summa Theologiae by Thomas Aquinas* I, 1 – 13. Ed., trans. and comment,: Peter Volek. Trnava: Saint Adalbert Association, 2017, p. 237: "Man has a natural desire to know the causes of whatever he sees."

[3] See Černák, Tomáš. Roztržka medzi Titom a Stalinom a jej dopad na udalosti v ČSR počas roka 1948. In: *Človek, spoločnosť, doba* : *Zborník štúdií z 3. vedeckej konferencie mladých historikov, zorganizovanej Katedrou histórie FF UPJŠ v Košiciach, ktorá sa uskutočnila 16. – 17. októbra 2013 v Košiciach*. Ed.: Zuzana Tokárová – Martin Pekár. Košice: Faculty of Arts at Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, 2014, p. 256 – 264.

[4] See, for instance, Suško, Ladislav: Správa z 9. zasadnutia Československo-juhoslovanskej historickej komisie. In: *Historický časopis*, a. 24, 1976, p. 476 – 478.

the work of this commission was an important precedent for the SCCH to be established.

Another factor hampering the creation of the SCCH after the establishment of the independent Republic of Croatia and the Slovak Republic was the fact that the countries of the former communist bloc from East and Central Europe were kind of competing with each other to establish themselves first in the political and cultural institutions of the West. In other words, the natural north-south or Mediterranean vector of our common history was temporarily replaced by a western (occidental) one. Consequently, establishing official state institutions, which would study and popularise the historical North-South cultural ties of Slovaks and Croats was neglected. There is another not entirely clear but all the more noticeable factor, which to some extent complicated the establishment of official ties in the field of humanities. When trying to renew their bonds with Croatia's cultural community, Slovakia's cultural community felt, so to speak, a kind of a priori Croatian post-war syndrome, which consisted in the Croats being "self-absorbed" after the end of the civil war in former Yugoslavia. History did not stop with the victory of the Croats in this conflict, though. Indeed, after a while these "isolationism" and self-centeredness of the Croats gave way to a search for natural allies in the further historical development of the Republic of Croatia and its cultural policy. And it did not take long for the Croats to find their traditional (un)known friends, the Slovaks.

The actual chain of events that led to the creation of the SCCH looks as follows. In 2008, the Department of Slovak History, by means of Martin Homza, established ties with the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb. The fact that Homza had previously become acquainted with Neven Budak in the old capital of the former common kingdom, i.e. in Budapest, more exactly at the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University, certainly played a crucial role. Tatiana Hutyrová, one of Homza's students in Bratislava and one of the first "swallows" from Slovakia to study history in Zagreb, served as the intermediary between them. Intensive mutual communication between the two institutions resulted in a common historical excursion of history students from Bratislava and Zagreb around eastern Slavonia at the turn of April and May 2009 (Fig. 1 – 3). One of the most important results of this informal common event was the agreement between Martin Homza and Neven Budak on the organisation of the conference *Slovakia and Croatia: Historical Parallels and Relations (until 1780)*, which eventually took place on June 20 – 24 in Bratislava and Levoča (Fig. 4 – 6). It counted with rich international participation, namely 45 scientists from Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Serbia. It was organised by the Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava together with the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts at University of Zagreb. Its fruit was the memorable and representative almost 450-page proceedings of the conference, entitled *Slovakia and Croatia*, vol. I.[5] In addition

[5] *Slovakia and Croatia*, vol. 1: *Historical Parallels and Connections (until 1780).* Ed.: Martin Homza – Ján Lukačka – Neven Budak. Bratislava – Zagreb: Department of Slovak History, 2013.

to valuable scientific results, the forum of Slovak and Croatian historians also determined the mechanisms and goals of further cooperation, which were summarised in the *Agreement on Cooperation between the Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University and the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zagreb*. This agreement constituted the informal starting point for mutual cooperation until the establishment of the SCCH.

Among other points, it included a commitment for the University of Zagreb to organise a scientific conference entitled *Croatia and Slovakia: Historical Parallels and Relations (from 1780 to the Present)* as well as a commitment for both sides to develop efforts to create the legal framework necessary to establish a common Commission for Humanities: "*whose aim will be interdisciplinary research and research into our* (Slovak and Croatian) *common* (cultural) *heritage*" (Fig. 7 – English version of the agreement). In December 2011, the three versions of the agreement, namely in Slovak, Croatian and English, were signed by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University, Jaroslav Šúšol, and by the member of the Department of Slovak History, Ján Lukačka, on behalf of the Slovak side, as well as by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zagreb, Damir Boras, and the Head of the Department of History, Damir Agičić, on behalf of the Croatian side.

After that, the Foreign Departments at the Ministries of Education of Slovakia and Croatia started to negotiate the conditions under which the SCCH would be established. In 2013, the ministries of both parties approved the *Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia for 2014 – 2017*, whose Article 11 stipulated the creation of the SCCH.

> *"The Contracting Parties shall establish and subsequently support the activities of the Slovak-Croatian Commission for Humanities, whose meetings will be held regularly in both countries in accordance with the statute of the Commission. The composition of the Commission and the number of its members shall be determined by the Contracting Parties by mutual agreement."*[6]

Consequently, the initiative of both scientific centres in Bratislava and Zagreb finally got the necessary legal foundations to launch their activities. The creation of the new commission seemed within reach. However, the road to it proved to be much longer and thornier than expected.

It took a new person to make it happen. It was Željko Holjevac, who helped organise the second international Croatian-Slovak conference and would eventually lead Croatia's SCCH team. This time the conference took place in Zagreb on 7 – 11 May 2014. It was attended by 28 scientists from Croatia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and was organised by the Department of History and the Department of West Slavic Languages and Literature at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zagreb in cooperation with the Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava. The proceedings

[6] Author's archive. See SCCH webpage (under construction).

to this conference were also published in 2017. This second and equally memorable three-hundred-page publication is entitled *Croatia and Slovakia*, vol. 2.[7]

The final decision by the relevant authorities to establish the commission was helped to some extent by the official ceremonies of both scientific outputs, which took place in the two capitals, i.e. Bratislava and Zagreb. The one in Bratislava was held in the Rector's Hall at Comenius University with the participation of the rector, the deans of both faculties, Slovakia's Education Minister, Dušan Čaplovič, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in Bratislava, Jakša Muljačić, as well as other diplomatic officials (Fig. 8 – 13).

It was not until 2018 that the SCCH gained momentum. On 19 January 2018, the Ministers of Education of the Republic of Croatia and the Slovak Republic met in Zagreb and, among other things, extended the validity of the *Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia* from 2018 to 2022, whose Article 11 stipulating the creation of the SCCH had remained unfulfilled during the previous period. This fact just made this task even more relevant. It was up to the stakeholders to complete the ratification process of this agreement and finally bring the commission to life. However, a few serious issues still needed to be addressed. First of all, it was necessary to define a common statute, the number of members the commission would have, the strategy for selecting the different humanistic disciplines in order to secure their parity, and the names to be appointed to the different posts in the future commission from among the worlds of humanities of Croatia and Slovakia.

On 20 June 2018, a working meeting was held at Comenius University aimed to solve these and other issues. The Croatian side was represented by Željko Holjevac, from the Department of History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as by Ivica Šute, Holjevac's colleague from the same department, Zrinka Kovačevič Stričević from the Department of Slovak Language and Literature from the same faculty, and by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, Miroslav Lovrić.

The Slovak side was represented by Jaroslav Šúšol, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University, by Martin Homza, Head of the Department of Slovak History at the same institution, as well as by Martina Stiffelová and Katarína Baranyaiová on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic. The Minutes from the Reception of this Foreign Working Visit, prepared by Katarína Baranyaiova, point out that the identified problem areas were successfully resolved. The participants also suggested the place (Bratislava) and approximate time (spring 2019), as well as the main topic of the SCCH first session (*Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence*: *History and Perspectives*).[8]

After a working meeting of both delegations, the first official ceremony in Slovakia, *Croatia and Slovakia*, vol. 2. followed. It took place in the Scientific

[7] *Croatia and Slovakia*, vol. 2: *Historical Parallels and Connections (from 1780 to Present Day)*. Ed.: Željko Holjevac – Martin Homza – Martin Vašš. Zagreb – Bratislava: FF Press, 2017.

[8] Author's archive. See SCCH webpage (under construction).

Council Hall at Comenius University with the participation of Slovak Education Minister, Martina Lubyová, the Rector of Comenius University, Karol Mičieta, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in Bratislava, Aleksander Hein (Fig. 14). On this solemn occasion, the Slovak Minister said:

"This publication is one of the few works that proves what public officials of the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Croatia are currently declaring, namely that we are interested in the Western Balkans, that we are interested in studying the history of this geographical space and in continuing our common relations."[9]

On 21 November 2018, the last of a series of official ceremonies, *Croatia and Slovakia*, vol. 2 took place at Zahreb University. Its agenda included the ceremonial launch of the SCCH. (see program Fig. 14 – 15). Therefore, the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Slovak-Croatian Commission for the Humanities* can be considered the baptismal letter of the commission. The Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Republic of Croatia, Peter Susko, read it in the Rector's Hall at the University of Zagreb on 21 November 2018, exactly at 11:15 am. Its final words are:

"One hundred years after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, in a common Central European framework as an integral part of the European Union, a commission of six Slovak and six Croatian members has been formed with the aim to initiate and coordinate scientific and research activities in the area of History, Linguistics, Neo-Latin Studies, History of Art, Ethnology and Archeology. On this day, the Slovak-Croatian Commission for Humanities has been launched. We wish it plenty of success in its future activities."[10]

Therefore, 21 November 2018 at 11:15 am can be regarded as the day and hour from which the SCCH counts its existence. (Fig. 16 – 18).

After the official ceremony in Zagreb launching the book *Croatia and Slovakia*, vol. 2 and declaring the official establishment of the SCCH, the Rectors of the University of Zagreb, Damir Boras, and the Rector of Comenius University in Bratislava, Karol Mičieta, met in the office of the Rector of the University of Zagreb. The meeting was also attended by Branislav Slyško, Press Secretary of Comenius University, Željko Holjevac, from the Department of History at the University of Zagreb, Martin Homza, Head of the Department of Slovak History at Comenius University, and Andrej Vrteľ, the future secretary of the Slovak part of the commission. Slovakia's Ministry of Education was represented by Martina Štiffelová. During the meeting, Comenius University Rector, Karol Mičieta, said among other things:

"With Croatia we have in common over 800 years being part of the same state, the Kingdom of Hungary, as well

[9] Public Relations Department of Comenius University Rectorate: *Profesor Martin Homza predsatvil novú publikáciu o slovensko-chorvátskych vzťahoch*. See https://uniba.sk/detail-aktuality/back_to_page/univerzita-komenskeho/article/profesor-martin-homza-predstavil-novu-publikaciu-o-slovensko-chorvatskych-vztahoch/?fbclid=IwAR1qfIHT7cxoXttoxEgsjpOaEEE_DEhuvRNf6Fv-kxn7VZ65wXViRl7JrRY.

[10] Author's archive. See SCCH webpage (under construction).

as the tradition of a common policy in the revolutions of 1848 and within the Little Entente following 1918. Now we are members of a common European family. Slovakia has continuously supported the European integration ambitions of Croatia. As a matter of fact, it is no coincidence that the Slovak Republic was the first member state to ratify the Accession Treaty of Croatia with the European Union on 1 February 2012."[11]

After this meeting, things gathered momentum. On 28 November 2019, Željko Hojevac, new director of the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences in Zagreb, was appointed Head of the Commission in the area of History, Zrinka Kovačevič in Literature and Language, Mirijana Repanić Braun in Theory of Art, Maja Matasović in Neo-Latin Studies, Krešimir Filipec in Archeology, and Jadranka Grbić Jakopović in Ethnology. Zrinka Kovačević was appointed Secretary of the Croatian team. In December of 2018, Martina Lubyová, Slovak Minister of Education, Science and Research, signed the decrees appointing the commission members for Slovakia.

Almost 10 years passed from the moment the initiative was first presented until it became true. However, the new legal situation in which the commission found itself corresponds to the new quality of the preparations for the first commission meeting. This took place on 17 – 19 June 2019 in the Scientific Council Hall at Comenius University in Bratislava. It consisted of two parts: a public one and a non-public one. At the beginning of the public part, which counted with the presence of high state and university representatives, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic, Olga Nachtmanová, ceremoniously handed over the decrees to the members of the Slovak SCCH team. (Fig. 19 – 21) Croatian Ambassador to Slovakia, Aleksandar Hein, was present when the relevant membership decrees were handed over to Martin Homza, Head of the Commission for Slovakia, to Andrej Vrteľ, Secretary of the Commission, as well as to Ivan Gerát, Miroslav Dudok, Marta Botíková, and Svorad Zavarský in the fields of History, Archeology, Theory of Art, Literature and Language, Ethnology and Neo-Latin Studies, respectively.

After this official ceremony, the new chairman of the Croatian SCCH team, Željko Holjevac, moderated the first part of the scientific conference on *Slovakia and Croatia on the Road to Independence: History and Perspectives*. The contributions presented within the public part of the meeting are contained in the first volume of *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica*. For this reason, they are not addressed here any further.

The contents of the second, non-public, part of SCCH's first gathering are included in the minutes of this meeting and, together with other important documents and material, will be available on the Commission's website, which is currently under construction. The open and accessible character of the commission's work to the public shall be

[11] See Slyško, Branislav: *Rektor UK prof. Karol Mičieta na Univerzite v Záhrebe*. See https://uniba.sk/detail-aktuality/back_to_page/univerzita-komenskeho/article/rektor-uk-prof-karol-micieta-na-univerzite-v-zahrebe/?fbclid=IwAR1IdUh2Cz8YQoHsXXqE6lpYwrxAjOTijRyii9I_Vt7AE-SAEEFUg-iE8yE.

ensured by the SCCH Facebook page administered in line with the best traditions of the coexistence of all Danubian nations. It will have three language versions, namely Slovak, Croatian and the New Latin, i.e. English. This is with the aim to prevent the SCCH from getting stuck in academic rigidity. Instead, it wants to remain open to all types of external stimuli so that it can reflect the current needs of the people of Slovakia and Croatia who, like the initiators of this new humanist platform in Central Europe, keep wondering why things around us are the way they are. Slovaks and Croats lived in one kingdom for over eight hundred years. Croatia joined the European Union on 1 July 2013. Since then we have again shared one common state. Therefore, the goal of the SCCH remains to make the cultural heritage of both nations as accessible as possible not only to each other, but also to offer to the wide European market of historical cultural values the widest possible amount of quality products from our rich Slovak-Croatian past. I am confident no one doubts that both nations have a lot to offer, not only to Europe but also to the whole world.

The Slovaks and the Croats on their Way to Independence : History and Perspectives

Nikica Barić*

Croatia's Road to Independence

Chorvátska cesta k samostatnosti / Hrvatski put u samostalnost

U prilogu su, u najsažetijim crtama, kronološki prikazani događaji koji su krajem 1980-ih vodili do duboke krize u Jugoslaviji, koja je početkom 1990-ih dovela do raspada države i osamostaljena Republike Hrvatske i njezinog međunarodnog priznanja.

Ključne riječi: Jugoslavija, Hrvatska, Srbija, Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman

During the mid-1970s, extensive constitutional and legal changes were made in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. The new Yugoslav constitution was adopted in 1974. By this constitution, the republics were given broad rights in the conduct of their affairs.

An important feature of the system was the slogan on "brotherhood and unity" of the Yugoslav peoples and nationalities and the suppression of all nationalisms which were seen as a serious threat to the Yugoslav unity. The regime did not impose the creation of a "Yugoslav nation", but it also did not condone the over-emphasis on nationality, since it saw it as a possible nationalistic threat to the Yugoslav community.

An important feature of the system was the system of socialist self-management, and as part of the reforms of the 1970s, the notion of associate labor on socially-owned means of production was introduced, with the adage that all the income earned from that work belongs to the working class who earned it through their work.

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), as the ruling party, was organized into leagues of communists in the Yugoslav republics and provinces. Although considerable rights were granted to the republics by the 1974 constitution, there were also institutions of federal government in Belgrade. An important federal institution was the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA).

Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito died in 1980. Tito was the leader of the Yugoslav communist and partisan movement, which seized power at the end of World War II. Tito's authority was unquestionable, and throughout his rule he made the final decisions on the further direction of politics at all key moments. After Tito's death, a collective presidency of Yugoslavia was introduced, with representatives of all republics and autonomous provinces.

After Tito's death, the first major problem was a serious economic crisis. Already in the 1970s, the Yugoslav economy was lagging behind, but this was also a period of increased borrowing from foreign loans. Thus, the 1970s was characterized by large investments and a solid standard of living of citizens, but such a picture of prosperity was only an appearance. Eventually, at the turn of the 1970s, the country was hit by trade

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and payment deficits and large external debt. The economic crisis, accompanied by high inflation, continued throughout the 1980s. In 1988, LCY finally decided to abandon socialist self-management and turn to a market economy.[1]

Also in 1981, there was a so-called counter-revolution in the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo, which was majority populated by the Albanian population. Kosovo was part of Serbia, and Albanian protesters demanded that the province be granted status of an republic.[2]

At the same time, oppositional intellectual and artistic circles were becoming more active in Belgrade. They criticized the undemocratic nature of the communist system, and on the other hand, the attitude of that system towards Serbia and the Serb people in Yugoslavia in general. They considered that the Serb people, as the largest in Yugoslavia and as the nation that had the greatest casualties during both world wars, were eventually left disfigured and damaged, which was blamed on Tito's rule. That is why the 1974 constitutional order was criticized, because it gave autonomous provinces within Serbia – Kosovo and Vojvodina – broad independence over authorities in Belgrade. In 1986, a *Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts* appeared in public. The paper analyzed the crisis in Yugoslav society and then focused on the position of Serbia and the Serb people in Yugoslavia. It was assessed that this position was extremely unfavorable and that the Serb people were the only ones in Yugoslavia who "did not have their own state". In addition to pointing out the plight of Serbs in Kosovo, the Memorandum said that the position of Serbs in Croatia was extremely unfavorable, moreover, that the situation for these Serbs was worse only during World War II, during the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia. Following the appearance of the Memorandum, the Communist leadership of Serbia condemned the text, assessing it as a nationalist document directed against Yugoslavia and called for the resignation of the leadership of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.[3]

But during the second half of 1987 Slobodan Milošević took over the leadership of the League of Communists of Serbia. While the leadership of communists in Serbia had previously sought to regain control of autonomous provinces, Milošević began to address this issue outside the institutions. The discontent of Kosovo Serbs, as well as the dissatisfaction with the unfavorable economic situation, was used for the so-called "anti-bureaucratic revolution". This was a series of mass gatherings, that is, demonstrations whose goal was to remove the hated "bureaucrats" from the government, although it actually served Milošević's goals. Under the pressure of mass demonstrations, the leadership of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

[1] Bilandžić, Dušan: *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*: *Glavni procesi 1918 – 1985*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1985.; Radelić, Zdenko: *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945. – 1991.*: *Od zajedništva do razlaza*, Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Školska knjiga, 2006.

[2] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*: *Rađanje države*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017., pp. 77 – 79.

[3] Dragović-Soso, Jasna: *„Spasioci nacije". Intelektualna opozicija Srbije i oživljavanje nacionalizma*, Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2004., pp. 123 – 154; Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 77 – 83.

resigned in 1988, and in early 1989 leadership in republic of Montenegro also resigned. The LCY leadership approved changes to the Serbian constitution, and in 1989 Serbia assumed control of its provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. But in Kosovo, this led to new protests by the Albanian population and clashes with security forces. After all these events, Serbia had four of the eight votes in the Presidency of Yugoslavia.[4]

In the meantime, there have been major changes in Slovenia, the northernmost and most developed Yugoslav republic, where alternative social and cultural trends appeared. They sought to protect the Slovenian national peculiarity, while criticizing the dogmatism of the communist system. The communist leadership in that republic proved more open to various forms of democratization. After the emergence of Slobodan Milošević and his aspiration to gain dominance in Yugoslavia, the greatest conflict arose between Slovenia, which did not want to surrender its rights to a possibly centralized Yugoslavia and Belgrade.[5]

In the meantime, the Communist leadership in Croatia remained true to the principles of Yugoslavia as enshrined in the 1974 Constitution. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a national movement appeared in Croatia, which sought to exercise the greater rights of Croatia within Yugoslavia and leadership of republic and communists of Croatia also advocated these goals. But in late 1971, President Tito crushed this movement. The Croatian leadership was forced to resign, followed by the persecution of numerous people who stood out in the Croatian national movement, many of whom were expelled from the League of Communists, and many were also sentenced to prison on charges of Croatian nationalism. Subsequently, the new leadership of Croatia acted decisively to counteract any emergence of Croatian nationalism.[6]

Ethnic Serbs also lived in Croatia in significant numbers. According to the 1981 census, Serbs made up 11.5% of the population of Croatia. In the part of municipalities in the central part of Croatia, the Serb population was majority, while in other parts they were significantly represented in the population. As early as 1989, it was evident that Milošević's "anti-bureaucratic revolution" was pouring into Croatia, spreading among Serbs in that republic, while Belgrade media attacked the communist leadership of Croatia as "anti-Serb", always recalling the period of the Second World War, when the Ustasha regime of the Independent State of Croatia persecuted and killed Serbs.[7]

In response to pressure from Belgrade, Slovenia has taken steps to protect its sovereignty, and the communists in Slovenia and Croatia have decided that the next elections for the parliaments of their republics should be free and multi-party. This happened in circumstances where the communist regimes in the Warsaw

[4] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 83 – 91.

[5] Fischer, Jasna (ed.): *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. *2: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije, 1948 – 1992*, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga – Institut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005.

[6] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 125 – 155.

[7] Barić, Nikica: *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj 1990. – 1995.* Zagreb: Golden marketing -Tehnička knjiga, 2005, pp. 39 – 52.

Pact countries were in crisis, that is, when in some of these countries the communists also allowed the creation of alternative political parties.[8]

In early 1990, the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the LCY was held in Belgrade. Milošević's attempt to seize control of the party ended in failure, as delegates of the leagues of communists of Slovenia and Croatia left Congress. In doing so, the party that had ruled Yugoslavia since 1945 ceased to exist. In 1989, the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) was founded in Croatia under the leadership of Franjo Tuđman. During World War II, Tuđman fought in Tito's partisan army, after the war he was an officer in the Yugoslav People's Army, and then worked as a historian at the head of the historical institute in Zagreb. Tuđman gradually began to act as a Croatian nationalist, and clashed with the regime, was expelled from the League of Communists, and later sentenced to prison for his political activities. The CDU emerged as a broad nationalist movement that would protect Croatia's rights against growing pressure from Serbia and won power in the first multi-party elections held in April 1990.[9]

Shortly before the democratic elections were held in Croatia, Serbia's leadership decided on a new strategy. Instead of keeping Yugoslavia under the domination of Serbia, it was decided that in the case of Croatian independence, it was necessary to keep the "Serbian territories" in Croatia within rump Yugoslavia.[10] In doing so, Milosevic could count on the support of the YPA. The armed forces of Yugoslavia consisted of a federal army and territorial defence units. This was in line with the concept of "armed people" as a defence strategy developed by the Yugoslav communists. In the period when multiparty elections were held in Croatia, the YNA confiscated the weapons of the territorial defence units, making the new Croatian government almost completely disarmed.[11]

Thus, the leadership of Serbia had double standards. In Kosovo, autonomy was abolished and the province subordinated to Belgrade, although the majority Albanian population lived there. By contrast, when it came to the borders of Croatia, Belgrade did not intend to respect them, since in some parts of Croatia the Serb population was either majority or significantly represented.

From mid-1990 to mid-1991, unsuccessful negotiations between the leaderships of the Yugoslav republics on the future organization of the country were held. Opposing views could not provide a solution. Slovenia and Croatia favored a Yugoslavia as a loose association of republics or outright independence, while Serbia and Montenegro advocated a firmer and more centralized federation.[12]

In the meanwhile, in the summer of 1990, an armed rebellion of ethnic Serbs broke out in Croatia, in northern Dalmatia, and after that the Serbs unilaterally established their autonomous provinces on Croatian territory, with the aim of remaining in Yugoslavia,

[8] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 169 – 171.
[9] Ibidem, pp. 155 – 168.
[10] Barić, Nikica: *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj*, pp. 75 – 76.
[11] Opširnije o ulozi JNA see: Marijan, Davor: *Slom Titove armije, Jugoslavenska narodna armija i raspad Jugoslavije 1987. – 1992*. Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008.
[12] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 325 – 342.

that is, in a common state with Serbia, in the case of Croatia's independence.[13]

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. This was followed by a brief YPA intervention in Slovenia, but soon an agreement was reached on the withdrawal of the federal army from the republic. In contrast, Milošević and the YPA did not intend to relent in Croatia. Between June and December 1991, conflicts in Croatia leading to open war escalated. On one side were weakly armed Croatian forces and on the other, Serb forces from Croatia, with the support of Belgrade and the YPA. At the beginning of the crisis in Croatia, the units of the federal army acted as a force to thwart "interethnic conflicts", but in reality the YPA provided support to rebel Serbs in Croatia, to finally be completely on their side.[14]

However, despite its vast superiority in arms, the YPA failed to defeat Croatian forces in an offensive operation launched in early October 1991. However, Serb forces and the YPA managed to occupy about one-third of the Croatian territory. These were also areas where the Serb population was not majority before the conflict broke out. A large number of Croats were expelled from the area occupied by Serbs and the YPA, and many Croatian civilians were killed. The war brought many devastations and victims. However, the fate of the town of Vukovar in the eastern part of Croatia, in the vicinity of border with Serbia, stands out. For months, Serb forces and the YPA besieged the city, defended by Croatian forces, and the city was, before it was occupied, almost completely destroyed in artillery and air strikes.[15]

In the meantime, the European Community has launched negotiations on resolving the crisis and war in Yugoslavia. In doing so, the principle was adopted that no changes to the borders achieved through violent means would be recognized, that is, that the borders of the Yugoslav republics cannot be modified by unilateral moves. Towards the end of 1991, Germany showed an increasing willingness to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, requiring these republics to guarantee minority rights, which in the case of Croatia concerned rights of ethnic Serb. Accordingly, Croatia has adopted a constitutional law on the rights of ethnic and national communities.[16]

The countries of the European Community recognized Croatia as an independent state on 15 January 1992. Meanwhile, an armistice between Croatia and the JNA was concluded in early 1992. The United Nations has also become involved in resolving the crisis. The deployment of the UN peacekeepers to Croatia, in areas under Serb control, was thus agreed. The deployment of "blue helmets" brought temporary relief to the crisis, but UN mission could ultimately not be successful. On the one hand, Croatia's aspiration was to return the areas under Serb control to its rule, and on the other, the Serbs, who declared the Republic of Serb Krajina in the areas they controlled at the end of 1991, did not want to deviate from their statehood and complete separation from Croatia.[17]

[13] Barić, Nikica: *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj*, pp. 62 – 108.
[14] Marijan, Davor: *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992*, pp. 503 – 520.
[15] Ibidem, pp. 503 – 520.
[16] Ibidem, pp. 521 – 551.
[17] Barić, Nikica: *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj*, pp. 143 – 166.

During 1992, with the outbreak of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the attention of the international community focused on the crisis in that country, where the extent of war and casualties was much greater than in 1991 in Croatia. It was not until 1995 that Croatia would bring back most of the Serb-held territories under its control by military operations. Also during 1995, with the mediation of the international community, peace would be established in Bosnia and Herzegovina and it was also agreed that Serb-controlled areas in eastern Croatia, along the border with Serbia, which remained under Serbian control, will be gradually returned to Croatian rule, which was successfully completed in early 1998.

Emília Hrabovec*

The Slovak Exile and the Way to the Independence of Slovakia

Slovenský exil a cesta k nezávislosti Slovenska / Slovačka emigracija i put u neovisnost Slovačke

Na jar 1945, pod dojmom postupu Červenej armády, obnovy Československa a jeho rýchlej boľševizácie, opustila Slovensko prvá masová vlna politickej emigrácie v moderných slovenských dejinách; o tri roky neskôr, po definitívnom prevzatí moci komunistami, ju nasledovala druhá emigračná vlna. Spoločným menovateľom drvivej väčšiny slovenského exilu bolo odhodlanie bojovať za obnovu Slovenskej republiky na demokratickom a kresťanskom základe a proti komunizmu, rôznili sa iba v názoroch na to, akým spôsobom to dosiahnuť. Východisková politická situácia slovenského exilu bola oveľa zložitejšia, než situácia exilov väčšiny iných národov strednej a východnej Európy, pretože podobne ako exil chorvátsky musel bojovať nielen proti komunistickému režimu, ale aj za znovuzískanie vlastnej štátnosti. V tomto zápase musel čeliť nepriaznivej medzinárodnej politickej konštelácii, postavenej na báze uchovania politického a územného statu quo, neporozumeniu zo strany mnohých západných politických faktorov, ktorí vnímali strednú Európu iba v logike studenej vony, resp. ako geopolitický priestor na uplatnenie vlastných záujmov, a početným politickým odporcom. K nim patrila najmä veľká väčšina českého exilu, stojaca na platforme Československa a nárokujúca si právo hovoriť aj v mene Slovákov, a samotné Československo, ktoré sa nekompromisným antikomunizmom a kresťanským hodnotovým zameraním slovenského exilu a jeho úsilím o zmedzinárodnenie slovenskej otázky a slovenskú štátnosť cítilo oveľa viac ohrozené než exilom českým, preto v zápase proti nemu neváhalo používať všetky prostriedky vrátane násilia.

Prvým medzníkom v dejinách povojnového slovenského politického exilu sa stala polovica päťdesiatych rokov 20. storočia. Kým dovtedy vládol istý optimizmus ohľadne možnej zmeny pomerov, porážka maďarského a poľského povstania, tvrdé represálie, ktoré postihli aj Slovensko, pasívny postoj západných štátov, presun časti politických záujmov do Tretieho sveta a postupne sa profilujúca politika mierovej koexistencie medzi veľmocami ukázali, že uskutočnenie politických cieľov exilu bude treba odložiť do časovo vzdialenej budúcnosti. Druhým medzníkom boli roky 1968/69. Federalizácia Československa síce demonštrovala svetu, že volanie exilu po práve na samourčenie zodpovedalo túžbe národa, vojenská intervencia v Československu a ďalšia exilová vlna však zároveň ukázali pretrvávajúcu neslobodu. V tomto svetle bol zásadným počinom vznik Svetového kongresu Slovákov, ktorý po prvýkrát zjednotil prakticky celý slovenský exil a vytvoril silnú platformu pre jeho politickú a kultúrnu činnosť. Kongres sa prihlásil k myšlienke štátnej nezávislosti Slovenska, vzhľadom na medzinárodný vývoj a existenciu Československa, uznaného medzinárodnou komunitou štátov, tak však robil

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predovšetkým s odvolaním na všeobecne uznaný princíp samourčovacieho práva a na zásadu úplnej rovnoprávnosti národov.

Kľúčové slová: Politický exil, antikomunizmus, studená vojna, slovenská štátnosť, Slovenský oslobodzovací výbor, Slovenská národná rada v zahraničí, Svetový kongres Slovákov, Štefan B. Roman, medzinárodná politika.

In 1945, due to the decision of the victorious Powers, Slovakia was reintegrated into the restored Czechoslovakia, from which the Powers assumed it would suit their political and ideological intentions better than an independent Slovak state. The renewed Czechoslovakia became part of the Soviet zone of influence and under the façade of "people's democracy", its political regime was already introducing the Soviet ideological, political and economic system, leaving decisive levers of power to the communists, delegitimating political activity beyond the communist-led coalition, depriving a substantial part of the population of their civil and national rights, introducing a harsh political retribution and anti-Catholic measures, and paving the way for a definitive Communist takeover accomplished in February 1948.

In spring 1945, under the impression of the advancing of the Red Army, the forced renewal of Czechoslovakia and its rapid bolshevisation, the first wave of Slovak exiles left Slovakia. In all several thousands of persons, among them not only people politically connected to the first Slovak Republic, but intellectual élites, university professors, scientists, writers and a numerous group of young university graduates and students fled the country. Their common objective was the unconditional determination to struggle for the renewal of the Slovak Republic on democratic and Christian grounds and against Communism, they differed only in the view and the methods of how to achieve this goal. Within their ranks, two relevant exile groups emerged, both headed by personalities who shared the common destiny of politicians who had got into disfavour of Berlin due to defending Slovak interests and resisting the penetration of German influence in Slovakia and 1939 – 1940 had to leave the active politics.

In the first postwar years, Ferdinand Ďurčanský was undoubtedly the most dynamic protagonist of the Slovak exile. Ďurčanský was one of the first Slovak politicians who was able to overcome the traditional self-centredness of the Slovak innerpolitical scene and include the dimension of foreign policy into it. As a former Slovak foreign minister and university professor for international law, Ďurčanský was convinced of the necessity to internationalize the Slovak question[1] and to present it *eo instanto* to the key political players that decided about the destinies of Europe, i.e. to the Peace Conference in Paris, to the highest representatives of the victorious powers, the United Nations and other internationally relevant institutional and individual protagonists, from the US Secretary of State George C. Marshall to Pope Pius XII. Ďurčanský assumed that according to the principles

[1] Cf. Ďurčanský, Ferdinand: *The International Aspects of the Slovak Question*. New York: Slovak Liberation Committee, 1954.

of international law the political situation in Slovakia created after 1945 was unlawful and the Slovak Republic continued to exist. He urged the Powers not to disregard the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Slovaks, the international law and the commitments to the Atlantic Charter and the Charter of the United Nations, not to treat Slovakia differently as the other former allies of Germany who were not deprived of their states, but to recognize her as a defeated nation and to conclude a peace treaty with her or to ascertain the will of the Slovak people by a plebiscite under international supervision.[2] As a very dynamic politician, Ďurčanský and his Slovak Action Committee (*Slovenský akčný výbor, SAV*), later Slovak Liberation Committee (*Slovenský oslobodzovací výbor, SOV*) founded in Rome in the beginning of 1946, flooded the Western political world with countless memoranda, appeals and letters,[3] created the bulletin *Slovak Information Service* that informed the world about the situation in Slovakia, established contacts with representatives of other Eastern European exile groups, founded a radio station north of Rome that broadcasted to Slovakia,[4] initiated even the forming of Slovak military units abroad[5] and transferred one part of his activities to Slovakia, where he built up a clandestine movement in order to demonstrate in front of the world that his organisation did not represent an isolated group of exiles, but enjoyed a wide popular support. Similarly as many other relevant Western politicians including some British military and political elites,

[2] République Slovaque. Ministère des affaires étrangères: *Aide-Mémoire sur l'existence de la République Slovaque et sur la nécessité de conclure le traité de paix avec elle*, Paris 1946; Comité d'Action Slovaque: *Aide-Mémoire sur la necessité du plébiscite en Slovaquie*, Paris 1946; Slovak Action Committee – Slovak National Council in London – Slovak League of America – Canadian Slovak League: *Memorandum presented to the peace conference concerning the rationality of existence of Czecho-Slovakia*, Paris 1946.

[3] Slovak Action Committee: *Address of the Slovak Action Committee to the Council of Foreign Ministers*, [s.l. & s.d.]; Slovak Action Committee: *Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to His Excellency Mr. Trygve Lie Secretary General of the United Nations*, [s.l. & s.d.]; *Memoriae sacrae excellentissimi viri sacerdotis selosissimi hominis status christiani exemplarissimi Dr. Josephi Tiso qui falso accusatus occisus crematus summam gloriam adeptus est ad omnes qui in universo orbe sunt catholici sincera pietate dicatum*, [s.l. & s.d.]; Slovak Action Committee: *Appeal concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population by the Soviet Authorities presented by the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*, [s.l.] 1947; Slovak Action Committee: *Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the civilized World Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs*, [s.l.] 1947; Slovak Action Committee: *Open Letter from the Slovak Action Committee to the Representatives of the Members of the United Nations*, [s.l.] 1947; Slovak Action Committee: *Proposal to the Security Council of the United Nations for the creation of a Central-European Conferation*, [s.l.] 1947; and others.

Cf. Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale Roma (thereafter ASMAECI), Affari Politici 1946 – 1950, Cecoslovacchia, busta 14, Demande adressée à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies concernant la création d'une comission d'enquête sur la persécution religieuse en Slovaquie et l'exclusion de la Tchéco-Slovaquie des Nations Unies, signed by Ferdinand Ďurčanský and Anton Bugan, August 1949.

[4] Cf. the memoirs of Okáľ, Ján: *Výpredaj ľudskosti*. Cambridge [ON]: Dobrá kniha, 1989, pp. 340 – 355.

[5] Géci, Jozef: Slovenská európska činnosť a doktrína o celoeurópskom zjednotení. In: *Slovenský politicky exil v zápase za samostatné Slovensko*: *Materiály z vedeckej konferencie konanej v Bratislave 5. – 6. júna 1995*. Ed.: Ján Bobák. *Bratislava: Dom zahraničných Slovákov, 1996*, pp. 244 – 245; Katrebová Blehová, *Beata: Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku v rokoch 1945 – 1950*. Bratislava – Roma: Slovenský historický ústav v Ríme, 2019, p. 67.

Ďurčanský in the immediate postwar time expected a fast escalation of a political and eventually even a military conflict between the West and the Soviet Union,[6] in which the Slovaks as a Christian nation would stand on the Western side, and he wanted them to be prepared.[7]

Different was the assessment of the situation by the former Slovak envoy to the Holy See Karol Sidor, who had found an asylum in the Vatican until his departure to Canada in 1950, and around whom the second exile political centre evolved. Sidor had a better starting position, because he could profit from the moral prestige of his Vatican residence, from the good reputation he had earned himself also among the Allied diplomats,[8] from the lively contacts he had with the Italian political elite around the nascent Christian democratic party (Alcide de Gasperi, Guido Gonella, Mario Scelba), as well as from the fact that the Holy See continued to recognized him silently as a representative of Slovakia and in Rome it was generally expected that he would found a government in exile.[9] Nevertheless, to a great disappointment of many contemporaries at home and in exile, in the first postwar years Sidor remained politically inactive, limiting himself to the – without doubt urgently needed – charity help in favour of his emigrated connationals. Sidor, too, persued the goal to work for the independence of Slovakia, but considered the launching of a political action in the immediate postwar period inopportune and the insistence on the continuity thesis not viable from the point of view of *realpolitik*, and for the time being, he wanted to lead the political struggle through the existing strong Slovak-American organisations in the USA, above all the respected Slovak League in America, and through the Slovak National Council in London founded in winter 1943/44 by Peter Prídavok. Sidors wait-and-see policy might have been partially due to the fear not to compromise his political asylum in the Vatican. Moreover, he evidently underestimated the revolutionary character of the political changes in Central-Eastern Europe after 1945 and for a while he even nourished the hope to return to the Slovak inner politics as a leader of a new Catholic political party that would take over the heritage

[6] Rzheshevsky, Oleg – Myagkov, Mikhail Yu.: The End of the Grand Alliance. New Documents and Materials. *The Second World War in the XXth century history*: *Bulletin du Comité international d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, a. 30/31, 1999/2000, pp. 11 – 26.

[7] To the activities of Ferdinand Ďurčanský and his organisation cf. Polakovič, Štefan: Záznam o činnosti SAV-u. In: *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943 – 1948).* Ed.: František Vnuk – Štefan Polakovič. Lakewood-Hamilton: Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988, pp. 111 – 225.

[8] In this sense expressed himself also the British ambassador to the Holy See Sir Arcy d'Osborne in a conversation with the postwar Czechoslovak chargé d´affaires to the Holy See František Schwarzenberg, who reported it to the minister of foreign affairs Jan Masaryk. Schwarzenbergsche Familienarchive Murau, Nachlaß Franz Schwarzenberg, Karton Vatikan, 4th political report of chargé d'affaires František Schwarzenberg to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, 14.3.1946. Cf. Hrabovec, Emília: Slovensko, Svätá stolica a diplomatická misia Karola Sidora (1939 – 1945). In: Sidor, Karol: *Šesť rokov pri Vatikáne*. Na vydanie pripravili Rydlo, Jozef M. – Vnuk, František. Bratislava: LHS, 2012, p. 255.

[9] Hrabovec, Emília: Slovensko, Svätá stolica a diplomatická misia Karola Sidora (1939 – 1945), pp. 257, 266 – 270; ASMAECI, Gabinetto, busta 47, Karol Sidor to Alcide de Gasperi, 20 October 1944, and de Gasperi to Sidor, 4 November 1944.

of the prewar Slovak People's Party. Only when it became evident that the political system of the National front did not offer any prospective for a free parliamentary struggle and his tribunals even sentenced Sidor to a long term imprisonment, and when after the definitive communist takeover in February 1948 a second wave of émigrés arrived that included also non-Communist politicians who had cooperated with the National front, Sidor realized that a political action in exile was necessary and decided to lay the institutional fundaments for a political organisation – the Slovak National Council Abroad (*Slovenská národná rada v zahraničí*, *SNRvZ*). It appeared in public on Christmas 1948 with the declared objective to "*free Slovakia from the Communist dictature and Czech preponderance*", to create a democratic Slovak state and to integrate it as equal member into the international organisation.[10] The prestige of the new organisation was enhanced by the fact that almost all former Slovak diplomats abroad and several well-known intellectuals joined it, as well as many former members of the Slovak Revolutionary Resistance (*Slovenský revolučný odboj*), an organisation of young exiles – university students and fresh graduates, who in 1945 – 1948 had created a dense communication and intelligence network between Slovakia and the exile and initially collaborated more with Ďurčanský's organisation,[11] the majority of the Slovak-American organisations and of the newcomers after 1948. The support of the latter demonstrated in front of the world that also Slovaks who had lived in Slovakia after the war including politicians active in the National Front system supported the idea of the Slovak statehood, once being able to declare their convictions freely.[12]

The starting position of the Slovak exile in the West was much more difficult then the situation of the majority of other exiles from the Eastern bloc. It resulted from the elementary fact that the Slovaks, in contradiction to the programmatic declarations of the victorious Powers

[10] Cf. the first document of the organisation Prvý ohlas SNRvZ na slovenskú emigráciu so zvláštnym zreteľom na slovenskú pospolitosť v Spojených štátoch a Kanade (The First Appeal of the Slovak National Council Abroad to the Slovak Emigration with particular consideration to the Slovak Community in the United States and in Canada), published by Vnuk, František: Slovenská národná rada v Londýne a v zahraničí (1943 – 1948). In: *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943 – 1948).* Ed.: František Vnuk – Štefan Polakovič. Lakewood-Hamilton: Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988, pp. 105 – 108.

[11] To the activities of the Slovak Revolutionary Resistance cf. the diary of one of its exponents Komandera, Rudolf: *Denník 1945 – 1947*. Bratislava: ÚPN, 2012; cf. also the memoirs of one of the founders Jankovič, Ladislav: Spomienky a úvahy. In: Joštiak, Jozef – Jankovič, Ladislav: *Dva životy – jeden osud*. Bratislava: Dom zahraničných Slovákov, [s.d.], pp. 135 – 164.

[12] More to Sidor and his activities in Rome see Katrebová Blehová, Beata: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku*, s. 21 – 62, 137 – 153; Vnuk, František: Slovenská národná rada v Londýne a v zahraničí (1943 – 1948), pp. 1 – 108; Hrabovec, Emília: Jozef Tiso a Svätá stolica. In: *Jozef Tiso*: *Kňaz a prezident*. Ed.: Eadem. Bratislava: PostScriptum, 2017, pp. 123 – 131; Eadem: Santa Sede e Cecoslovacchia 1945 – 1965. In: *Chiesa del silenzio e diplomazia pontificia, 1945 – 1965*: *Umlčaná cirkev a pápežská diplomacia 1945 – 1965*. Ed.: Eadem – Giuliano Brugnotto – Peter Jurčaga. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana (= Atti e Documenti, 44), 2018, p. 62 – 64, 74; Kirschbaum, J.[ozef]: Via Tanaro – kus Slovenska v Ríme. In: *Karol Sidor. Politik, novinár, spisovateľ*. Ed.: Jozef Paučo. Middletown [PA].: Literárny Almanach Slováka v Amerike, 1962, pp. 94 – 101. To the activities of the Slovak National Council Abroad cf. Slovenský národný archív Bratislava (SNA), Slovenská liga v Amerike (SLvA), k. 12, 14, records of the meetings of the political organs of the Slovak National Council Abroad from the Fifties.

such as the *Atlantic Charter* or the *Charter of the United Nations* and without regard to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people, were re-integrated into the renewed Czechoslovakia, so that – similarly as the Croatians, but in contrast to almost all other exiles, struggling only against the Communist regime – all generations of the postwar Slovak political exile had to follow a double objective: the struggle against Communism and the struggle to regain the own independent statehood. In this battle they had to face a disfavourable international political constellation based on the maintaining of the political and territorial *status quo*, numerous political adversaries and a dramatic lack of financial resources. In contrast to the post-February Czech exile, that was at least partially subsidised from the state budget of the USA, supported by ideologically akin non-governmental organisations and that could make use of the Czechoslovak financial resources abroad accumulated in previous times, the Slovak exile lived from the hard work of his members and from their boundless idealism and personal commitment almost unimaginable today. Even the Czechoslovak Communist regime had to acknowledge in the "*Brief Report on the Czechoslovak Emigration*" that while Czech top-level political émigrés were usually directly or indirectly at the service of foreign political centres, Slovak exile politicians were in their exile work politically independent and "*participate in the separatist movement out of conviction*".[13]

The first strong adversary of the Slovak exile was the Czechoslovak state that looked upon the Slovak emigration as its greatest enemy. The uncompromising anti-Communism of the Slovak exile and its embedment in Christian moral values threatened the ideological fundaments of the Communist regime far more radically then the predominantly leftist-socialist Czech exile, which sometimes even earned praise of the Prague ideologists for its "progressive" points of view.[14] First of all, the Slovak exile, in its efforts to internationalize the Slovak question and to regain an independent state, menaced the very existence of Czechoslovakia. Therefore, both the People's Democratic and the Communist regimes in Czechoslovakia invested enormous efforts to paralyze the activities of the Slovak exile. In the first postwar years, Prague made every effort to achieve the extradiction of Slovak émigrés to Czechoslovakia,[15] later it invested huge means to spy on them, penetrate their ranks, subvert their organisations from inside and to compromize the exiles in front of their own people and

[13] II. správa HS StB, Orientační zpráva o čs. emigraci, 5 September 1966. Prague Cold War, accessible online http://www.praguecoldwar.cz/Soubory/660901_Cs-emigrace.pdf. (6 October 2019).

[14] The Communist Party daily *Rudé právo* (Prague) published in 1956 an article that praised the Czech (Czechoslovak) broadcasting of Radio Free Europe from 31 October 1956 dedicated to the explanation of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine and to the criticism of its deviations under Stalin: "*It is certainly a great satisfaction to hear such words after so many years of abuse against Marx and Lenin and against the socialist society which we are building…There is only one thing we do not understand. What were these gentlemen running away from in 1948?*" *Rudé právo*, (4 November 1956).

[15] Cf. the memoirs of Čulen, Konštantín: *V amerických zaisťovacích táboroch*. Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 2004; Okáľ, Ján: *Leto na Traune*. Cambridge [ON]: Dobrá kniha, 1986, pp. 86 – 276; Idem: *Výpredaj ľudskosti*; Šprinc, Mikuláš: *K slobodným pobrežiam*. Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 2004. See also Katrebová Blehová, B.: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku*, pp. 63 – 78 and 129 – 139; Hrabovec, Emilia: Santa Sede e Cecoslovacchia 1945 – 1965, pp. 62 – 64.

above all in front of their host countries, thus destroying them politically and existentially. Many anti-Slovak defamation actions originated in Prague which were apparently launched by Western journalists, lobbying groups or the strong Italian Communist Party.[16] In some cases, the Czechoslovak secret services did not refrain even from open physical violence like kidnappings or assassinations – the most sadly known was the lethal attack against the president of the German branch of the Slovak National Council Abroad Matúš Černák, murdered in July 1955 by a bomb sent via mail.[17]

Paradoxically, the strongest adversary of the Slovak exile was not Czechoslovakia itself, but the Czech – or Czechoslovak as it used to call itself – post-February exile, that stood on the platform of the first Czechoslovak Republic and the postwar system of National front and saw its main political goal, if not its *raison d'être*, in securing the survival of the unitary Czechoslovak model and in struggling against the "Slovak separatism". As the traditionally sovietophile Czech National Socialist Hubert Ripka[18] put it: "*We have to hold Czechoslovakia even if* (…) *only one single Slovak goes with us*."[19] The protagonists of this Czech exile arrogated for themselves the right to speak on behalf of the Slovaks whom they considered an integral part of the mythical "Czechoslovak nation" or an underdeveloped ethnical group whose destiny was inextricably linked to Czechoslovakia. A stronghold of such opinions was the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (*Rada svobodného Československa*) founded in February 1949 in Washington and dominated by Czech National Socialists around Peter Zenkl and Czech Social Democrats, mostly former close collaborators of president Edvard Beneš and members of the Communist-led National Front government. They denounced any independent Slovak move in exile as "*a menace to democracy*", "*an absence of right political thinking*", "*a general lack of culture*" and "*a form of primitivism*", and warned the Western democracies not to make any compromise with the Slovak exile if they wanted to reestablish democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.[20] Such hard and malicious pronouncements

[16] Hrabovec, Emília: Generálne zhromaždenie SKS v Ríme 1975 v kontexte slovenského a medzinárodného vývoja. In: *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*. Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: ÚPN, 2018, pp. 106 – 111; Eadem: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*. 2nd ed. Bratislava: Lúč, 2017, pp. 255 – 281.

[17] ASMAECI, Affari Politici 1951 – 1957, Cecoslovacchia, busta 1276; [s.a.]: *Wer war Matúš Černák?* München: Akademischer Verlag Dr. Peter Belej, 1955; Archív Pápežského slovenského ústavu sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Ríme (thereafter APSÚSCM) APSÚSCM Roma, Korešpondencia 1955, Slovak Catholic Centre to Vojtech Bucko, Slovak priest and delegate of the German Bishops' Conference for Slovak Catholics living in Munich, 403/55, 12 July 1955.

[18] During the First Czechoslovak Republic Hubert Ripka was the co-editor of the journal dedicated to the Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship *Praha-Moskva* and in 1935 he organized a journey of Czech journalists to the USSR. In the exile in London during World War II he belonged to the most open supporters of the pro-Soviet course of president Edvard Beneš and the government-in-exile. Cf. Ripka, Hubert: *East and West*. London: Lincolns-Prager, 1944, p. 34.

[19] Kaplan, Karel: *Poúnorový exil*. Praha: Dialog, 2007, pp. 192 – 193, cites Ripka's letter from 26 March 1949.

[20] The citations are from an elaborate of the Czech Social Democrat Miroslav Kerner for the American occupation forces in Germany. Cited from Uhrík, Igor: Československý politický exil v Spojených štátoch amerických a Spojenom kráľovstve na začiatku studenej vojny. In: *Politický exil z krajín strednej a východnej Európy*: *Motívy, stratégie, aktivity a perspektívy na Východe a Západe, 1945 – 1989*. Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2017, pp. 416 – 417.

resulted from the political and ideological convictions of their authors, but also from their geopolitical thinking, clearly expressed by their political mentor Edvard Beneš in 1947, as he declared that the Czechs could never accept an independent Slovakia, because having on the one side 70 million Germans, they must on the other side have Russia as their neighbour: "*This is a vital problem for the existence of the Czechs as a nation and as a state.*"[21]

A few Slovaks of "Czechoslovak" convictions, former collaborators of the National Front system, engaged in the Council of Free Czechoslovakia. They representated a thin minority among the Slovaks, but they gave the Council and its affiliated institutions a "Czechoslovak" legitimacy.[22] Among them, there were some former diplomats of the Prague Ministery of Foreign Affairs (Juraj Slávik, Ján Papánek) and some exponents of the government of the National Front from the Slovak Democratic Party and the minuscule Party of Liberty (Jozef Lettrich, Rudolf Fraštacký, Jozef Dieška and others.). Abroad, however, they got into a painful isolation: because of inner conflicts they soon at least temporarily left the Council, while from the Slovak exile they remained divided by an insurmountable precipice, since the huge majority of the post-February émigrés, too, both common emigrants and political prominents (Emanuel Böhm, Štefan Blaško, Ľudovít Kandra, Michal Zibrín), once in liberty, avowed themselves supporters of the Slovak statehood.[23]

Imrich Kružliak, himself member of the post-February emigration wave, personally connected with the Democratic Party and the National Front government, who later, after he had not succeeded in emigrating to Canada, found his daily bread in the *Radio Free Europe* which he dared to criticise only after his retirement, branded the attitudes of the small group of Slovaks around the Council of Free Czechoslovakia as "political conjuncturalism"[24] and "a financial question".[25] "*Their Czechoslovakism arises out of fear provoked by the errors they committed after 1945 and from a kind of inferiority feeling, which results I do not know if from the conscience that they are very few or from the awareness that they act in profound contrast to the will of the nation*", Kružliak wrote to his fried, the publicist Konštantín Čulen. "*But Czechoslovakia fell apart and it is not possible any more to resuscitate her, if not by pressure from outside and only as a federation, but I do not know for how long, since we have seen in the history how all these federations were bound to end.*"[26] "*The Czechs and the Czechoslovaks may do whatever they want*", Kružliak

[21] Zprůmyslnění Slovenska povede k vyrovnání mezi Čechy a Slováky. In: *Rudé právo,* (14 February 1947), p. 1.

[22] Kaplan, Karel: *Poúnorový exil*, p. 64; Goněc, Vladimír: *Česko-slovenský vztah v exilových diskusích počátkem padesátých let*. Brno: Vydavatelství MU, 2006, pp. 52 – 58.

[23] Emanuel Böhm became even president of the Restraint Presidium of the Slovak National Council Abroad. Cf. SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 36, minutes of the sessions of the Restraint Presidium 1953 – 1955; ibidem, Emanuel Böhm to Whitney Shepardson, President of the National Committee for a Free Europe, 6 January 1954; SNA, SLvA, k. 14, Michal Zibrín to "My friend" [Konštantín Čulen?], 5 January 1955; Michal Zibrín to Charles J. Kersten, 4 January 1955.

[24] SNA, SLvA, k. 14, Imrich Kružliak to Konštantín Čulen, 8 September 1951

[25] Ibidem, 12 April 1950.

[26] Ibidem, 8 September 1951.

closed his observations, "*I am not afraid of their endeavours, because I know the mood at home… They can return home only under Czech bayonets and they would not last for long in Slovakia today.*"[27]

The representatives of the Slovak political exile were well aware of the fact that taking into account the weakness of the Slovak factor on the international stage, they could achieve their goals only if they succeeded in involving the non-Slovak ambience, the exile representatives of other nations, the international organisations, but above all the influential Western governements and parliaments in the Slovak cause. The victorious Western powers, however, despite the intensifying Cold War, remained on the platform of the Jalta agreements and the territorial order established in 1945 and respected the existence of Czechoslovakia, with which they maintained diplomatic relations, the division of the world into two blocks and the existence of the Soviet zone of influence, as they clearly demonstrated both after the defeat of the Hungarian and the Polish uprisings in 1956 and after the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Moreover, the great Western European protagonists on the international chessboard, Great Britain and France, lacked any particular historical and political ties to the small, geographically and mentally distant Slovakia without proper historical state traditions, and considered her territory at the most a strategic space, in which they had no other national interests than those dictated by the logics of the Cold War and the geopolitics.

The situation in Washigton was even more complex. The American politics had an eminent interest in defeating Communism and from 1947/1948 on, it explicitly began to count on the exiles as instruments in the political and psychological warfare in the Cold War.[28] At the same time, however, Washington clearly stood on the platform of the concept of the united Czechoslovakia, in which it saw not only a favourite historical child of the American liberal democracy born with American help in 1918, but, apart from its Communist government, also an acceptable political entity from the standpoint of stability, security and economic viability of Central and Eastern Europe and the American geopolitical interests and a safeguard against the political and economic fragmentation of the region. Therefore, Washington supported the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, that was for some time financed from the US budget and initially considered a sort of unofficial government-in-exile,[29] and a "Czechoslovak point of view" in American or US-inspired initiatives including the unique "Czechoslovak desk" of *Radio Free Europe* in Munich and the governmental *Voice of America*.[30]

The Slovak policy in exile was well aware of the relevance of the American

[27] Ibidem, 12 April 1950.

[28] Uhrík, Igor: Československý politický exil v Spojených štátoch amerických a Spojenom kráľovstve na začiatku studenej vojny, pp. 375 – 390.

[29] Ibidem, pp. 397 – 421.

[30] To the genesis and the programmatic line of the RFE in general see Johnson, A. Ross: *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*: *The CIA Years and beyond*. Stanford 2010; Cone, Stacey: Presuming a Right to Deceive: Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, the CIA, and the News Media. *Journalism History* (Ohio University), a. 24, 1998/1999, nr. 4, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohio_University.

factor in international politics. Beside the existence of a strong and well-organized Slovak-American community, this was the main reason while at the beginning of the Fifties, several exile initiatives comprising the Slovak National Council Abroad transferred their seats to the USA. However, under the given circumstances, in the attempted rapprochement to Washington, the Slovak policy could capitalize only its anti-Communist stance. It was not a case that it found attentive listening particularly in the first half of the Fifties, as the most radical phase of the Cold War culminated, hopes for a quick liberation from Communism were still surviving, but concerns about possible penetration of Communist influence into the West and the USA began to grow, too. The Slovak exile and the Slovak-American organisations in the USA made use of this atmosphere to point out to the clean anti-Communist shield of their members[31] and above all to make American politics acquainted with the dramatic situation and the perduring anti-Communist resistence in Slovakia (above all with the activities of the clandestine movemente *Biela légia* – The White Legion,[32] and mass unrests).

Many American congressmen and senators, critical of the excessive permissiveness of the Roosevelt and the Truman administrations towards the Soviets and Communism and of the undifferentiated support of the post-February Czech or Czechoslovak exiles, former collaborators of the undemocratic system of National front co-responsible for the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, showed

For the situation of the Slovaks within the unique Czechoslovak board cf. SNA, SLvA, k. 12, Report on the activities of the Slovak National Council Abroad in Europe, 13 November 1951; APSÚSCM, Korešpondencia 1953, Imrich Kružliak to Anton Botek, 23 October 1953; Jozef Šramek to Anton Botek, 25 October 1953; Korešpondencia 1954, Anton Botek to the president of the Association of the Slovak Catholics Miloš Mlynarovič, 25 November 1953; ibidem, Anton Botek and Štefan Náhalka to the abbot of the St. Andrew Abbey in Cleveland Teodor Kojiš, 25 November 1953; ibidem, letter of a refugee arrived on 19 October 1953; Korešpondencia 1954, elaborate „Menlivé úhly Dr. Šrámka"; ibidem, Jozef Šramek to Anton Botek, Štefan Náhalka and others, 22 January 1954; *Kanadský Slovák*, (3 October 1953), p. 4; Grébert, Arvéd: „Dôverne" o personálnej politike v RFE. *Slobodné Slovensko*, 41, Nr. 2 (1986), p. 3; Grébert, Arvéd: Svedectvo Dr. Jozefa Šrámka o Rádiu Slobodná Európa. In: *Slovenský politický exil v zápase za samostatné Slovensko*: *Materiály z vedeckej konferencie konanej v Bratislave 5. – 6. júna 1995*, Bratislava: Dom zahraničných Slovákov, 1996, pp. 289 – 291; Kružliak, Imrich: Rádio Slobodná Európa a Slováci. In: *Slovenský povojnový exil*: *Zborník materiálov zo seminára Dejiny slovenského exilu po roku 1945.* Ed.: Juraj Chovan-Rehák – Genovéva Grácová – Peter Maruniak. Martin: MS, 1998, pp. 338 – 344; Katrebová Blehová, Beáta: Rádio Slobodná Európa a Svetový kongres Slovákov. In: *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*, pp. 184 – 207; Hrabovec, Emília: Štefan Náhalka – zakladajúci rektor Slovenského ústavu sv. Cyrila a Metoda a neoficiálny slovenský diplomat v Ríme. In: *Perla slovenského kňazstva*: *Štefan Náhalka (1916 – 1975).* Ed.: Jozef Rydlo. Bratislava: LHS, 2020 (in print).

[31] One of the official reports of the Committee on Un-American Activities that conduct enquiries about the Communist influence in the USA, significantly stated that Slovak-American organisations belong to those who "are on record as opposed to Communist rule and as supporting present American forign policy". Cf. Report on the American Slav Congress and Associated Organizations, 26 June 1949, cited from Paučo, Jozef: *Slováci a komunizmus*. Middletown [PA].: Jednota Press, 1957, p. 315.

[32] On the White Legion see Vicen, Jozef: *Vo víroch rokov 1938 – 1988*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1999, pp. 191 – 220; Cintavý, Pavol: *Po stopách Bielej légie v protikomunistickom odboji*. Bratislava: Spisy Konfederácie politických väzňov Slovenska (Dokumenty a svedectvá II.); Idem: *Dokumenty o Bielej légii*. Bratislava: Spisy Konfederácie politických väzňov Slovenska (Edícia Dokumenty a svedectvá III).

a keen interest in news about the perduring anti-Communist resistance in Slovakia and discovered in the Slovaks a far stronger pillar of anti-Communism than Czechoslovakia. They blamed the American government for disregarding its own democratic principles and for "tragic errors" in relation to small nations including the Slovaks, and did not hide the conviction that the USA should give the Slovaks political and a moral support by recognizing publicly their right of self-determination including the right to an independent state.

Extremely agile in this sense was congressman Ray J. Madden, in 1951 president of the Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyń Forest Massacre. In May 1953, Madden submitted to the Congress a concurrent resolution in which he expressed the firm conviction "*that the Slovak people have the right of self-determination and the right to be governed by their own consent based on the free expression of popular will in free elections*". The resolution demanded for Slovakia free elections under the supervision of the United Nations, "*aid and moral support to active fighters now struggling for the liberation of the Slovak people*", and the recognition of an "*effective Government in Exile representing the anti-Communist Slovak people*".[33] In March 1955 congressman Alvin M. Bentley cited in the House of Representatives the Declaration of the Slovak National Council Abroad approved on 4th July 1954 in Niagara Falls, that defended the right of the Slovaks to self-determination and expressed the conviction that the best safeguard of the political, cultural, and economic rights of the Slovak nation consisted in a democratic Slovak state and that "*there cannot be freedom for the Slovak nation as long as democratic governments shall seek a compromise with the Soviets or with states having a Communistic government*".[34] Alvin M. Bentley and senator Everett Dirksen met also with the president of the German branch of the Slovak National Council Abroad Matúš Černák during his journey to the USA in 1953 that lasted several months; on this occasion, Černák was received also in the State Department.[35] In similar sense acted also the congressmen Alvin O'Konski, Daniel J. Flood, Clement Zablocky, Edward Derwinski, Philip J. Philbin, Michael A. Feighan and others, who maintained contacts with the representatives of the Slovak National Council Abroad, with the Slovak League in America and other Slovak organisations, held speeches in their public meetings and published their

[33] Concurrent Resolution in the House of Representatives, submitted by Hon. Ray J. Madden, 7 May 1953, published in Kirschabum, Joseph M.: *Slovakia: Nation at the Crossroads of Central Europe*. New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, Inc., 1960, Document Nr. 58, pp. 335 – 336. A similar concurrent resolution was submitted by Madden on 2 May 1956. Published ibidem, p. 353.

[34] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 37, Extention of Remarks of Hon. Alvin M. Bentley of Michigan in the House of Representatives, 10 March 1955.

[35] Matúš Černák v Amerike. In: *Slobodné Slovensko*, a. 8, 1953, nr. 9, pp. 1 – 2; Z Černákovej aktivity v USA. In: *Slobodné Slovensko*, a. 8, 1953, nr. 11 – 12, p. 2; Vnuk, František: *Životopis Konštantína Čulena*. Cleveland [OH]: Slovenský ústav, 1984, p. 176. Cf. remeberance of Štefan Kramár in Maruniak, Peter (ed.): *Prof. Matúš Černák 1903 – 1955*. Žilina: Kabinet výskumu dejín slovenského exilu Matice slovenskej a Mestský úrad Žilina, 1999, p. 58 and Mikuš, Jozef A.: *Pamäti slovenského diplomata*. Middletown [PA]: Jednota, 1978, p. 425, published a photograph of the meeting with senator Everett Dirksen.

resolutions and memoranda in the *Congressional Records*.[36]

The probably most visible political steps were taken by congressman Charles J. Kersten. On the basis of information provided by the Slovak exile, particularly by the president of the Commission for foreign affairs of the SNRvZ Jozef Mikuš, who had a special office in Washington, and by the co-founder of the White Legion Jozef Mikula,[37] Kersten introducted in July 1951 into the Congress a concurrent resolution of far-reaching relevance, in which he stressed the existence of a strong anti-Communist movement in Slovakia ("*there ist no other country in the Soviet orbit which has a better underground movement than heroic Slovakia*") and called upon the USA to formulate a more severe anti-Communist policy, to avoid any further agreements with Czechoslovakia and to orient the American United Nations representatives to demand that free elections be held in Slovakia and in the Czech lands under the supervision of the United Nations so that the Slovak and the Czech nations may freely choose their own form of government and establish their own states without any outside pressure.[38] Kersten was convinced, and at the historical congress of the Slovak League in May 1952 he publicly acknowledged, that Slovakia should not have been deprived of her state independence, because it violated the Christian and the democratic principles and because as an independent state it would have resisted the Communist expansion far more effectively than Czechoslovakia did:

> *"The Slovaks have ever opposed Communism: and they strongly resist it today. Slovakia should not have been wantonly destroyed, because it could have served us in a good stead today on the side of the democratic world. It is in the interest of America that all nations of the earth, including the Slovak nation, have the right to self-determination and, if they so desire, to be free and independent."*[39]

In July 1953 Kersten helped the delegation of the SNRvZ to be received in the State Department, where it presented a memorandum on the Slovak question addressed to the State Secretary

[36] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 36, 37; Mikuš, Jozef A.: *Pamäti slovenského diplomata*, p. 392.

[37] In Washington a special office of the Slovak National Council Abroad (officially maintained and financed by the Slovak League of America) was opened whose primary task consisted in informing of American politicians and politicians and diplomats arriving to the US capital on the situation of Slovakia and the political programme of the Slovak exile. The office was lead by Jozef M. Mikuš, a former Slovak diplomat, jurist and expert for foreign policy in the Presidium of the Slovak National Council Abroad. SNA, SLvA, k. 12, Mikuš's reports on his visiting diplomacy and lobbying in Washington. See also SNA, OF Jozef M. Mikuš, k. 9, Mikuš'correspondence with congressman Kersten and other American politicians. Cf. Mikuš, Jozef A.: *Pamäti slovenského diplomata*, pp. 391 – 394. For providing of information to American congressmen and senators on the resistance activities in Slovakia cf. also Katrebová Blehová, Beáta: Kongresman Charles J. Kersten a výbor Kongresu Spojených štátov amerických pre vyšetrovanie komunistickej agresie. In: *Historický zborník*, a. 29, 2019, nr. 2, pp. 66 – 79; Kirschabum, Joseph M.: *Slovakia: Nation at the Crossroads*, pp. 312 – 360.

[38] The Kersten Resolution for the Freedom of the Slovaks (No. 139). *Congressional Record*, 17 July 1951, 959126 – 39804.

[39] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 20, *Independent Slovakia should not have been destroyed*. Speech of the Hon. Charles J. Kersten at the Conference sponsored by the Slovak League of America, 23 May 1952.

John Foster Dulles and handed over to the chief of the Division for East European Affairs Mr. Barbour.[40] In 1954, after Stalin's death, as the Soviet leadership gradually began to push forward the policy of peaceful coexistence that was strongly criticised by the Slovak exile, Kersten initiated the creation of the *Select Committee on Communist Agression* that enquired Communist crimes in Eastern Europe, heard a huge number of testimonies comprising several Slovaks and in cooperation with ten congressmen and with the experts from the Georgetown University elaborated a final report known as the Kersten Report. It not only condemned the peaceful coexistence as a "myth", but outlined the history of Slovak struggles for political equality and freedom, criticised the reintegration of Slovakia into Czechoslovakia "without any form of plebiscite" as contradictory to democratic principles and emphasised the right of the small European nations comprising the Slovaks to self-determination.[41] The Slovak political exile considered the Kersten report a fundamental document that

> *"rebuts political legends and propaganda lies" and "reveals clearly who bears the guilt of murders, political and religious persecution and finally the merciless delivery of Slovakia and Czechia to Communism. According to the report, it was 'above all the naive faith, condivided in varying degrees by all Czech politicians, that was responsible for the fact that the Communist Party took over the power so easily in 1948'."*[42]

The Slovak exile policy nourished great expectations from the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower (1953 – 1956)[43] that, as it appears, considered a correction of the American policy in favour of the Slovaks, who were regarded the element of strongest resistance against Communism in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1956, as anti-Communist uprisings in Hungary and in Poland culminated and reports about unrest and clandestine movements arrived also from Slovakia, a Slovak delegation was received for the first time personally by the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who had been a frequent addressee of Slovak memoranda and letters already since the beginning of the Fifties. The president of the Slovak League in America Filip Hrobák, who participated in the delegation, summarised his impressions with the words: "*The State Secretary has been well informed about the substance of the Slovak problem already before our visit. From his remarks it was clear that he knew that the Slovaks do not want to live with the Czechs in one state*."[44]

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[40] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 36, Minutes of the meeting of the Restraint Presidium of the SNRvZ in Washington, 2 July 1953.

[41] Kersten, Charles J.: *Communist Takeover and Occupation of Czechoslovakia. Special Report No. 8 of the Select Committee on Communist Agression No. 8 of the Select Committee on Communist Agression, House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress*, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955.

[42] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 20, Nad záverečnou správou Kerstenovho výboru. Dr. Jozef Kirschbaum.

[43] Černák, Matúš: Das erwarten die Slowaken vom Präsidenten Eisenhower. In: *Südor-Stimmen*, a. 2, 1958, pp. 6 – 8.

[44] SNA, SLvA, k. 14, minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Slovak League in America, Pittsburgh, 15 December 1956.

Nevertheless, a principal revision of the American policy towards Czechoslovakia did not occur. Although the State Department in several official letters to American congressmen and Slovak representatives recognized the principle of self-determination of all nations and the right of the Czech and Slovak peoples to determine themselves in future under free conditions whether they will continue to live together in a common Czechoslovak state,[45] it reiterated at the same time its refusal to take any initiative in proposing alternative forms of the organisation of Central Europe and stressed that the American policy should concentrate on the creation of conditions under which the peoples of Eastern Europe will be able to freely determine their governmental and economic institutions, and not become involved in discussions about the future of the enslaved nations.[46] Washington continued to consider the united Czechoslovakia a viable political concept, and the policy of "non-predetermination", although corresponding to the political logics of the existence of diplomatic relations with Prague and in principle not excluding a possible resettlement of Central Europe according to the will of the nations in a post-Communist future, underestimated the gravity of national oppression as an integral part of the Communist repression and in practice lent force to those political factors that saw their *raison d'être* in the unconditional defense of the Czechoslovak status quo.

More favourable conditions for the Slovak exile were to be found in Western Germany. By its creation in 1949 the Western German state did not gain a complete sovereignty and thanks to the absence of a peace treaty with Germany and to the division of Germany into two states integrated into two different political blocs, the German question remained open. Nevertheless, Bonn received the possibility to conduct its proper foreign policy and thanks to the decision of the Western Allies to rapidly integrate Western Germany into euroatlantic political, economic and later also military structures, also some space for maneuvering.

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[45] As James Cowles Hart Bonbright, acting assistant secretary in the Department of State, put it in a letter of 16 August 1951 addressed to Rev. Florian C. Billy, chief secretary of the Association of Slovak Catholics: "*The United States has never opposed the aspirations of any people in Europe to determine by their own free choice the state or form of political organization under which they wished to live. On the contrary, self-determination has been a fundamental principle of American policy in Europe since the administration of President Woodrow Wilson; and this Government has not departed from it in the case of the Slovaks*." Cf. Kirschbaum, Joseph M.: *Slovakia – Nation at the Crossroads*, pp. 358 – 359; Ďurčanský, Ferdinand: *Die slowakische Frage eine internationale Frage*. München: Slowakisches Befreiungskomitee, 1954, pp. 9, 24. The Department of State confirmed this view in the letter of the Assistent Secretary Thruston B. Morton to Alvin M. Bentley of 2 May 1955. Kirschbaum, Joseph M.: *Slovakia – Nation at the Crossroads*, pp. 359 – 360. Bentley quoted the letter in his remarks at the 34th Congress of the Slovak League of America on 23 May 1955. Cf. Glaser, Kurt: *Czecho-Slovakia: a critical history*. Caldwell [ID]: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1961, pp. 243 – 244.

[46] Cf. the already mentioned letter of the Department of State of 2 May 1955 to Alvin M. Bentley, quoted by Glaser, Kurt: *Czecho-Slovakia: a critical history*, pp. 243 – 244, and a letter of Philip Hrobak, president of the Slovak League of America, to congressman Daniel J. Flood of 14 July 1955, in which he critically discussed the views of the State Department. The remarks of Daniel J. Flood in the House of Representatives of 20 July 1955, in which he quoted in extenso the letter of Philip Hrobak, were published by Kirschbaum, Joseph M.: *Slovakia – Nation at the Crossroads*, pp. 349 – 352.

Thanks to the geopolitical position, the unresolved German question, whose integral part were the millions of *Volksdeutsche* expulsed from the East, and the traditional historical and economic ties with Central and Eastern Europe, Western Germany, diversely from the Western states in the real sense, in the long run could not be disinterested in Central-Eastern Europe and in at least theoretical reflections on its possible future reorganisation, in spite of the fact that under the given circumstances its foreign policy was oriented towards the West and the integration in euro-atlantic structures, and for the moment renounced the reunification of the country.

The entrance of the German policy into the European political concert had, therefore, a not negligible relevance for the Slovak exile and significantly broadened its operative possibilities. In a conversation with a high officer of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Kossmann on 11 October 1952, the president of the German branch of the SNRvZ Matúš Černák significantly remarked that France and Great Britain could be satisfied with the given geopolitical constellation, whereas Western Germany, the USA and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had a common interest in the fall of Communism and a new order in Central Eastern Europe.[47]

Hence it was not by chance that at the beginning of the Fifties several leading personalities of the Slovak exile moved to Germany. They usually settled in Munich, where the Americans had founded the broadcasting stations Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, where the representatives of almost all European political exiles lived, a great number of different exile publications appeared and that soon became the playground for the highest concentration of agents and spies that had ever met at the same place.

Though the Bonn government could not and did not want to officially support any of the Slovak exile groups, it tolerated their activities and even maintained some contacts with them. Since 1953 the Ministry for inner German questions even subsidized with a considerable monthly sum the activities of the Slovak National Council Abroad and the publication of the journal *Slobodné Slovensko* (*The Free Slovakia*). This was largely a personal merit of Matúš Černák. Černák, as a former student of University of Leipzig from his youth culturally oriented towards Germany, spent practically the whole war in Berlin as minister plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic and established a widespread network of relations there. Many of his contacts had connections to the anti-National Socialist resistence groups around Carl Friedrich Goerdeler or the bishop of Berlin Konrad von Preysing or with people around the future co-founder of the German Christian Democracy and federal chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and after the birth of the German Federal Republic they occupied influential posts in the nascent political and higher administrative apparatus at the federal or the regional level. In exile, Černák maintained personal contacts with chancellor and till 1955 also minister of foreign affairs Adenauer, with Adenauers successor in office Kurt Kiesinger or with

[47] Hruboň, Anton: Poznámky k politickým aktivitám slovenského exilu v prvej polovici 50. rokov z pohľadu agendy Zahraničného úradu Nemeckej spolkovej republiky. In: *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938 – 1989*, vol. III.: *Menšiny*. Ed.: Anton Hruboň – Juraj Jankech – Katarína Ristveyová. Banská Bystrica: Belianum, 2014, pp. 234 – 246.

the federal minister for displaced persons, refugees and war victims Theodor Oberländer. The president of the German federal parliament, the Christian Democrat Eugen Gerstenmaier, during the war member of the resistance group Kreisauer Kreis, and his party colleague in Adenauer's government Waldemar Kraft, even spoke at the celebrations of the Slovak statehood in March 1956.[48] Although these contacts cannot be overestimated, in their time they probably represented the best contacts to the political establishment the Slovak exile disposed of in any Western state.

The representatives of the Slovak exile in Germany were well aware of the fact that expulsed Germans from the East, above all the Carpathian Germans (*Karpatendeutsche*) from Slovakia, represented an important political factor that could not be ignored. While professor Ďurčanský later maintained mainly cultural and scientific contacts with them, Černák in the name of SNRvZ in January 1953 even signed a cooperation agreement with the Association of Carpathian Germans in Germany (*Karpatendeutsche Landsmannschaft*). The agreement stated that "*the vital interests both of the Slovak nation and of the citizens of Slovakia of German nationality can be fully guaranteed only in an independent and democratic Slovak state*". The Slovak side promised the Carpathian Germans a full civic equality and the right to cultural autonomy, as well as an indemnity for the persecution after 1945, while the Association of Carpathian Germans obliged itself to "*fully support the SNRvZ in its struggle for the independence of Slovakia*".[49]

Efforts to establish contacts with the exiles of other nations from Central and Eastern Europe on the basis of the common refusal of Communism and of Jalta, a common Christian and conservative ideological views and common efforts to achieve freedom and self-determination for all nations, represented another characteristic feature of the Slovak political exile. These contacts were often informal, based on personal contacts, or, in other cases, on an institutional platform like the Central European Federal Club in London, the Anti-Bolshevic Bloc of Nations in Munich, or Intermarium. Significantly, the only exile with which – with some exceptions[50] – it proved impossible to establish a political dialogue, because of complete irreconcilability in all basic questions concerning the political future, was the Czech one, firmly based on the platform of unconditional maintenance of the Czechoslovak state. Consequently, the Slovak exile remained excluded from all those exile associations that were founded as organisations of former official political

[48] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 36, chief of the German branch of the SNRvZ Fraňo Tiso to the Presidium of the SNRvZ in Clevelande, report on the activity, 27 July 1956.

[49] Ibidem. For Černák's contacts with the organisation of Carpathian Germans whose centre was in Stuttgard see also Černák, Matúš: Pozdrav do Stuttgartu – Gruss nach Stuttgart. In: *Slobodné Slovensko*, a. 6, 1051, nr. 6, p. 1.

[50] This exception was represented by a small number of Czech exile politicians who were in opposition to the post-February Czech political mainstream and particularly to the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, open criticized the People's Democratic Czechoslovakia and were willing to recognize the Slovak claim for independence. Cf. Cholínský, Jan: Český a slovenský protikomunistický odboj v zahraničí po únoru 1948: Sonda do vztahů Čechů a Slováků neuznávajících Radu svobodného Československa. In: *Protikomunistický odboj v strednej a východnej Európe*. Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2012, pp. 707 – 742.

representatives of the postwar regimes in Central Eastern Europe, that were at least partially financed by the American National Committee for a Free Europe (later Free Europe Committee, both financially dependent on the US state budget) and had an anti-Communist, but at the same time a leftist character, as for example the Assembly of Captive European Nations that accepted only representatives of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, who placed a veto on the Slovak membership.[51]

A specific feature of the Slovak exile that reflected the tightly interwoven national and religious identity of the Slovaks and the vivid religiosity of their past generations, was its close linkage to the Church (for the great majority the Catholic one) and a relevant presence of Catholic clergy (and some evangelical pastors) in its institutional structures and activities. With the first exile wave after 1945 several dozens of Catholic priests arrived. They were active not only in the religious field, but in charity and cultural activities of the exile, as well. A strong group of priests and religious arrived in exile at the turn between the Forties and the Fifties, as the first wave of agressive anti-Catholic persecution in Czechoslovakia culminated. Rome became their natural centre, where institutional structures arose and large scale activities were launched that surpassed even the exiles of many other historically and numerically stronger nations. The Slovak Catholic Centre founded in 1951 was their first pillar, in 1963 replaced by the Slovak Institute of St. Cyril and Methodius around which a strong group of Slovak priests gathered who tought in the Slovak gymnasium, worked in the pastoral service for the Slovaks abroad, founded a Slovak publishing house, lectured at the pontifical universities or worked in the Roman Curia. Although these wide range activites were primarily of religious or cultural-academic character, they did have a considerable political relevance.[52] It consisted already in the very fact that on the "papal soil" the Slovaks acted consequently under the own name and under their own institutions recognized by the Holy See that never created any "Czechoslovak" institutions. The "missions" (parishes) for Catholics living abroad, founded according to the apostolic constitution of Pius XII *Exsul familia* (1952),[53] were organized in consonance with the national principle, in the framework of the Vatican Radio a Slovak broadcasting existed, the same applied to the different committees or curial organs dedicated to specific questions of the Church behind

[51] By a letter of 24 July 1957, the chairman of the Assembly of Captive European Nations Vilis Masens rejected the application for membership of the Slovak National Council Abroad of 28 August 1956 argueing that "*for Mr. Peter Zenkl that application* 'was unacceptable'."The Slovak National Council Abroad, as the chairman of its Foreign Affairs Committee put it, considered the position of the Assembly "*nothing less than a denial of the right of self-determination to one of the oldest Central-European nations*". SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 21, Jozef Mikuš to the leaders of the delegations of the members of ACEN, 15 September 1957.

[52] Hrabovec, Emília et al.: *Slovenský ústav svätých Cyrila a Metoda v Ríme (1963 – 2013)*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Komenského, 2015, and the references quoted there.

[53] Pius PP XII: Exsul Familia. In: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, a. 44, 1952, pp. 649ff. On the Slovak Catholic missions in the world see Hrušovský, Dominik: Slovenský ústav sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Ríme a duchovná služba pre Slovákov v zahraničí. In: Hrabovec, Emília et al: *Slovenský ústav svätých Cyrila a Metoda*, pp. 53 – 97.

the Iron Curtain. Up to a certain point, the Slovak exile in Rome could even replace a non existing Slovak diplomacy and bishops' conference and contribute to a relevant degree to the solution of various unresolved political-ecclesiastical questions, among them the creation of the Slovak Church province that laid the ecclesiastical foundations of the Slovak individuality.[54]

In the middle of the Fifties, the first significant turning point in the history of the Slovak exile occured. While at the beginning of the Fifties an optimistic view reigned with regard to a possible political change in Europe and the tense international atmosphere (Corean war, Berlin crisis, uprising in Eastern Germany, Poland and Hungary) further nourished such hopes, the defeat of the Hungarian and Polish uprisings and hard reprisals in Slovakia, that practically ended the phase of open resistance to the Czechoslovak Communist regime, brought painful disappointments. The probably most painful one was caused by the attitude adopted by the Western countries that demonstrated that the Western powers might have been anti-Communist and verbally condemn the Soviet intervention, but they respected the Soviet zone of influence and – absorbed by their own problems like the Suez crisis or the wars in Indochina and Tunis Algeria – they behaved passively. The outcome of the events of the fiery autumn of 1956 for a long time buried all hopes for a quick improvement of the situation. It became evident that for the time being, resistance activities behind the Iron Curtain had hardly any chances to succeed, and the realisation of the expectations of the political exile had to be postponed to a distant future. The changed international situation, above all the new policy of peaceful coexistence, which was beginning to appear since 1954 – 1956, and the gradual shift of political interest towards the Third World, signalised, too, that both sides were preparing for a long convivence. A negative influence on the activities of the Slovak exile exerted paradoxically also the Austrian State Treaty (*Staatsvertrag*) signed in 1955 which obliged Austria to permanent neutrality, thus hindering exile activities on Austrian soil, where until then the foreign centre of the White Legion and a broadcasting station of the same name had operated and the basis of the exile information and communication services resided; the final blow to its activities was the kidnapping of its main organizer Jozef Vicen to Czechoslovakia by the Czechoslovak secret service two years later.[55]

The Slovak National Council Abroad, too suffered painful human losses, as in the course of a few years three presidents of the Council died[56] and the most agile and successful territorial vice-president Matúš Černák was murdered by the Czechoslovak secret service. The Slovak Liberation Committee on the other hand was marked by a certain discontinuity caused by the emigration of its

[54] Cf. Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 221 – 282.

[55] Cf. his memoirs Vicen, Jozef: *Vo víroch rokov 1938 – 1988*, pp. 224 – 233.

[56] The founding president Karol Sidor died in Canada in 1953, his successor in office František Hrušovský in Cleveland in the USA in 1956 and Jozef Cíger Hronský in Argentina in 1960. SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 36, Minutes from the extraordinary meeting of the Restraint Presidium of the SNRvZ on 13 September 1956 in Cleveland.

leading personalities to the distant Argentina in 1947, although Ďurčanský returned to the Old Continent in 1952, and by the fact that the political preconditions it had counted on in its frantic activities immediately after the war, failed to materialize.

Under these circumstances, at the latest in the second half of the Fifties the Slovak exile began to abandon the more radical ideas about the possibilities of resistance against the Prague Communist regime and to focus on long term activities. It continued its exhausting efforts, hindered by the financial straits in which most of the exiles lived, to inform relevant political instancies and the world public opinion about the dramatic situation in Slovakia and to claim liberty, democracy and independence for Slovakia; the methods and ways of its activities, however, underwent some changes. Cultural, scientific and publishing activities, that in front of the academic and political public opinion historically and juridically justified the right of the Slovak nation to self-determination and to an independent state,[57] assumed a dominant role, together with intensive religious activities.

In this situation, voices were raised with new urgency that called for unification of the exile, all the more considering the fact that unlike other national exiles from behind the Iron Curtain, innerly divided along party and ideological lines, the Slovak exile was programmatically and socially relatively homogeneous, condivided the same basic programme – the liberation from the Communist and Czech preponderance and the renewel of an independent Slovak state, whereas the persisting division into two camps, as time passed, was nourished more by personal animosities than by differencies of programmatic or at least tactical character, but caused the exile deep moral and political damages. In May 1960 representatives of Slovak Liberation Committee, Slovak National Council Abroad and Slovak League in America finally met in New York and agreed upon the foundation of a unique exile political organisation called Slovak Liberation Council that in its first public message confirmed the goal to work for the liberation of Slovakia "*from the Communist-Soviet tyranny and the Czech occupation*" and for "*a free, democratic Slovak Republic based on Christian principles*".[58]

Spiritus movens of this unifying meeting was the Canadian-Slovak industrial magnate Štefan B. Roman, originally member of the Slovak Liberation Committee. In the course of the Sixties, Roman distinguished himself as one of the most prominent protagonists of the Slovak exile. It was Roman who few days before Christmas of 1968 invited the representatives of the Slovak Liberation Council and of the Slovak League in America to Toronto to a common meeting with the aim of finding a way how to unify all Slovak forces in the West under one common institutional roof.[59]

The immediate motivation was manifold. The most important one were the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968,

[57] Ďurčanský, Ferdinand: *Právo Slovákov na samostatnosť vo svetle dokumentov*. Buenos Aires: Slovenský oslobodzovací výbor, 1954; Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: *Náš boj o samostatnosť Slovenska*. Cleveland [OH]: Slovak Institute, 1958.

[58] Posolstvo slovenskému národu. In: *Jednota* (Middletown), a. 70, 1960, nr. 3594 (8 June), p. 1.

[59] Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Založenie Svetového kongresu Slovákov. In: *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*. Ed.: Idem. Toronto: Svetový kongres Slovákov, 1981, pp. 20 – 28.

the great hopes awoken by the political liberalisation and suffocated by the military intervention of the armies of the Warsaw Pact, which was followed by a new exodus, that showed the persistent lack of freedom in the country behind the Iron Curtain. The new émigrés brought a "blood transfusion"[60] into the exile and new challenges, as well. An entire human and political generation divided them from their exile predecessors. They were already grown up and educated in the Communist Czechoslovakia, many of them showed no interest in political activities or after a quarter of century of political indoctrination in Czechoslovak schools they had difficulties to orient themselves in Slovak history and in the exile situation and were hardly integrable into the existing political organisations.

At the same time, however, the federalisation of Czechoslovakia and the creation of the Slovak Socialist Republic demonstrated to the world that the exile claim of self-determination corresponded with the will of the nation, survived all persecutions and came to the surface in the very first favourite moment that presented itself, although in the limited form which the given situation allowed. The new federative order, since 1969 progressively undermined, remained, however, a question of inner politics, so that Slovakia continued to be deprived of her own voice abroad and to be non-existent for the outer world.

In this context, an urgent necessity was generally felt to have an exile organisation that would unite all Slovaks in the world, thus giving them force and legitimity to speak on behalf of the silenced nation at home and to claim justice, freedom, self-determination and independence for her. Out of these reflections, the idea was born to found a Slovak World Congress (Svetový kongres Slovákov, SKS), that for the first time appeared in public in June 1970 and whose institutional genesis was completed at the General Assembly in Toronto in June 1971.[61]

The foundation of the Congress was a historical step. For the first time it united practically the whole Slovak exile and created a strong and respected platform for its political and cultural activities. Extraordinary perspectives opened to the activities of the Congress thanks to the fact that it was headed by Štefan B. Roman, a well-known personality with world-wide political, economic and social contacts. Roman, a deeply religious Catholic of Eastern Rite, former lay auditor of the Second Vatican Council, organizer of huge religious events in Canada and elsewhere and personal friend of two popes, who had a cathedral constructed on his property near Toronto, maintained also lively contacts within the highest ranks of the ecclesiastical world.[62] Roman united the idealism of a glowing patriot, who considered serving the nation a moral duty to which

[60] Vnuk, František: Slovensko v plánoch politickej emigrácie (1945 – 1970). In: *Slovenský politický exil v zápase za samostatné Slovensko,* p. 139.

[61] Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Založenie Svetového kongresu Slovákov, pp. 20 – 45.

[62] Hrabovec, Emília, *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989),* pp. 101 – 103, 121, 177, 181 – 182, 329, 361, 389. With regard to Roman's nomination as auditor of the Second Vatican Council see Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano (AAV), Concilio Vaticano II, busta 670, directory of the auditors; ibidem, general secretary of the Council Pericle Felici to Štefan B. Roman, 21 September 1964.

he remained unconditionally devoted for the whole life and to which he was ready to dedicate time, energy and considerable financial means, with the pragmatism of a businessman who refused empty political dreaming and demanded a disciplined and deliberated activity and who enjoyed an unquestionable authority, able to mediate in conflicts and to lead the way.

The Slovak World Congress represented a broader organisation than its exile predecessors. As an umbrella organisation of all Slovaks, it united at one institutional platform not only the postwar political emigration, but all Slovak organisations and individual persons regardless of their political or religious views or the time when they had come abroad, i.e. both Slovaks from all waves of the postwar political emigration and the community of expatriates of older origin. It wanted to become a "Slovak parliament" *sui generis*, "a unity in diversity",[63] on the platform of a common goal, defined by the programmatic declaration of the founding congress in New York as the realisation of the natural law of the Slovak people to freedom, political and spiritual self-determination, equality with other nations, "*an international justice expressed by the full democratic statehood*" and the right to freely and directly participate in the integration process in Europe.[64]

The Slovaks in the Congress were well aware that a nation without a state did not exist internationally and that only an independent state could give it real freedom, justice and equality with other nations which the Congress did not cease to claim. Hence from the beginning the Congress claimed the state independence of Slovakia, but with regard to the dynamic international development, to the existence of Czechoslovakia, recognized by the international community of states, and to other factors, above all the accusation from abroad, particularly from the USA, but also from a smaller part of the émigrés after 1968, that it "prejudges" the decision of the nation at home,[65] he did it above all with reference to the generally recognized principle of self-determination, "*that includes also the right of a nation to an independent state*",[66] and the principle of full equality within the family of nations.

With particular openness the Congress manifested its commitment to the independent Slovak state in 1979, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the proclamation of the first Slovak Republic. The Congress dedicated to this topic the entire number of its journal *Bulletin SKS* and a special Declaration, that explained that the birth of the first Slovak Republic could not be understood as a consequence of outer intervention, but as a natural consequence of Slovak historical development and as a "*inalienable right and inalienable obligation of the Slovak nation*".[67] The right to

[63] Cf. the programmatic speech of Štefan B. Roman at the General Assembly in Washington in 1978. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 32/33, 1978, pp. 6 – 8.

[64] Declaration approved by the preparative General Assembly in New York in 1970, published by Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Založenie Svetového kongresu Slovákov, pp. 41 – 42.

[65] Okáľ, Ján: Ideológia SKS v prejavoch Štefana B. Romana. Kirschbaum, Jozef M. (ed.): *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*, p. 208.

[66] From among a high number of different pronouncements cf. for example Roman's speech on the meeting of the Presidium of SKS in Paris 27 – 28 April 1979. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 35, 1979, p. 6.

[67] *Bulletin SKS*, a. 9, nr. 34, 1979, p. 1. The whole number of *Bulletin SKS*, a. 9, nr. 34, 1979, was dedicated to this anniversary and to the analysis of the third political goal of the Congress –

an independent state was particularly stressed in a special chapter of a fundamental document elaborated by a closed meeting in Galt in Canada in 1979 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the proclamation of the first Slovak Republic and approved by the General Assembly in Toronto in 1981, that defined the basic ideological starting points and political aims of the Congress.[68] On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first Slovak Republic the Congress issued a special declaration entitled *History is the Witness of Our Rights*. The Declaration ended with an invitation to all Slovaks in the world:

> *"We invite all Slovaks in the world, all democratic political currents, all cultural feasors and spiritual workers, into the work for a democratic statehood. A modern and culturally highly-developed nation needs all of them, in order to work, in spite of all different opinions, for a common goal: the democratic freedom in an own independent state. For us, this idea is imprescriptible. We shall promote it till the victorious end, as the national consciousness and the human honour requires it from us. In front of the world we want to be a free and independent nation."*[69]

The representatives of the Slovak World Congress were well aware that the realisation of their desires would not only depend on the fact if they succeed in unifying and mobilizing all relevant Slovak forces abroad and from the development in Slovakia, but, as always in the case of small and politically weak nations, also on the will and the interests of the great powers.[70] Therefore, the activity of Slovak World Congress had from its very start an explicit foreign-policy and international dimension. Already the first General Assembly of the Congress in New York in June 1970 declared the Slovak question an international one,[71] the Congress notified its foundation to all Western foreign ministries[72] and in its activities it systematically tried to "*get Slovakia back on the map of Europe*", i.e. to present the Slovak issue on international political, academic and cultural fora and to find a way how to inform key representatives of the Western powers and of international organisations about the Slovak question and to convince them to take it into consideration as a relevant factor of the future European order.

The basic strategy of the Congress parted from the conviction that the Slovak cause would be served best

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the independence of Slovakia. Cf. also Kirschbaum, Stanislav J.: Význam ťažiskových aktivít SKS. In: *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*, p. 91.

[68] *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 47, 1981, pp. 13 – 15. Cf. Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Poznámky k Ideovým základom a politickým cieľom SKS. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 48, 1981, p. 13.

[69] *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 83, 1989, pp. 1 – 2. The Declaration was signed by the acting president of the Slovak World Congress Jozef Krištofík and by the general secretary Dušan Tóth.

[70] The president of the Congress Štefan B. Roman, in a very realistic way, always stressed this fact. Cf. for example Roman, Štefan B.: Svetový kongres Slovákov po piatich rokoch. *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 18/19, 1975, pp. 1 – 2 and Idem: Slovenské práva sú nedeliteľnou časťou ľudských práv. *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 47, 1981, pp. 1 – 7.

[71] The Declaration approved by the preparative Slovak World Congress in New York was published also in *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*, pp. 41 – 42.

[72] Report of Štefan B. Roman on the meeting of the Presidium of SKS in Detroit 8 – 9 June 1972. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 8, 1972, pp. 5 – 6.

if the Congress was able to "*lead it out of the exile isolation*", to "*put it on a broader foundation*" and "*integrate it into the concept of the Western policy*".[73] In other words, if it can formulate and justify the Slovak goals in harmony with the political goals and interests of the Western states. In their way, all exile groups also before the Slovak World Congress had tried to do this, but only the Congress, thanks to its power and to the favourable international conditions, could consequently follow this path. The cornerstones of this strategy were:

First, a consequent anti-Communism and resistance against the Soviet power and ideological expansion that naturally resulted from the views of the Slovak exile and at the same time integrated the Congress into the principal line of the Western Cold War policy;

Second, the effort to justify the Slovak claims not with regard to the fact that they are just, what mostly does not represent an assertive argument in politics, but with reference to the fundamental political principles and values recognized by the West like the *Atlantic Charter*, the *Charter of the United Nations* or the *Final Act of Helsinki*. *In concreto*, particular stress was put on human rights understood in the broadest sense as "*the most sacred idea of man which comprises national and political, cultural and religious rights*",[74] the right of self-determination, which included the right to an independent state, and democratic principles, whose implementation was considered the necessary precondition for international justice, stability and peace.[75] Self-determination as an integral part of human rights was stressed particularly in front of the Carter administration that elevated human rights to its main agenda, whereas towards the Reagan administration self-determination was accentuated as a strategic instrument for the supression of the Soviet influence and the desintegration of the Soviet Union;

Third, the support of the European integration, although from the beginning linked to the condition that the Slovak nation as an integral part of the European historical and cultural space would participate in it directly as an independent subject with equal rights.

A particular feature of the political and ideological programm of the Slovak World Congress was the fact that it did not limit itself to the "outer goals" in the sense of the achievement of freedom and state independence of Slovakia, but from the very start claimed that this state must enshrine political and spiritual contents embedded in the Slovak historical tradition and its Christian roots. In some publications of main Congress representatives, not only Communism as ideology and political system was decidedly rejected, but also boundless Capitalism with its absolutized pursuit of profit and its little consideration of moral principles and solidarity was criticized. Parting from the principles of the Catholic social doctrine, Roman himself often spoke of the necessity to put Capitalism on new ethical grounds. To the Slovak political,

[73] Cf. for example Roman, Štefan B: Svetový kongres Slovákov po piatich rokoch. *Bulletin SKS*, Nr. 18/19 (1975), pp. 1 – 2.

[74] Roman at the meeting of the Presidium of SKS in Paris 27 – 28 April 1979. *Bulletin SKS*, Nr. 35, 1979, p. 6.

[75] Roman, Štefan B.: Slovenské práva sú nedeliteľnou časťou ľudských práv. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 47, 1981, pp. 1 – 7.

economic and theological thinking, Roman ascribed a particular mediation role in this field. In 1977, in collaboration with the professor of economic sciences of Jewish origin and vice-president of the Slovak World Congress Eugen Loebl, he published a programmatic book entitled *The Responsible Society* that formulated the theoretical concepts of a new social order built up on the "*ethical principles of the Holy Scripture*".[76] These principles – formulated, however, rather generally –, were later incorporated also into the programmatic document. "*The ideological grounds and political goals of the Slovak World Congress*" which was elaborated in 1979, without ever being theoretically deepened or economically substantiated.[77]

The Slovak World Congress' headquarters was located in Toronto and with one exception of the General Assembly in Rome in 1975 all general assemblies took place on the American continent. It arose naturally from the fact that the main founder and the *spiritus rector* of the Congress Štefan B. Roman, the majority of the conveners of the Congress and the strong Slovak-American fraternalist organisations resided overseas. It reflected also the weight of the American factor in the world politics and the necessity, which the Congress felt from the very start, to find support of the American political representatives for the activity and the goals of the SKS. Beginning with New York in 1970 in all general assemblies influential American senators and congressmen and members of the Canadian federal and provincial governments participated, and written addresses were sent to the assemblies by relevant political actors including the future US presidents Gerald Ford or Ronald Reagan.[78] With the support of these politicians several meetings and political seminaries with Slovak participation were organized in the Senate and in the Congress of the United States,[79] and *Congressional Records* published news and reports on the events organized by the Slovak World Congress as well as texts of its memoranda.

Given the firm ties of the American policy with the idea of Czechoslovakia, the representatives of the Congress tried to present their long-term strategic vision carefully, often not emphasizing in the first lane the Slovak question as such, but the generally accepted idea of the right to self-determination for the peoples of Central Eastern Europe, interpreted as the implementation of democratic freedoms and human

[76] Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Poznámky k Ideovým základom a politickým cieľom SKS. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 48, 1981, p. 13.

[77] Ideové základy a politické ciele SKS. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 48, 1981, pp. 14 – 21.

[78] Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Založenie Svetového kongresu Slovákov, pp. 27, 30; Trubinský, John C.: Pozdravy členov Kongresu Spojených štátov amerických a predstaviteľov národnostných organizácií v USA prvému Svetovému kongresu Slovákov. Slovák a svet, Knižnica dokumentov 1. *Bulletin SKS* informed regularly on the participation of American and Canadian politicians in the events of the Congress.

[79] An important meeting took place on 21 August 1974 on the occasion of the 6th anniversary of the intervention of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia in the Capitol Building in Washington. Eugen Loebl held a conference there on the United States Foreign Policy from an Eastern View. Cf. Predsedníctvo Svetového kongresu Slovákov zasadalo v Toronte. *Bulletin SKS*, Nr. 16/17 (1974), p. 3; Loebl, Eugen: United States Foreign Policy from an Eastern View. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 16/17, 1974, pp. 15 – 18, or Idem: Zahranično-politická koncepcia SKS. In: *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*, s. 139 – 152.

rights and at the same time as a strategic instrument to desintegrate the Soviet bloc, being thus in line with the priorities of the American foreign policy.[80]

In spite of many different intersections between the Congress and the American policy and of long-term personal contacts with its representatives including some presidents, in the relations between the Slovak World Congress and Washington a friction remained. In the Seventies it was caused above all by the policy of *détente* that culminated during the SALT negotiations with Moscow and the Helsinki conference on security and cooperation in Europe and was accompanied by a vivid visiting diplomacy between Moscow and Washington. The Congress perceived these steps as weakening of the anti-Communism of the West and pushing aside of reflections on a possible reconstruction of Eastern Central Europe. Therefore, the new foreign policy course of the Reagan administration, that brought a radicalization of the Cold War and of the relations to the Eastern bloc, stressed the interpretation of the Atlantic Charter and the Charter of the United Nations in the light of the principle of self-determination, of free elections for all nations and of the refusal of the division into spheres of influence, and in the last consequence tended to overcome the Jalta agreements as symbol of the division of Europe and to gradually oust the Soviet influence out of Central Eastern Europe, found ardent support of the Congress that perceived it as a confirmation of its own policy. In this sense, on the occasion of his reelection in November 1984, Štefan B. Roman sent Reagan a long and warm gratulation telegramm, in which he praised the standpoints of the president:

> *"You are the first President to interpret the Yalta Conference in the spirit of the commitment of the Atlantic and the United Nations Charter, who has rejected the concept of spheres of interest and demands free elections in all the Nations of Central and Eastern Europe. We regard your interpretation of YALTA as the most important and most realistic contribution for lasting peace. There is no peace without freedom. There is no freedom without peace."*[81]

Under the Reagan administration, however, also new obstacles appeared for the Slovak exile politics. Since the end of the Seventies, and then with new intensity since the mid-Eighties, the Slovak World Congress was confronted with pressures from the White House and the State Department that urged it to recognize the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia. They resulted not only from the already mentioned historical bonds of the American policy with Czechoslovakia, but also from the diminishing relevance of anti-Communism as a political

[80] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 37, Štefan B. Roman to president Jimmy Carter, 8 August 1978; ibidem, k. 36, Hearing of John Hvasta before the Committee on Foreign Relations. United States Senate Ninety-Eight Congress, Second Session, June 12, 1984. Cf. excerpts from the conference of Eugen Loebl in Washington in August 1974: United States Foreign Policy from an Eastern View. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 16/17, 1974, pp. 15 – 18, or Loebl's analysis of the foreign policy concepts of the Congress Loebl, Eugen: Zahraničnо-politická koncepcia SKS, pp. 139 – 152.

[81] *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 65, 1984, p. 5. For the positive reaction of the Slovak World Congress to the first election of Ronald Reagan cf. the editorial of the Congress periodical written by the editor in chief Okáľ, Ján: Čo očakávať od prezidenta Reagana? In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 43, 1980, pp. 1 – 2.

factor with which the Slovak policy had operated until then, and in the second half of the Eighties probably also with the shaping of first specific American plans for a possible new territorial and political order after the already foreseeable fall of the decomposing Communist regimes, in which the USA preferred the maintaining of Czechoslovakia. After the General Assembly of the Slovak World Congress in New York in 1984, a high representative of the State Department Mark Palmer sent a long letter to Štefan B. Roman, in which he confronted the president of the Slovak World Congress with a political choice *aut aut*:

"The basic problem we have with the SWC is what we believe can reasonably be considered its espousal of Slovak separatism. United States Government policy has consistently supported the integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic since its founding in 1918, and has rejected attempts – from whatever quarter – to break up the Czechoslovak state.

Some recent statements made by spokesmen of the SWC create, in our opinion, reasonable doubt as to the organization's dedication to the continuation of a united Czechoslovakia. Examples include your own recent remarks about the need for the Slovaks to 'freely determine their relationship with their neighbors,' *and to live* 'free and independently in the family of nations,' *or Mr. Kirschbaum's more direct call for* 'freedom and independence' *and his evocation of a* 'Slovak Question.' *Remarks made by Mr. Braxator about a* 'free, democratic Slovak Republic' *as being the optimal solution are also seen in this light. Similarly, greetings sent by a spokesman of the SWC to a Sudetan German meeting, in which he used the words* 'Long Live a Free Sudetenland,' *also raise questions about your organization's dedication to the preservation of the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia.*

We have searched carefully, but in vain, for any positive references in your publications of the speeches of your leaders to the Czechoslovak Republic or to the idea of cooperation between Czechs and Slovaks in one state. Instead, we have seen a glorification of the state of 1939 – 45. Although it is not our role to dictate a view of history to the SWC, we find the linkage of the Slovak 'state' to your long-proclaimed goals of Slovak self-determination (such as Ms. Anička Roman's remarks to your recent Congress) to be further evidence suggesting that the SWC in fact does not accept the Czechoslovak Republic as it now stands.

If the SWC wishes to normalize its relations with the Department of State, we would find most helpful an unambiguous official statement that the SWC accepts the territorial integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic."[82]

The Congress and Roman personally decisively rejected the blackmail. In a long letter, Roman tried to explain the point of view of the Congress and at the same time to demonstrate its substantial identity with the basic principles

[82] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 37, United States Department of State (signed by Mark Palmer, Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs) to Štefan Roman, 20 July 1984.

both of the international law and the US political tradition:

> *"After all, the Pittsburgh and Cleveland Agreements of Czechs and Slovaks during the World War I also applied to the principles of the right to self-determination, which were influenced by President Wilson's political concept. The Atlantic Charter as well as the Charter of the United Nations and politics of the United States fully respect this sovereign right of every nation to determine its own future existence.*
>
> *Our concept, that the principle of the right of self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe could be the international peace politics, was incorporated by the German CDU/ CSU into its election program. Furthermore, the National Security Advisor, Mr. Robert F. McFarlane, in his letter of March 26, 1984, addressed to Mr. Loebl, wrote:* 'Indeed if self-determination were granted to the nations of Eastern Europe, there would be much less cause for the security concerns shared by almost everyone of the continent'."[83]

It was also in this context that the Presidium of the Slovak World Congress became aware of the necessity to put more emphasis on activities in Europe. It resulted from many factors. First of all from the incontestable geopolitical fact that Slovakia laid in the middle of Europe and her future depended to a great extent on the positions of European political actors who as a rule took her more into consideration than the distant American great power. As already mentioned, the claim of self-determination resounded far more markedly in the divided Germany than in the Anglo-American ambience, in spite of the fact that after the arrival of the Social Democratic coalition government, the launching of the Eastern policy of the Bonn government, the consolidation of the relations with Czechoslovakia in 1973 and the gradual generational change of German elites both the inner-political atmosphere and the programmatic foreign policy visions underwent a profound transformation. Also the European unification process, in the Seventies already in considerable progress, required the integration of the Slovak question into the European contexts. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe drew attention to the Old Continent, too. Already in 1972, at the opening of the negotiations, the Congress sent to the participating governments of the member states of the North Atlantic Pact a Memorandum on European Security, that pointed out the importance of the Slovak question for the development in Europe.[84] Afterwards, the Congress developed vivid activities with regard to the control conferences of Helsinki in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna, to which the Congress sent its delegations, that presented well formulated memoranda that called for attention of the European public to the national and religious persecution

[83] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 37, Štefan B. Roman to Mark Palmer, 20 July 1984, concept of the answer. In a similar spirit also the letter of John Hvasta to Zbigniew Brzezinski of 30 January 1979 was formulated. Ibidem.

[84] Mikuš, Jozef: Zahranično-politická činnosť SKS. In: *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*, p. 134; Kirschbaum, Stanislav J.: Politické ciele povojnovej slovenskej emigrácie. In: *Slovenský povojnový exil*, p. 98.

in Slovakia.[85] Finally, there was a "human factor", too. It was in Europe, where the majority of the new émigrés that arrived into the exile after 1968, mostly highly educated persons with a notable potential of public activity, had settled.

The Slovak World Congress maintained contacts also with the representatives of the Council of Europe and of the European Parliament in Strassburg, whom a delegation of the Congress led by Štefan B. Roman visited in October 1976.[86] Another working meeting with some deputies of the European Parliament took place in Munich in 1980. In April 1975 the Slovak World Congress was admitted into membership in the European Conference for Human Rights and Self-Determination of Nations in Luzern.[87] In June 1975 it organised the historic General Assembly in Rome, in February 1976 followed a successful international press conference in Bern,[88] in May 1977 a delegation of the Congress participated in the "European days" in Germany. The relations with other Central European exiles, whose head offices resided mostly in Europe, received new impulses, too.[89] One of the flashpoints of this collaboration represented the international conference "*Peace and Freedom in Europe*" organized by the European functionaries of the Congress in Munich.[90]

In the second half of the Eighties, while in the Soviet Union the *perestrojka* was in progress and a series of Soviet-American summits took place, the West began to feel the vicinity of profound political transformations in Central and Eastern Europe. The political and psychological Cold war initiated in the immediate postwar years culminated, too, and it began to be evident that the decisive political factors in the West were programmatically, organisationally and personally preparing themselves for a new order after the already forseeable fall of Communism. Similarly evident was the fact that in this process, the Czech leftist-liberal-socialist dissent from around *Charta 77* and its ideological counterpart at the other side of the Iron Curtain were the preferred partners of the Western media. While every public appearance of the speaker of *Charta 77* found immediately echo in the world media, nobody informed about the various mass expressions of the Slovak resistance to Communism that manifested themselves above all in the religious field, for example when only in the Marian year 1988 more than 600.000 mostly young people participated in pilgrimages, or Slovak catholics were arrested.[91]

In this context, the Slovak World Congress began to "*think the unthinkable, speak*

[85] SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 37, Memorandum of the SKS for the control conference in Belgrade and an elaborate intitled Les violations des droits de l'homme en Republique Socialiste Slovaque. Cf. also Braxátor, František: *Slovenský exil 68*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1992, pp. 68 – 73.

[86] Zasadnutie Predsedníctva Svetového kongresu Slovákov v Európe. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 24/25, 1977, pp. 4 – 8. Braxátor, František: *Slovenský exil 68*, pp. 70 – 72.

[87] *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 18/19, 1975, p. 20.

[88] Švajčiarska tlač o tlačovej konferencii SKS v Berne. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 22, 1976, pp. 6 – 7.

[89] –js-: Maďarsko-slovenský dialóg.In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 13, 1972, pp. 14 – 15; Spolupráca so stredoeurópskymi exilmi. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 16/17, 1974, p. 18; Slovensko-maďarský dialóg. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 22, 1976, p. 7. Cf. Braxátor, F.: *Slovenský exil 68*, pp. 100 – 139.

[90] Kružliak, Imrich (ed.): *Frieden in Freiheit für Europa*. München: Kokodynsky, für Slovak World Congress Toronto, 1984.

[91] Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989).* pp. 294 – 295.

the unspeakable"[92] and to prepare for profound changes. The General Assembly in Toronto in 1987 formulated more explicitly than ever – with reservation of the final decision of the Slovak citizens, once they would be free to express their will – the programme of an independent Slovak state as the principal goal of the Congress and declared that all its political actions will move from the conviction that only an own independent, free and democratic Slovak state can fully guarantee the development and the prosperity of the Slovak nation.[93]

The Congress and Roman himself intensified also the efforts to approach the political representatives and the dissidents in Slovakia. In 1987, the National Award of the Congress was granted to Pavol Čarnogurský, former deputy of the parliament of the Slovak Republic and father of a famous Slovak dissident Ján Čarnogurský.[94] Roman relaunched his efforts to establish direct contacts with the president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the general secretary of the Communist Party, the Slovak Gustáv Husák, which he had sought in vain since the late Sixties,[95] and in the summer of 1986 he met in Canada with the president of the federal government Lubomír Štrougal, one of Husák's close collaborators.[96] In 1987, the idea was born to organize the Fourth World Festival of Slovak Youth in Slovakia, but it failed because of the refusal on the Czechoslovak side. The president of the *Matica slovenská*, a traditional Slovak cultural organisation, Vladimír Mináč, whom the government of the Slovak Socialist Republic entrusted to write the response to the official request of the Slovak World Congress adressed to the chairman of the government Peter Colotka, answered according to the political instruction in a negative or even hostile way.[97] In spite of this political setback, the festival did not refuge to overseas as its two predecessors, but took place in the immediate neighbourhood of Slovakia, in Austrian Semmering.

The Congress and Roman registered painfully that while Poland and Hungary, despite the Communist regime, were establishing more and more intensive contacts with their connationals abroad on the basis of a common patriotic interest, and even the socialist Czechoslovakia tollerated contacts of the Czech dissent with foreign countries, contacts

[92] Cf. the title of Roman's opening address at the conference on Central Europe organized by the Slovak World Congress in Toronto in 1981: Roman, Stephan B.: Think the unthinkable – speak the unspeakable. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 47, 1981, pp. 16 – 17.

[93] Cf. the resolution of the General Assembly of the Slovak World Congress from June 1987. *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 77, 1987, p. 6; Braxátor, František: *Slovenský exil '68*, p. 59; Kirschbaum, Stanislav J.: Význam ťažiskových aktivít SKS, p. 93.

[94] *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 77, 1987, pp. 2 – 4; I. K. [Kružliak, Imrich]: Svetové snemovanie Slovákov v Toronte. In: *Horizont*, a. XVI, 1987, nr. IV, p. 3.

[95] Ústav soudobých dějin Akademie věd České republiky (ÚSD AV ČR), KV ČSFR, F4, telegramme of the Czechoslovak ambassador in Ottawa to the minister of foreign affairs in Prague, 27 September 1969; SNA, OF Jozef M. Kirschbaum, k. 7, Štefan B. Roman to Gustáv Husák, concept, 7 October 1969. Cf. Hrabovec, Emília, *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 177 – 181 and Eadem: Generálne zhromaždenie SKS v Ríme 1975 v kontexte slovenského a medzinárodného vývoja, p. 116.

[96] Eadem: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 417 – 418.

[97] Na margo smutnej korešpondencie. In: *Bulletin SKS*, nr. 78, 1988, pp. 2 – 7. Cf. Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 418 – 419.

with the Slovak exile remained harshly persecuted. Significantly, while Hungary, after the elevation of the archibishop of Esztergom László Lékai to cardinal, organized an official diplomatic celebration in Rome,[98] the cardinal's hat for the Slovak curial archbishop Jozef Tomko could not be mentioned in the Czechoslovak media and the regime prohibited even to Tomko's close relatives to travel to the ceremony. Instead of a gradual "rapprochement" visible in the relations between the homelands and the exiles of other countries, in Czechoslovakia of the second half of the Eighties, a new intensive propaganda campaign against the Slovak exile was launched. Prague, that felt that it could not rescue the Communist regime any more, tried to preserve at least the Czechoslovak state.[99]

In this situation it was a painful blow for the Slovak exile and the Slovak politics in general that the relatively young and healthy Štefan B. Roman died unexpectedly in March 1988.[100] His death not only fundamentally weakened the highest Slovak exile organisation, but had the consequence that on the eve of a new era, when the power and the political relations in Central Eastern Europe were undergoing profound changes, the Slovaks lost their internationally respected political personality able to shield the Slovak struggle for national emancipation on the international stage.

On the other hand, the Slovak cause received a visible support in the papal Rome. If during the pontificate of Paul VI there were some concerns in the Roman Curia that official contacts with the Slovak emigration and the accentuation of the national character of the Slovak activities in Rome could burden the positions of the Vatican Eastern policy towards Czechoslovakia, Karol Wojtyła – Pope John Paul II put aside such considerations and openly expressed his vicinity to the Slovak exile. A clear sign in this direction was the Pope's nomination policy: as soon as in summer 1979, the Pope elevated Jozef Tomko to archbishop and bestowed the important office of the general secretary of the Bishops' Synod on him; in 1985 Tomko received the cardinal's hat, thus becoming the first Slovak curial cardinal, and was entrusted with the direction of the crucial Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.[101] In November 1981, John Paul II visited the Slovak Institute of the SS. Cyril and Methodius in Rom – it was his very first visit after the attentate in May 1981;[102] in 1983, he personally consecrated Dominik Hrušovský, the rector

[98] Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik (ÖStA, AdR), BMfAA, IIPol. 1976, Karton 138, Rom Vatikan, political report of the Austrian ambassador to the Holy See Gordian Gudenus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, 16 June 1976.

[99] Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 366 – 368, 394.

[100] The entire nr. 79, 1988 of *Bulletin SKS* was dedicated to this sad event. Cf. particularly Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Slovenský národ stratil veľkého syna a symbol slobody. In: Ibidem, pp. 2 – 4; Kružliak, Imrich: Živorný odkaz Štefana B. Romana, pp. 4 – 6; Polakovič, Štefan: Čím bol Štefan Roman v národe?, pp. 8 – 10.

[101] Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, p. 394; Tomko, Jozef kardinál: *Na životných cestách. Rozhovory s Mariánom Gavendom*. Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2008, pp. 247 – 285.

[102] *Slovenské hlasy z Ríma*, a. 30, 1981, nr. 12. The whole number was dedicated to the historical visit of the Pontifex.

of the Institute, to bishop entrusted with the pastoral care of the Slovaks abroad.[103] In 1980, the Pope erected the diocese for the Slovaks of Eastern rite in Canada, four years later he personally consecrated its cathedral in Toronto.[104] Personalities of the Slovak exile, particularly cardinal Tomko, but also the bishops Pavol Hnilica and Dominik Hrušovský, belonged to the circle of close friends of the Pontifex who condivided and supported his "new Eastern politics". A politics that after years of difficult and mainly resultless negotiations under the pontificate of Paul VI regained the character of a radical opposition that instead of searching for an acceptable *modus vivendi* with the Communist regime aimed at a fundamental change, at the overcoming of the Yalta divisions and the reuniting of Europe on Christian basis, and that beside the diplomatic negotiations mobilized the consciences of the Catholic masses.[105]

The kiss of the Slovak soil, a gesture otherwise reserved to souvereign states, with which John Paul II opened his first spontaneous pastoral visit to Slovakia in April 1990,[106] just four months after the collaps of the Communist system, was a more than symbolic expression of his solidarity with the neighbouring Slovak nation and his respect for her desire for an independent state.

[103] Hrušovský, Dominik: *Roztratených zhromažďovať*: *Rozprávanie o mojom živote*. Bratislava: PostScriptum, 2018, pp. 210 – 222.

[104] Roman-Barber, Helen (ed.): *Our heritage of faith*: *Consecration of the Slovak Cathedral of the Transfiguration by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, September 15, 1984*. Unionville [ON]: Eparchy of Saints Cyril and Methodius for Slovaks of the Byzantine Rite in Canada, 1985.

[105] On the "new Eastern politics" of John Paul II see Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*, pp. 319 – 462; Eadem: *L'Ostpolitik* di Giovanni Paolo II e la Slovacchia (1978 – 1989). In: *Incorrupta monumenta ecclesiam defendunt*: *Studi offerti a mons. Sergio Pagano, prefetto dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Vol. III. Inquisizione romana, Indice, Diplomazia pontificia.* Ed.: Andreas Gottsmann – Pierantonio Piatti – Andreas E. Rehberg. Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 108), 2018, pp. 267 – 290.

[106] See Labo, Šebastián – Košiar, Ján (ed.): *Ján Pavol II. Posol lásky a pokoja*: *Návšteva Svätého Otca v Česko-Slovensku*. Trnava: Dobrá kniha, 1991.

Julija Barunčić Pletikosić*

The Role of the Catholic Church in Creating the Modern Republic of Croatia

Úloha Katolíckej cirkvi pri vzniku súčasnej Chorvátskej republiky / Uloga Katoličke crkve u stvaranju suvremene Republike Hrvatske

U radu se analiziraju uloga i značenje Katoličke crkve u zbivanjima u Hrvatskoj u prvoj polovici 1990-ih. Kroz pregled najznačajnijih aktivnosti i stavova Katoličke crkve u posljednjim godinama postojanja SFRJ, te prijelomnim godinama stvaranja moderne i samostalne hrvatske države, pokušat će se dati odgovori na pitanja kakva je bila uloga i značenje Katoličke crkve u zbivanjima u Hrvatskoj u prvoj polovici 1990-ih godina.

Ključne riječi: Republika Hrvatska, Katolička crkva, Jugoslavija, demokratske promjene, Franjo Kuharić.

Following the first multiparty elections in the spring of 1990 and the abolishment of the then single-party communist government system, the Republic of Croatia joined the general democratization process pervading at the time most of the then communist countries in Europe. With the new Croatian Constitution (December 1990), based on the principles of democracy, Christianity also gained its full freedom upon proclamation of the constitutional principle of religious freedom. The Catholic Church thus acquired freedom to perform public work in Croatia. This way it contributed significantly to the creation of the independent, sovereign and internationally recognized modern Croatian state.

Before analysing the actual and possible role of the Church in a communist state and that in a democratic society, it should be highlighted that general postulates of the Catholic Church regarding the relationship between the Church and the political community (i.e. the state) have clearly been regulated by the social teachings and documents of the Church adopted at the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965).[1] However, it should also be emphasised that this relationship between the Church and the state has, throughout history, including both before and after the Second Vatican Council, mostly been conditioned by the regime system of individual states in which the Church "lived". In reality, "life"

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[1] Turčinović, Josip (ed.): *II. vatikanski koncil, Dokumenti, latinski i hrvatski, 1970.* Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1970, p. 649-662.

of the Church was different in a confessional state, where both the Church and the state acknowledged and encouraged their mutual relations since the same people were members of both the state and the Church, than the "life" of the Church in communist states, where it was mostly denied or strictly controlled.[2] Communism, as a term and an ideology, but also as the political system that emerged from its postulates, in its essence denounces private ownership, free market, civil liberties, multi-party system and, especially, emphasising of religious and national values, and it promotes atheism. Therefore, religion was marginalised in all communist states, often prevented from operating publicly and expressing its views, especially on the ruling class and political structures, but also on fundamental human rights, civil liberties and the majority of social and political issues.

Religion was not prohibited openly and directly in most of the communist states. However, in reality it was suppressed from the public life and marginalised. In other words, work of the Christians and religious organisations and institution was often disabled or controlled, and the Communist Party sought to be the only ideological and political authority because, according to the teachings of communism, religious and national disparities create and accentuate differences, which might lead to national and civil conflicts, especially when it comes to Yugoslavia.[3] Furthermore, not all communist governments (i.e. states) had the exact same attitude towards religion. Politics varied when it came to the Church, from the most radical, e.g. in Albania, to the Eastern Bloc countries where the Church, despite the fact that it was not officially prohibited, was also fully prevented from operating publicly, to the example of the former SFRY where, especially since the 1960s, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state was, tentatively speaking, much more liberal than in other communist states, but still in line with the postulates of communism as an ideology.[4]

Unlike communist states, the Church operates freely in modern democratic countries free from ideological features, just like all other social subjects, and it binds its members i.e. believers (however, not all citizens of a country) by social and moral norms, which it was unable to do in communism, and often prohibited from doing. The Role of the Church is basically equal to that of other subjects in a democratic state when it comes to advocating and respecting social and moral values, which it is allowed to establish by itself and support. However, it may not impose its norms and goals to other secular areas and other social values, thus also the state and all of its citizens.[5]

The year 1980 or, to be exact, the death of Josip Broz Tito, the President of the SFRY, marked the beginning of a slow breakup of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and of the SFRY. Economic crisis and long-suppressed

[2] Devčić, Ivan: Društveno djelovanje Crkve i država. In: *Riječki teološki časopis*, a. 1, 1993, nr. 2, pp. 193-208.

[3] Radelić, Zdenko – Marijan, Davor – Barić, Nikica – Bing, Albert and Živić, Dražen: *Stvaranje hrvatske države i Domovinski rat*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Školska knjiga, 2006, pp. 17 – 20.

[4] Marasović, Špiro: Crkva i država u komunističkim društvima. In: *Crkva i država u društvima u tranziciji*. Ed. Ivan Grubešić. Split: Knjiznica Dijalog, 1997, pp. 25 – 30.

[5] Devčić, Ivan: Društveno djelovanje Crkve, p. 207.

national differences, and especially aspirations of supporters of the Greater Serbian ideology for the Serbian supremacy within the SFRY, all contributed to the final breakup of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which took place in Belgrade in January 1990, at the 14th (Extraordinary) Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. All those factors contributed greatly to the breakup of the SFRY, which finally occurred on 25 June 1991 as Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence.

During the 1980s, the Church was often prevented from expressing its views publicly and from operating publicly in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. However, its work was not prohibited since the Catholic press reported regularly on public appearances of Croatian Catholic bishops and other church dignitaries. It is evident from various documents, speeches, statements, letters and communications of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, being the representative body of the Catholic bishops in the SFRY, that in those years the work of the Catholic Church became all the more open and louder when it came to advocating the respect and protection of fundamental human rights and civil liberties, both individual and collective, but also advocating national equalities and democratisation of society.[6] Representatives of the Catholic Church in the Socialist Republic of Croatia, most often cardinal Franjo Kuharić as the President of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, who played an extremely important role in Croatia during the SFRY and even greater one during the Croatian War of Independence in the first half of the 1990s, used certain festive occasions, such as regular New Year's Day receptions hosted by the President of Parliament (*Sabor*) of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, to draw attention to the unfavourable position of both the Church and the Croatian people in the former Yugoslavia. For example, cardinal Kuharić gave the following speech to the President of Parliament at a New Year's Day reception, in 1981, which the President of Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia hosted for representatives of religious communities:

> e.g. "*You represent responsibility for the public life in Croatia; therefore, we express our wishes to you in the light of the common good of all Croatian people and each individual, no matter where they might find themselves, what service they might perform and what anxieties they might be exposed to.* (…)
>
> *The goal is clear to all of us: common good is established when personal, national and religious identity of each person is recognised, when their inviolable personal dignity is protected, when their consciousness is granted freedom to live peacefully by their beliefs in both private and public life* (…)".[7]

In his statements and reflections, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić often referred to the words of the Pope John Paul II, who stated that e.g. "*man is not for order but order for man*", referring to the political, social, economic and cultural systems that must be sensitive to the human needs

[6] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata u službi mira i stvaranja samostalne Hrvatske*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2009, pp. 5 – 6.

[7] Ibidem, pp. 23 – 25.

of men and their good, and free to transform themselves.[8]

In the second half of the 1980s, the Croatian bishops addressed more often in their public appearances the crisis that was felt in all spheres of life in the former Yugoslavia, since long-suppressed national tensions, especially by supporters of the the Great Serbian ideology, actually arose to the surface during that crisis. Such climate only increased pressure on the Croats in Yugoslavia, primarily by accusing them of genocide and imposing collective guilt on the entire Croatian population for crimes committed against the Serbs during the Second World War, which accusations were brought on against the Catholic Church and the Holy See.[9]

The Croatian bishops emphasised more frequently their belief that the Croatian people foster the aspiration and strength for the initiative and joining together at the political, cultural, economic and social front, considering their long tradition of exercising their rights in a parliamentary manner. The institution of the Croatian Parliament (*Sabor*) as the e.g. "*continuous form of existence of the Croatian national law and the rule of law*" testifies of that. Therefore, the Croatian people also need to pave the way for e.g.

> *"positive courses uniting the Western Europe, towards which the Croats definitely directed their history as early as in the first century of the Christian era by siding with the Holy See, which has become an innate part of the Croatian national being".*[10]

Owing to the fact that, after almost half a century of the communist rule, the Eastern European countries started to discover e.g. "*the value of deep Christian roots, significance of the respect for rights of individuals for the civilisation and of its creative activity, and the necessity of restoring democratic institutions*", the Croatian bishops saw e.g. "*signs of hope and encouragement*" in all those events, suggesting that the Yugoslav nations may achieve e.g. "*true equality, mutual respect and needed cooperation*" in the near future, thus overcoming circumstances in which e.g. "*tyranny of the strong threatens to impose itself aggressively and trample over sovereignty and self-determination of the people*".[11]

In the climate of the aforementioned changes which have already been introduced in the majority of the communist states, the Croatian bishops made it clear that they support the new inclination of the Croatian people towards political pluralism, that is, political dialogue based on the multi-party system, i.e. inspired by events in Yugoslavia caused by the crisis in political, economic and other areas of public life, as well as the increasing inter-ethnic disagreements, that led to the breakup of the SFRY more rapidly.

The Catholic Church, generally, throughout the entire period of Yugoslavia's existence, regardless of the characteristics of relations with the state,

[8] Ibidem, pp. 27 – 29.

[9] Barunčić Pletikosić, Julija: *Katolička crkva u Hrvatskoj*, Julija: *Katolička crkva u Hrvatskoj i Domovinski rat 1991. – 1995.: stavovi, djelovanje, stradanja*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, Glas Koncila, 2017, pp. 14 – 24.

[10] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 71 – 74.

[11] Priopćenje za tisak o jesenskom saboru BKJ u Đakovu 2. – 4. Octobre 1989. In: *Službene vijesti Biskupske konferencije Jugoslavije, 1990*, nr. 1, pp. 6 – 7; Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 71 – 74.

permanently and systematically protect and promote the cultural, economic and political interests of the Croatian people, primarily Croatian cultural and national identity. Such views and efforts of the Catholic Church are attested by all the official documents and press releases of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, as well as numerous statements of its representatives.

For example, in his New Year's speech on 31 December 1989, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić addressed the influence of changes taking place in the Eastern European socialist countries on the Croatian people, which demonstrates that even then the Catholic Church monitored carefully the events occurring outside the SFRY borders and that, for many years preceding those major changes, it recognised and was attentive to the needs of the Croatian people living in Yugoslavia. e.g.

> *"There is talk of democratisation in our homeland, as well. Croatia has also announced its departure from the single-party system and transition towards the multi-party system, in which the entire population would be offered programmes through equal proposing, which always presumes the principle of free political association. The people will be given the opportunity to decide in free elections by secret ballot, to state their wishes and what they consider to be in the interest of the common good in politics, economy, dealing with social issues, social fairness, education, healthcare, culture etc.* (…)"[12]

Cardinal Franjo Kuharić spoke of the same aspirations in the New Year's reception at the then President of the Croatian Parliament in January 1990. He pointed out that the Catholic Church in Croatia e.g. "*with sympathies and hopes*" follows the process of democratization that is slowly beginning to be realized in Croatia, because, basically, democracy includes the possibility of different thinking and seeking solutions to the general good, which at the level of the people or the state community requires the existence of a multi-party system and the equality of political programs and parties.[13] That leads to free and multi-party elections, where people freely choose their representatives, and the statehood of the Croat people, as the Church believes, represents the Parliament. The Church also believes that the constitution of a state is a fundamental norm of public life in general, and the creation of the new *Croatian Constitution* in 1990, as an expression of the will of the Croatian people and the foundation of future relations among peoples, therefore it should be left to the Croatian Parliament, where legally and freely elected representatives of the people will bring forth new laws as the basis for the future life of all Croatian citizens.

Before the multi-party elections in Croatia announced for the Spring of 1990, in March that same year the Catholic bishops addressed a pre-election letter to the Christians and all citizens, emphasising that the Catholic Church welcomes this e.g. "*turning point in history*" taking place at the free multi-party elections and

[12] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 81 – 83 and Kuharić, Franjo: *Mir je djelo pravde*. Zagreb: Glas Koncila, 1995, pp. 37 – 39.

[13] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 87 – 90.

enabling the people to decide for themselves on the future of their nation. It was stated that e.g. *"the Church as a community was not sent to organise the political and economic life of people"*; however, all Church members are also members of a nation and community, which is responsible for its political, social and economic life and, therefore, members of the Catholic Church are, as free citizens, invited to participate in their nation's public life.[14]

The bishops also pointed out: e.g.

"It is understood that as believers, it is especially important if a particular political program guarantees the true independence of the Church from the state power. It's important to know whether the church will finally get a public-law status or will more or less skillfully lay down the laws on the legal position of religious communities and keep the same community under their palms controlling their development and acting as if they are a potential social danger. (…)"[15]

When, shortly after the elections, a constitutional session of the new, democratically elected Parliament of SRH was held on May 30 1990, it was also attended by Archbishop of Zagreb, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić who said, in the Zagreb Cathedral on the same day, that e.g.

"from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea it raised suddenly and unexpectedly, in the peoples and countries of Eastern Europe, a wave of such deep changes in the system as the multitudes spoke out of their innards and opened their suppressed thoughts and hidden aspirations for freedom. That is how freedom has happened; the transition from a one-party system to a multi-party, parliamentary democracy has occurred. That wave did not even pass over Croatia."[16]

On June 25 in 1991, the *Declaration on the Establishment of a sovereign and independent Republic of Croatia* was adopted. On the basis of the referendum of the Croatian citizens, on June 25 the Croatian Parliament also enacted the *Constitutional Decision on the Sovereignty and the Independence of the Republic of Croatia*, the *Constitutional Act on the Amendments to the Constitutional Act* on the Implementation of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia* and the *Charter on the Rights of Serbs and Other Nationalities in the republic of Croatia*. On the same day Slovenia also proclaimed independence. However, at the request and through the good offices of the European Community and US, on July 7 1991 Croatia and Slovenia accepted, on the Brioni island (*Brioni Agreement*) a three-month moratorium on independence so that negotiations on a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis could continue.[17]

Confirming the will of the Croatian people expressed in the referendum and proclaiming Croatia's independence, The Catholic Church reiterates the historical meaning of such a decision for the Croatian people and all citizens

[14] Ibidem, pp. 95 – 98.
[15] Ibidem, pp. 95 – 98.
[16] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 99 – 101 and Kuharić, Franjo: *Mir je djelo pravde*, pp. 61 – 63.
[17] Nazor, Ante: *Velikosrpska agresija na Hrvatsku 1990-ih*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2011, pp. 68 – 69.

of Croatia. After the *Declaration on the Establishment of a sovereign and independent Republic of Croatia* was passed, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić declared that the act confirmed the referendum by the will of Croatian, and the Declaration itself should be a great e.g. "*charter of peace, mutual respect in justice and freedom*".[18]

One can conclude that the Catholic Church in Croatia has not only welcomed persistently all democratic efforts resulting in political changes, which have enabled Croatia to declare its sovereignty and independence after several decades of being part of the SFRY, but it has also advocated that all those changes be made peacefully, respecting the free will of the Croatian people in all spheres of social and political life. That was the only future the Church saw for the Croatian people and viability of the Croatian statehood, envisioning the Republic of Croatia as a community of the Croatian and all other people living in it, regardless of their religious or national affiliation. In emphasising and supporting its beliefs, the Church has relied on the basic postulates of faith and on the underlying documents adopted at the Second Vatican Council relating to rights of the people and nation. Moreover, one of the most important reasons behind the Catholic Church's firm support of the aforementioned democratic changes and the new political power system is surely its position and freedom of public operation in the newly formed Croatia, which was guaranteed to it as the constitutional right, and which it did not have in the former Yugoslavia. The possibility of public operation, which the Church did not enjoy for several decades, was granted to it by the independent Croatian state after the 1990 democratic changes.

[18] Blažević, Velimir: *Katolička crkva u Hrvata*, pp. 152 – 153.

Miroslav Londák – Elena Londáková*

Slovakia's Early Spring (1963 – 1967)

Slovensko v predjarí (1963 – 1967) / Slovačko rano proljeće (1963.-1967.)

V 40-ročnej histórii československého komunistického režimu zaujíma výnimočné postavenie rok 1968, kedy prišlo k významnému pokusu o jeho reformu. Táto dostala názov socializmus s ľudskou tvárou. No pri popisovaní toho vývoja, ktorým Československu v r. 1968 prešlo, dochádza často k zjednodušeniam. Autori sa zaoberajú alebo okupáciou krajiny, alebo ponímajú celý vývin len ako o snahu o istú demokratizáciu režimu, ktorá sa začala v januári 1968 nástupom A. Dubčeka k moci.

Avšak na dôsledné pochopenie toho vývoja, ktorým Československo prechádzalo roku 1968 je potrebné poznať i obdobie predchádzajúce, obdobie tzv. slovenského predjaria (1963 – 1967). V tom čase sa pripravovali podmienky nasledujúceho spoločenského vývinu. Obdobie predjaria sa mohlo začať z toho dôvodu, že na začiatku 60. rokov 20. storočia prišlo k značnému oslabeniu komunistického režimu v krajine. A to tak z hľadiska politického, morálneho i ekonomického. Ukázalo sa totiž, že tie nezákonné politického procesy, ku ktorým prišlo na zač. 50. rokov sú späté so špičkami komunistického režimu a že celá kauza tzv. slovenského buržoázneho nacionalizmu bola vykonštruovaná. Zároveň sa začala hospodárska kríza, ktorej príčiny si predstavitelia režimu nevedeli predstaviť. Navyše na jar 1963 sa stal A. Dubček šéfom slovenských komunistov. Práve na základe spomínaného sa mohlo začať slovenské predjarie a následne rok 1968. V ňom však nešlo len o liberalizáciu režimu a formovanie socializmu s ľudskou tvárou, ale zároveň prebiehal i proces emancipácie slovenského národa, vrcholiaci v procese federalizácie Československa.

Kľúčové slová: slovenské národné dejiny, československý komunistický režim, slovenské predjarie, Alexander Dubček, rok 1968.

Three Slovak historians have named the period from 1963 to 1967 Slovakia's Early Spring.[1] It was the time preceding the year 1968, known as the Prague Spring, which is, in fact, Czecho-Slovakia's Spring. During this period, the chain of events we associate with the year 1968 were gestated. In Slovakia's Early Spring many restrictions were loosened. This was possible not only because Alexander Dubček had become First Secretary of the Slovak branch of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in April 1963, but also thanks to the fact that from 1962-1963 the communist regime in Czechoslovakia had become considerably weakened. As a matter of fact, it faced a severe economic crisis, whose causes

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[1] For more details, see Londák, Miroslav – Sikora, Stanislav – Londáková, Elena: *Predjarie*: *Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960 – 1967*. Bratislava: Veda, 2002, 392 p.

the regime was unable to establish. It was also debilitated politically and morally after the public found out that the ruling communist elite was behind the unlawful political processes that had been staged in the 1950s. These processes profoundly affected not only the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalists but Slovakia's entire political and cultural society. In the spring of 1962, the so-called Kolder's Commission issued a report, which stated that the evidence examined clearly showed that the affair known as "*bourgeois nationalism within the Communist Party of Slovakia*" had been artificially fabricated and all those accused of it were actually innocent.[2]

During the Early Spring, restrictions and censorship aimed at preventing any kind of criticism were relaxed, and Slovakia's intelligentsia could openly express their dissatisfaction with the conditions in the country. This clearly showed in the spring of 1963 at the Congress of Writers of Slovakia and, later on, at the Congress of Journalists of Slovakia. As can be expected, the most addressed issues were the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalism, but also the freedom of creation and the need to speak out on public life issues. The bureaucratic system also became the target of criticism, as well as the (not most appropriate) industrialisation of the country. Slovakia's economists did not remain silent either. In fact, they openly spoke against the administrative and directive way Slovakia's economy was being managed and considered new methods for running it. This all, of course, within the framework of the so-called socialist economy.

In the more relaxed atmosphere of the Early Spring, Slovak intellectuals also had the opportunity to have their works published. An outstanding position in this respect was occupied by the weekly *Kultúrny život*, which was so popular that it was difficult to get. Even in Prague. In fact, Czech authors also contributed to it, as the "breeze of freedom" had not yet reached the centre of the country. The atmosphere in Slovakia was different to that in the Czech lands.[3] Among other things, this was due to the fact that Alexander Dubček had become leader of Slovakia's communists in the spring of 1963. Instead of silencing criticism, Dubček gave it *priestor* (space)[4] and gradually identified with many of the critics. It was mainly thanks to Dubček that several events in the history of Slovakia were dusted off. For instance, the history of the Slovak National Uprising, a major milestone in Slovak history, was no longer defamed or distorted but looked at without any bias. Nevertheless, due to Antonín Novotný, the first man of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the question of a fairer position

[2] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CC VPC) at its April 1963 session adopted the report *Správu o porušovaní straníckych zásad a socialistickej zákonnosti v rokoch 1949 – 1954*.

[3] Well-know Czech historian, Karel Kaplan, put is as follows: "*In the 1960s, the political movement in Slovakia formed one of the basic currents that merged into the national reform movement. It occupied an important position in it, was full of initiative, had robust program points, especially the adjustment of the Czech-Slovak relationship, which directly affected the organisation of the existing power and political system.*" Quoted after Kaplan, Karel: *Antonín Novotný: Vzestup a pád „lidového" aparátčíka*. Brno: Barrister & Principal, o. p., 2011, p. 209.

[4] This is why party members gave Dubček the nickname Alexander Priestorovič (author's note).

of Slovakia in the constitutional structure of the country remained taboo.

After the 1948 coup d'état, there was nothing to stop the Communists from disfiguring Czechoslovakia's civil society and imposing Soviet-style socialism. This suited Moscow well and, so, the country became an integral part of the Eastern bloc for four full decades. The initial period of Czechoslovakia's communist regime (1948 – early 50s) saw the most significant political changes taking place, the market economy being replaced by a planned-economy, as well as the beginning of the transformation of the country's social structure. As for the position of Slovakia, an asymmetric model of state order began to be fully implemented.[5] Although Slovaks had already been recognised as an independent nation,[6] the competencies of the Slovak national authorities were gradually reduced, making their impact on the country's political life and on the development of its economy really negligible. In the autumn of 1948, the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) ceased to exist as an independent political party and became just a territorial organisation of the countrywide Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. From that moment on, the representatives of the CPS in Slovakia only pursued the policy dictated by Prague. Ambitions of equality, which was being considered at the end of the war, and of a federal country were replaced by a policy oriented to make the economy and social conditions in Slovakia level with those in the Czech lands. Its main tool was to be the socialist industrialisation of Slovakia, funded from countrywide means.[7]

To understand the position in which Slovakia found itself, it is necessary to get familiar with the affair known as Slovak bourgeois nationalism. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took advantage of the specific situation the international communist movement was going through to get rid of insurgent CPS leaders by fabricating political trials, in which e.g. Gustáv Husák was sentenced to life, Laco Novomeský to ten years in prison, Ladislav Holdoš to thirteen years, etc.[8] The biggest wrongdoing the Slovak "bourgeois nationalists" committed was

[5] The essence of the asymmetric model of unitary Czechoslovakia lay in the fact that, although there were Slovak national authorities, they were largely subordinated to the countrywide authorities, which actually represented the Czech national state authorities. For example, there was no Czech National Council or its executive bodies of power.

[6] The spring of 1945 became a historic milestone in the development of the theory of Czechoslovakism. Until then, it was considered the official state ideology and the central authorities aimed to create a political Czechoslovak nation. After that date, the Slovak nation was recognised as equivalent to the Czech nation. In practice, however, Czechoslovakism could still be seen in so-called "substitute" forms. Quoted after Kováč, Dušan: *Slováci, Česi, dejiny*. Bratislava: AEP, 1997, p. 126 – 127.

[7] In this context, it is important to emphasise that in the autumn of 1945, a monetary reform took place in Czechoslovakia. The main problem was to determine the optimal exchange rate between the Slovak currency and that of the Protectorate, which at the end of 1945 was 4:1 in favour of the Slovak currency, although it weakened slightly by the end of the war. The exchange rate was finally determined in a 1:1 ratio. The concessions of the Slovak party were to be compensated in the future in the process of making Slovakia's economy and society (and its industrialisation) level with the Czech lands using countrywide sources.

[8] Representatives of Slovakia's cultural life also got severe sentences. Partisan commanders from WWII, Viliam Žingor and Jozef Trojan were sentenced to death, etc.

to have struggled for a more independent Slovak policy at the end of the war. Despite the fact that in the spring of 1945 they accepted Klement Gottwald as the head of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC), this was not enough to buy them absolution.[9] The CPC considered the efforts Slovakia's communist intelligentsia carried out to achieve a more equal position of Slovakia in the structure of the country to be high treason. The notion known as Slovak bourgeois nationalism was basically a purposefully fabricated construction, a conscious political line, rather than the result of accidentally coinciding half-truths, deformations and mistakes. It did not only aim to remove some unwanted politicians personifying a specific political line, but also a blockade to prevent Slovakia from making any future political or other national demands that did not suit the central authorities in Prague.[10]

Of course, there was no equivalent notion of Czech bourgeois nationalists. After all, the Czech lands supported central, whole Czechoslovak interests, which were nothing but a mask for Czech interests. As a mater of fact, the Czech elites of the time, as well as the broad masses of the population in the Czech lands, fully identified with the idea of a Czechoslovak state and nation and did not see the necessity to have Czech national authorities.

The unlawful proceedings against the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalists (April 21-24, 1954), which were full of criminal constructions, affected the relations between Slovaks and Czechs on the long term. For a long time, it blocked Slovakia from enforcing any kind of political or economic demands. The innocent prisoners were gradually rehabilitated only at the beginning of the Early Spring, especially after 1963. As Mieroslav Hysko – who had been editor-in-chief of the communist Pravda newspaper during the Slovak National Uprising – said at the first Congress of Journalists of Slovakia in May 1963, this injustice had "*displeased the Slovak nation as a whole*".[11]

After February 1948, the new way of managing the Slovak economy quickly took shape. Communist Czechoslovakia was being clearly built as a centralist state. This had logical consequences in the different aspects this study focuses on. The CPS was not in charge of managing the economy in Slovakia. As a matter of fact, several Slovak governing bodies were abolished at the beginning of the 1950s. The way Slovakia's economy was managed crystallised gradually in the initial period of the communist regime and practically lasted throughout the whole duration of socialist Czechoslovakia. In fact, it remained immune to different attempts to reform the economy

[9] According to some authors, the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalism "*became a scarecrow for a whole decade*" and was "*one of the forms of solving the Slovak national issue in post-war Czechoslovakia*." Quoted after Černák, Tomáš – Syrný, Marek: *Husák, vrcholy a pády 1945 – 1951.* Bratislava: Marenčin PT, 2018, p. 218.

[10] In 1968, well-known Slovak historian Michal Barnovský wrote that the psychosis caused by the campaign around the so-called Slovak bourgeois nationalism and the consequences resulting from it "*paralysed, and even eliminated any initiatives coming from Slovakia, because you risked being labelled a nationalist and traitor. Subsequent events showed that fears of being accused of bourgeois nationalism were well-founded*." Quoted after Barnovský, Michal: Problematika industrializácie Slovenska v rokoch 1945 – 1950. In: *Historický časopis*, vol. 16, 1968, nr. 2, p. 186.

[11] *Minutes from the 1st Congress of Journalists of Slovakia.*

and reorganise the relevant ministries, as well as to efforts by Slovak bodies to expand their competencies. This resulted from the fact that Slovakia's economy was not managed and determined (as it had often been the case in the past) by the local authorities, but was largely managed from Prague, whose interests were said to be national, but were in fact often purely Czech.

The basic economic development form in Slovakia was a socialist type of industrialisation. Its goal was to build up new industries in Slovakia, as well as to make its economy and social standards even with the Czech lands. During the decades that Slovakia was part of communist Czechoslovakia, it underwent undeniable development. In fact, despite the negative aspects of the totalitarian regime, Slovakia's economy saw its thorough modernisation.

However, not even after forty years, let alone twenty, did the communist regime manage to make Slovakia's economy level with that of the Czech lands. Curiously, in the late 1940s, it was estimated that this process would take three to four quinquennia. The reason for this appalling failure was not only that the planned economy the Communists so highly praised was not as omnipotent as they would have it. It was mainly due to the fact that a high percentage of the investments made to develop the industry, i.e. the most progressive sector of the economy, went to the Czech lands,[12] despite the fact that they were far more industrialised than Slovakia. For example, in the 1950s it was almost 75 – 77%, despite the ongoing industrialisation of Slovakia and the resulting construction of new plants within its territory. This investment policy forced many residents of Slovakia to look for work in the Czech lands because it was no longer possible to leave the country to work abroad. In fact, workers leaving the Slovak agricultural sector did not find enough work opportunities in the newly built industries in Slovakia.[13]

As there was no real long-term strategy for the development of Slovakia's economy throughout the post-war period (despite socialist Czechoslovakia's new planned economy), the newly built industries in Slovakia were mostly offshoots of Czech enterprises intended to be subcontractors producing semi-finished goods with minimal added value. This was not only the case in the 1950s, but also throughout the following decade. This unfortunate situation was mostly the result of the fact that Prague considered the whole economy of Czechoslovakia to be a homogeneous system and failed to see the specific conditions, interests and needs of Slovakia.[14]

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[12] In connection with the so-called steel concept of the development of Czechoslovakia's economy, in the Czech lands: "*a specific form of industrialisation was applied, represented by the de facto restructuring of an advanced industrial base built in the past. It was an unparalleled process in Europe, because in another territory of the Soviet bloc that had been industrialised in the past, i.e. East Germany, the starting situation included severely disrupted and largely destroyed capacities, which cannot be said of the industrial potential of the Czech lands after the end of WWII.*" Quoted after Jirásek, Zdeněk: *„Ocelová koncepce" hospodářství českých zemí*. Opava: Institute of Historical Sciences at the Silesian University in Opava, 2014, p. 6 (translated from Czech by the author).

[13] For more details, see Londák, Miroslav: *Ekonomické reformy v Československu v 50. a 60. rokoch 20. storočia a slovenská ekonomika*. Bratislava: Veda, 2012., p. 110 et seq.

[14] This also showed in the preparation and implementation of the first (Rozsypal's) and the second (Šik's) economic reform. For more details, see Londák, Miroslav: *Ekonomické reformy v Československu v 50. a 60. rokoch 20. storočia a slovenská ekonomika*, p. 71 et seq., as well as 127 et seq.

Mainly basic industry plants were built in Slovakia, which did not need so much labour, so they were not able to absorb a substantial part of the people leaving the agricultural sector. In fact, Prague more often than not failed to take into account the different demographic development in Slovakia and the Czech lands. This reflected in the share of national investments flowing into Slovakia. Consequently, tens of thousands of Slovaks had to move or commute to the Czech lands for work.[15]

Table 1

Workers leaving the agricultural sector and new jobs in industry in the Slovak Republic and in the Czech Republic in 1948 – 1960[16]

	Workers leaving agriculture	New jobs in industry
ČR	414 615	446 811
SR	356 056	173 376

After overcoming the crisis of the mid-1950s, Czechoslovakia's economy began to prepare for the second investment wave. It had the advantage that it could still grow, mainly based on extensive growth factors, and could still employ more and more workers. However, a gradual transition to new technologies, which eventually became known as the scientific and technical revolution, failed to happen in Czechoslovakia. The second five-year plan, which corresponds to the second half of the 1950s, affected the Slovak economy badly. In the second investment wave, the largest share flowed to bigger and rather developed Czech industrial centres, such as the Ostrava region.[17] Of course, investments were also made in Slovakia and new industrial enterprises were created. In fact, Slovakia's share of newly developed basic industrial funds, which is the sector of the economy that had the greatest impact on the generation of national income, reached 23.95% within the monitored period.[18] On the other hand, the development of labor resources in Slovakia became a growing problem. The situation in this respect was so critical that it has no parallel in the whole history of socialism in Slovakia, including the 1980s. From 1956 to the end of the 1950s, i.e. for five long years the number of people employed in the national economy declined continuously. The reason for this decrease was mainly the fact that those leaving the agricultural sector could not find enough

[15] According to official data, 50,000 people of Slovak nationality lived in the Czech lands in 1945, and in 1967 almost 364,000 people. Quoted after the publication *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR*, p. 429. In the mid-1960s, the difference of work commuters between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic was around 82,000, others commuted to work in the Czech lands on a weekly and other basis.

[16] Calculated on the basis of the publication *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR*, p. 460, 661. By the abbreviations SR and ČR we mean the territory of Slovakia and the Czech lands, respectively.

[17] The guidelines for the second five-year plan, adopted by the Countrywisde Conference of the CPC in June 1956, concerning the investment construction, read: "*Pay special attention to the preparation and comprehensive provision of capital construction in the Ostrava, Ústí na Labem and Karlovy Vary regions*." (translated from Czech by the author) Quoted after *Od X. do XI. sjezdu KSČ*: *Usnesení a dokumenty ÚV KSČ*. Praha: SNPL, 1958, p. 385.

[18] During the second five-year period, such financially demanding constructions as water works on the Váh (Nosice, Skalka, Krpeľany, Sučany, Madunice) were also carried out in Slovakia.

work opportunities in industry and other sectors of the economy. This development has no parallel in the Czech lands, in which the number of people working grew constantly, the only exception being 1971 and 1972, when the figures against the previous year were lower. However, no long-term continuous decline was ever registered. Moreover, workforce was growing far more slowly in the Czech lands than in Slovakia, even in spite of the fact that thousands of Slovaks were moving over to their Czech neighbours. In 1945, the number of Slovak citizens in the Czech lands was 50 thousand; in 1948 it was 220 thousand, in 1953 – 325 thousand, in 1956 – 367 thousand, and in 1960 – 422 thousand.[19]

At the very beginning of the 1960s, there were no signs whatsoever to indicate the approaching significant changes Slovakia's Early Spring was going to witness. In July 1960, a new constitution was adopted proclaiming the victory of the socialist production relationship "*in all areas of the economy*," the country's name was changed to Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the leading role of the Communist Party in the state and society was anchored in the constitution. On the outside, the Czechoslovak economy in general seemed to be in good condition.

After all, high year-on-year increases in national income had been achieved at the end of the 1950s (around 7% per year), and the 1953-1955 crisis as well as the problems connected with the end of the 1st investment wave were over. In fact, there was no indication that Czechoslovakia's economy was not able to grow any further on its own foundations and the theoretical premises of Marxism-Leninism. But then, the first signs of an economic crisis appeared in the course of 1961 causing the extremely ambitious 3rd Five-Year Plan to collapse. The leadership of the Communist Party could not understand why this was happening. So they started to prepare Šik's economic reform.

In the early 1960s, Slovak society was confronted with the testimonies of people returning from prison after a partial amnesty. Information about the behind-the-scenes political processes of the early 1950s, which had until then been manipulated by the propaganda and concealed by the media, became public knowledge. Not only ordinary people, but also party members were shocked. Alexander Dubček himself, who was a member of the team created to investigate these processes, known as Kolder's commission, declared how the documents he got hold of literally shocked him. As he puts it, after working in the commission he "*was never the same person again*".

The rehabilitation of these intelligentsia and resistance figures of Slovakia became one of the leitmotifs of the common efforts of the country's cultural and, eventually also, new political elites. From the very beginning, one of Dubček's clear priorities was the thorough rehabilitation and exculpation of all the victims of those horrible fabricated trials who were unjustly convicted, persecuted and imprisoned, and who had lost not just their honour and freedom, but also their civil rights, property and, in many cases also

[19] Data according to *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR*, p. 661, p. 460, p. 429. At the same time, statistics show a curious development – between 1960 and 1961, the number of persons of Slovak nationality in the Czech lands decreased by about 140,000, but at the same time the number of persons of Czech nationality in the given area increased by 107,000.

their health and families, which broke up as a result of the separation.

His next political priority was to rehabilitate important Slovak historical milestones, events and personalities that had been belittled and misinterpreted. This program was positively received in Slovakia, just as the apparition of a new generation, high-ranking figure in the Slovak political scene.

The socialist industrialisation of Slovakia brought about a number of problems which, from the beginning of Slovakia's Early Spring[20] in 1963 were criticised by Slovak economists such as Hvezdoň Kočtúch, Viktor Pavlenda and others. Likewise, Ján Ferianc and Pavel Turčan criticised the methods used to achieve Slovakia's development in the common state. In their opinion, it followed historically obsolete paths and built only on the traditional development of Czech industry, copying its sectoral and territorial fragmentation, excessive development of basic industries and which tied up large amounts of labor force in inefficient productions.

The continuation of these tendencies could not lead to Slovakia's society and economy reaching the level of the Czech lands in the short run. In their opinion, maintaining these development trends could not lead to reaching a balanced economy in both regions even within a timespan for which extrapolation can make any sense.[21]

According to Kočtúch and Pavlenda, the course of the levelling-up process from the end of the 1940s could be described by several relevant theses – Slovakia's economic underdevelopment was eliminated, and some relative differences between the economic development in Slovakia and the Czech lands were also erased, but this process was not as intensive as to reduce the absolute differences in some important indicators. On the opposite, these continued to grow bigger.

Some critical voices also pointed out that the socialist industrialisation of Slovakia consisted in the implementation of a number of investment projects, but failed to create the subsequent economic connection between the different newly built enterprises. For example, processing plants were not sufficiently coupled with companies in the basic industry, and semi-finished products were shipped over to ever-expanding processing companies in the Czech lands.[22] The fact that the technical level of these new industries was low and many plants were already obsolete at the time they were being designed and built, was also a shortcoming in Slovakia's industrialisation.

Of course, contemporary propaganda constantly and zealously highlighted the successful socialist industrialisation in Slovakia. They would list all newly built industrial plants at which large numbers of people were employed. That is true, the country was industrialised, thousands and thousands of new workers joined the new plants and in the early 1960s, namely in 1963 – 1964, Slovakia became an industrial-agricultural country, meaning that more people worked in the industrial sector than in agriculture. On the other hand, several negative aspects that could be seen for a long

[20] For more details, see Londák, Miroslav – Sikora, Stanislav – Londáková, Elena: *Predjarie*, passim.
[21] Ferianc, Ján – Turčan, Pavol: Prístupy k analýze priestorového usporiadania československej ekonomiky. In: *Ekonomický časopis* vol. 14, 1966, p. 184.
[22] Ibidem.

time were not discussed in public in spite of the fact that party leaders and several state institutions were aware of them. A major problem that also affected the country's overall economic development in the post-February period, was that new work opportunities in industry and economic development in general did not follow demographic development, which was completely different in the Czech lands and in Slovakia.

Alexander Dubček became the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPS in the spring of 1963 and gradually identified with the criticism that could be heard in the country in Slovakia's Early Spring. Dubček also had several analyses[23] at his disposal, which pointed out the negative effects of Šik's ongoing economic reform in Slovakia. But what irritated him the most were the results of the long-term investments ordered by Prague, which practically took no account of the different demographic development going on in Slovakia and the Czech lands. Their results are documented in the following table:

Table 2

Increase in the number of inhabitants, working age population and work opportunities in Czechoslovakia as a whole, and their share in Slovakia and the Czech lands in 1948 – 1967[24]

Indicator	Absolute figure in Czechoslovakia	ČR v %	SR v %
Total population increase	1 993 987	48,79	51,21
Total workforce increase	774 737	38,87	61,13
Increase of population in productive age	605 011	29,86	70,14
Increase in the number of work opportunities in the national economy	1 080 170	74,94	25,06
Increase in the number of work opportunities in industry	920 236	65,35	34,65

Of course, Dubček did not have exactly a table like this at his disposal, but he knew the approximate figures. Dubček called the situation shown in the last two lines an inverse ratio. The figures speak for themselves. Despite the fact that Czechoslovakia had a planned economy and that the socialist industrialisation of Slovakia was funded using countrywide sources, twenty years after February 1948, Slovakia still accounted for just 25 percent of the new work opportunities although it accounted for over 70% of the growth of population in working age in the whole Czechoslovakia. At the same time, Slovakia accounted for less than 35% of the countrywide increase in work opportunities in industry, despite the fact that after the end of WWII the Czech lands already had a much higher degree of industrialisation. For all these circumstances there is reason to say that Slovakia's economic development after February 1948 was one of the many reasons that led to the Czecho-Slovak spring of 1968.

[23] For more details on the analysis of Slovakia's Planning Commission, see Londák, Miroslav – Sikora, Stanislav – Londáková, Elena: *Predjarie*, p. 240 et seq.

[24] Calculated on the basis of the publication *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR*, p. 434, 635, 460 and 661.

More relaxed political conditions were most visible in the cultural sphere. While being a kind of seismograph of the time, *culture* actively participated in the whole transformation society was undergoing. In the second half of the 1950s, literature and fine arts stepped out of the boundaries of communist cultural policy and after 1957 several independent groups of artists (the August 29 Group, the Galanda Group, Group 4) emerged and, turning their back to socialist realism, resumed the legacy of interwar Slovak modernism and avant-garde.

On the threshold of the 1960s, they were followed by a new generation of artists who irresistibly "rehabilitated" abstract art. This new stream bravely set out on their own path, trying new methods of formally simple but ideologically even deeper artistic creation, looking for new meanings in seemingly ordinary objects and *performances* that were first presented at private "confrontations" of conceptualists.

Open to free interdisciplinary communication, they engaged in common projects with photographers, filmmakers, musicians etc. Likewise, sculptures became part of modern architecture (Jozef Jankovič † 2017).

More relaxed international political conditions and closer contacts with the world "on the other side of the Iron Curtain" also contributed to the extraordinary boom Slovak culture experienced in the 1960s. Previously forbidden works were translated and many international celebrities visited Bratislava in 1963 – 1965 (Jean Paule Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Allen Ginsberg, Roger Garauda, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and with him the first "western" co-production of *The Man Who Lies* (*L'Homme qui ment*, 1968),[25] as well as several music groups. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the 1960s were characterised by a livid Beatle-mania. Numerous music groups of 15-year-olds appeared, captivated by Big Beat, which best reflected the feelings and desires of the young generation.

Slovakia's young film creation also found itself on the threshold of its greatest era. The first groundbreaker was director Stanislav Barabáš with his film *A Song about the Gray Pigeon*. But it was Štefan Uher's *The Sun in a Net*, dedicated to an unadorned "socialist" everyday life, that Miloš Forman called the *John the Baptist* of the "*new wave*" in Czech film. These artists forgot about great heroes and socialist optimism and began an extraordinarily creative period rich in formal experiments and original works of art. While the first wave of artists re-addressed topics that had been taboo until then, the new generation that emerged in the late 1960s embarked on their own convention-free path depicting metaphorical improvised works on the one hand (Juraj Jakubisko, Elo Havetta), but also providing a new view of "socialist" everyday life. (Dušan Hanák).

Like film production, Slovak performing arts and theatre truly bloomed. For years they churned out prominent actors, set designers and directors, whose exceptional productions were also presented on television, e.g. in the program called Bratislava Mondays. Opera and ballet thrived as well, and many of their major stars managed to catch attention in stages and competitions abroad (Lucia Popp, later Peter Dvorský, and others).

[25] In 1968 Jean-Louis Trintignant was awarded the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for the main role in this film. Its premiere in Slovakia, scheduled for August 21, 1968, could not take place due to the military occupation.

Writers also came to terms with the trauma of being the abused generation of builders of socialism. Young authors abandoned ideological schemes, "socialist optimism," and defended their "right to disillusionment," just like renown poet Milan Rúfus defended his right "to grief." The older generation of writers and poets (Dominik Tatarka, Alfonz Bednár) was followed by a completely new generation (Miroslav Válek, Ľubomír Feldek, Ján Stacho, Rudo Sloboda, Vincent Šikula and others).

Architecture began to write its distinctive chapter, too. After the neoclassicism and monumentalism of the 1950s, it developed into an innovative and elegant functionalist modernism (the Slovak National Uprising monument and museum in Banská Bystrica by Dušan Kuzma and sculptor Jozef Jankovič, Bratislava's crematorium by Ferdinand Milucký with a sculpture by Vladimír Kompánek, and the inverted pyramid of the Slovak radio in Bratislava by Štefan Svetko). Its dark side was large-scale urbanisation in the form of giant prefab housing estates, which was the result of industrialisation and people moving from the countryside to the new industrial centres, as well as of baby boom years.

While art and culture experienced rapid growth and their outcome was appreciated at many shows and festivals abroad, the political elites, thanks to close communication with the Slovak intelligentsia and under the influence of Alexander Dubček, gradually became an integral part of the democratisation process as well.

Alexander Dubček was the prototype representative of the new generation of party elites and his apparition in the Early Spring became one of the key factors that made possible the political movement in the 1960s not only in Slovakia but also in the whole of Czechoslovakia.[26] Shortly after taking office as First Secretary of the CPS on 8 April 1963, Dubček spoke out for the rehabilitation of the unjustly prosecuted Slovak "bourgeois nationalists" (although at that time it could not be really thorough). He also drew attention to major milestones in the history of Slovakia that had been pushed aside, and went on "bringing back" some important and equally forgotten historical figures to the awareness of Slovak society (Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Ľudovít Štúr, etc.). This is one of the reasons why he came into conflict with Antonín Novotný, the orthodox leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.[27] In 1967, when he criticised the Slovak elites, Novotný went back to the rhetoric used at the beginning of the 1950s. Dubček, who at the beginning had paid attention to party rules and pressure from Prague to silence Slovak critics of the political regime, preferred consensus rather than the use of means of power and gradually adopted some of the critical ideas that were being heard in Slovakia, to eventually become an active and direct participant of these democratisation processes.

One of the most important characteristics of Dubček was that he was not an ossified member of a communist apparatus but, instead, was capable of personal growth. He could listen to experts from different spheres of social life and formulate non-dogmatic politics based on that. Dubček got his communist-party education in the second half of the 1950s

[26] For more details on A. Dubček, see *Alexander Dubček: The Symbol of Spring*. Ed.: Miroslav Londák – Slavomír Michálek. Berlin – Bratislava: Peter Lang & Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2019.

[27] The well-known Czech historian Karel Kaplna called Antonín Novotný an anti-Slovak chauvinist.

at the University of Politics in Moscow. After returning from the USSR he was seen as a promising cadre and one of Novotný's men. Even when the new constitution of Czechoslovakia was adopted in 1960, which further reduced the status of the Slovak national authorities, Dubček did not show any signs of disagreement. The turning point in his personal development was his work as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party for Industry (he joined on 7 July 1960). Dubček not only became part of the centre of power, but also gained access to a lot of secret information related to the economic development taking place in the whole Czechoslovakia, as well as in Slovakia. This caused Dubček to look with different eyes at Czechoslovakia's centrally controlled socialist economy, at the place Slovakia occupied in it, as well as at the economic development Slovakia had undergone after February 1948. Dubček was soon daring enough to express different opinions on investment priorities in Slovakia and eventually also on the competencies of the Slovak national authorities, from the opinions defended by Novotný's political group. That is why in the autumn of 1962, Novotný decided to sent Dubček away from Prague and degrade him from the position of Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, i.e. from being Secretary at central level to being Secretary at provincial level. Although Dubček spoke out in favour of Slovakia's national interests during the Early Spring, it is necessary to emphasise that he was by no means a nationalist. In fact, until the end of his life he was rather a Czechoslovak whose main interest was to bring Slovakia to the same economic and social level of the Czech lands.

The first stage of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia ended in 1967. Dubček's speeches from September and October 1967 also contributed to this development. Subsequently, in January 1968, a discontinuous phase in the development of Czechoslovakia began. The year 1968 is a significant milestone not only in the history of this regime and Czechoslovakia's society, but also an important turning point in the development of the entire Eastern bloc and the communist movement, especially in the West. The intervention of Moscow and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops showed that Soviet-type socialism could not be reformed in Central-Eastern Europe. The idea at the core of the movement was discredited and its intellectual attractiveness disappeared.[28] West European communist parties broke up with their Eastern counterparts and began to gradually go back to the original workers' movement that had prevailed historically: social democracy.

[28] British historian Tony Judt thus assessed the world-historical effects of the violent suppression of the reform attempt personified by Alexander Dubček: "*The illusion that communism was reformable, that Stalinism had been a wrong turning, a mistake that could still be corrected, that the core ideals of democratic pluralism might somehow still be compatible with the structures of Marxist collectivism: that illusion was crushed under the tanks on August 21st 1968 and it never recovered. Alexander Dubček and his Action Program were not a beginning but an end. Never again would radicals or reformers look to the ruling party to carry their aspirations or adopt their projects. Communism in Eastern Europe staggered on, sustained by an unlikely alliance of foreign loans and Russian bayonets: the rotting carcass was finally carried away only in 1989. But the soul of Communism had died 20 years before: in Prague, in August 1968.*" See Judt, Tony: *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. London: Penguin Press, 2005, p. 447.

The events we associate with the year 1968 occurred for several reasons – domestic, economic and social ones. The first twenty years of the regime revealed a number of problems. Some of them became evident during the Early Spring: Slovakia's inadequate and clearly unequal position within the country, the involvement of the regime and of the Communist leadership with serious and unlawful affairs of the 1950s, the far from ideal course of Slovakia's industrialisation, as well as the overall economic and social development of the country, especially against the developed capitalist countries, which reflected in the standard of living of the population. In connection with the weakening position of the regime in the Early Spring, the population felt a gust of freedom as new possibilities for traveling beyond the Iron Curtain opened.

In the turbulent year of 1968, the accumulated problems of Czecho-Slovakia's society, conditioned by the whole post-war development, became part of the agenda. Questions having to do with the democratisation of the communist regime resulting from the ideas of the so-called "Socialism with a Human Face" were in the spotlight. Likewise was the question of the coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks in a common state, which culminated in January 1968 with the establishment of the Czecho-Slovak federation.

Peter Jašek*

Contacts between Slovak and Croatian Political Exiles in the 70s and 80s

Kontakty slovenského a chorvátskeho politického exilu v 70. a 80. rokoch / Kontakti slovačke i hrvatske političke emigracije 1970-ih i 1980-ih godina

Štúdia sa zaoberá témou vzájomných kontaktov medzi Svetovým kongresom Slovákov ako kľúčovým orgánom slovenského politického exilu na jednej strane a predstaviteľmi Chorvátov v zahraničí na strane druhej. Jeden i druhý exil spájal spoločný záujem formulovaný cieľom bojovať proti komunizmu, ako aj za nezávislý štát. Súčasný výskum je obmedzený z dôvodu komplikovanej dostupnosti archívnych zdrojov. Text sa venuje širšiemu kontextu vzťahov Svetového kongresu Slovákov so zástupcami exilu z rôznych krajín strednej a východnej Európy v sovietskom bloku. Štúdia obsahuje aj rekonštrukciu konkrétnych prípadov vzájomnej spolupráce medzi Slovákmi a Chorvátmi na Západe.

Kľúčové slová: Politický exil, Svetový kongres Slovákov, zahraničná politika, ľudské práva – vzájomné kontakty

The issue of Slovak political expatriates and their activities, especially after 1945, remains unexplored and has so far received little attention by Slovak historiography. This lack of interest is really lamentable considering the crucial role the activities developed by Slovaks abroad had for Slovak history. After all, representatives of the Slovak diaspora played a significant role in almost all major turning points in Slovak history, especially in the 20th century. Some few examples to illustrate this are the crucial part Milan Rastislav Štefánik and the Slovak League of America played in the establishment of the Czecho-Slovak Republic in 1918, the struggle for autonomy throughout the interwar period, the active part Slovak representatives such as Štefan Osuský, Milan Hodža and Peter Prídavok took in WWII anti-fascism resistance in the West, and the significant and still underestimated share Slovak émigrés had in fighting the communist regime between 1945 and 1948, which continued until 1989, alongside the struggle for independence following 1989. Nevertheless, some literature can be found on the topic, which makes it possible to at least outline a basic overview

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of the targeted issues and represents a starting point for future research.[1]

There are several reasons why this topic remains a taboo in Slovak historiography. First of all, it is the over 40-year communist rule and the resulting ideologisation of Slovak historical science in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist dogmas that in the activities of Slovak expatriates saw nothing but "ideological diversion". It is, therefore, regrettable to see that even thirty years after the fall of the communist regime, such misleading approach is still tangible in Slovak historiography… Other objective factors that make it difficult to pay attention to Slovak expatriates is the fact that the relevant sources are not easily available as they are scattered over the archives of numerous foreign affairs offices, Slovak expatriate institutions and private records literally all over the world. It is also necessary to mention many other major subjective factors: ideological bias, insufficient language skills and lack of the funds necessary to carry out costly research abroad.

The fact that the topic of the Slovak diaspora has not been sufficiently and complexly processed goes hand in hand with other issues, one of which is with no doubt the cooperation activities with representatives of movements of expatriates from other Central and Eastern European countries.[2] This paper focuses on the issue of the Slovak community of exiles in the 70s and 80s in connection with the Slovak World Congress. At his point it is necessary to emphasise that the history of Slovak émigrés remains vastly unprocessed, the result of very limited records and relatively out-of-reach sources. The information used to look into this topic comes mostly from the organisation's official Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress, which regularly brought out key documents and was used by all its leading representatives for their publishing activities.

The Slovak World Congress continued the activities organisations of expatriates and individual personalities had been carrying out between 1945 and its foundation in 1971. As a matter of fact, from as early as the end of WWII, Slovak expatriates had been actively struggling against the communist regime. In the vast

[1] For all publications, let us mention at least Hrabovec, Emília: *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte Vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962 – 1989)*. Bratislava 2016; Eadem: Slovenský ústav svätých Cyrila a Metoda v Ríme (1963 – 2013). Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 2015; Jašek, Peter: *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2018; Ličko, Miroslav John: *Ako chutí cudzina? Slovenská demokracia v exile 1948 – 1989*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1999; Sočufka, František (SJ): *Na vlnách Rádia Vatikán*. Bratislava: Dobrá kniha, 1998; Pešek, Jan – Vondrášek, Václav: *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity. Mýty a realita*. Bratislava: Veda 2011; Špetko, Jozef: *Slovenská politická emigrácia v 20. storočí: Jej vzťahy k českej emigrácii a Čechom*. Praha 1994; Idem: *Líšky kontra ježe: Slovenská politická emigrácia 1948 – 1989: Analýzy a dokumenty*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2002; *Slovenský politický exil v zápase za samostatné Slovensko*. Ed.: Ján Bobák. Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 1996; Michálek, Slavomír: *Ján Papánek: Politik, diplomat, humanista*. Bratislava: Veda, 1996; *Politický exil z krajín strednej a východnej Európy: Motívy, stratégie, aktivity a perspektívy na Východe a Západe, 1945 – 1989*. Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2017; Idem: *Protikomunistický odboj v strednej a východnej Európe*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2012; Katrebová Blehová, Beáta: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku v rokoch 1945 – 1950*. Bratislava – Rím: Slovenský historický ústav v Ríme, 2019.

[2] In this respect, the article by Czech historian Jan Cholínský on the contacts between the Slovak World Congress and representatives of the Czech exile movement is rather an exception. See Cholínský, Jan: Political Unification Attempts by Czech Émigrés and Contacts with the Slovak World Congress. In: *Slovak World Congress in the Struggle Against the Communist Regime*, pp. 223 – 259.

majority of cases, groups of Slovak émigrés had been fighting not only against the communist regime, but also trying to change the state order of post-war Czechoslovakia. In fact, 1945 meant not only the end of the independent Slovak Republic State, but also the rapid dismantling of the rights Slovaks enjoyed in the common country of Czechs and Slovaks. In the post-war period, Slovak expatriates became active members of different organisations that emerged in the West and became part of the anti-communist resistance. While being united by an anti-communist stance, they were also divided by their different ideas concerning the constitutional arrangement of post-war Czechoslovakia. Among the best known organisations of expatriates were the *Slovak Liberation Committee* and the *Slovak National Council Abroad*, which promoted the right of Slovaks to their own statehood. These ideas were also supported by different Slovak expatriate organisations, such as the Slovak League of America. In 1949, the Council of Free Czechoslovakia was founded in the United States of America, which subscribed to interwar Czechoslovakia. However, due to its strong pro-Czechoslovak orientation, in the 1960s some of the original members of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia founded the Permanent Conference of Slovak Democratic Émigrés. Among the major achievements by Slovak Catholic expatriates was the establishment of the Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome in 1963, which published religious literature that was often smuggled into Slovakia. Of particular importance was the broadcasting of Western radio stations, which included Slovak desks within the Vatican Radio, the BBC, Radio Nacional de España, Deutsche Welle, as well as the Czechoslovak sections at Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America, and Radio Luxembourg. All these expatriate organisations, in which Slovaks were also active, formed integral part of the Cold War and the bipolar division of the world, so their activities were carried out in this vein.

An important moment for emigration were the events of 1968, when efforts to democratise the communist regime were truncated by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries on August 21, 1968. These events and the gradual imposition of the so-called "normalisation regime" resulted in a mass emigration wave from Czechoslovakia. Statistics show that over 70,000 people did not return to the country, the highest number since the end of World War II. In fact, this figure represents more than 50% of all emigrants after 1945.[3] This wave arrived in western countries at a time of intense unification processes within the structures of Slovak exiles. Their representatives were fully aware that fragmentation and internal contradictions (many of which were being systematically instigated by the Czechoslovak State Security) constituted a major obstacle to achieving a common goal. The new wave of refugees accelerated these unification processes. This is one of the reasons why, after more than two decades, it was at least possible to overcome the differences within the Slovak diaspora. Unity was finally reached in June 1970 when at the initiative of an outstanding Slovak businessman living in Canada,

[3] Podolec, Ondrej: Trestnoprávna represia za tzv. nedovolené opustenie republiky a jej prehodnocovanie v 80. rokoch 20. storočia. In: *Pamäť národa*, a. 14, 2018, nr. 1, p. 35.

Štefan B. Roman, the Slovak World Congress (hereinafter SWC) was established at a General Assembly of Slovak Expatriates that took place in New York from the 19th to 21st of June 1970 as the umbrella organisation of the Slovak political exiles. On that occasion, Roman explained the need to establish the Congress with the words:

> *"Creating the Slovak World Congress is an imperative necessity for Slovaks in order to speak in a unified and strong voice. Among other responsibilities, the Congress shall coordinate the activities of pro-Slovak oriented organisations on the other side of the Iron Curtain as well as in the free world."*[4]

The congress was attended by 282 delegates from 12 countries and brought together 93 major organisations of expatriate Slovak communities and hundreds of individuals.[5]

Štefan Boleslav Roman became the first SWC chairman.[6] Other functionaries were appointed and horizontal and vertical structures were created. The congress was divided into geographical units. Each unit was headed by a vice-president who represented Slovaks in Australia, Europe, South America, the USA and Canada.[7] It was also structured into commissions. At the beginning there were 13 commissions covering a wide range of areas, namely statistics and register, finances, Slovak minorities affairs, politics, affairs of Non-Slovaks in Slovakia, cultural activities, religious issues, scientific and publishing activities, organisation and planning, social issues, media, contacts with Slovakia, and youth

[4] Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: Založenie Svetového kongresu Slovákov. In: *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*. Ed.: Idem. Toronto: Svetový kongres Slovákov, 1981, p. 21.

[5] Ibidem, pp. 23 – 24.

[6] Štefan B. Roman (1921 – 1988), Slovak businessman and industrialist. After finishing elementary school in Slovakia at the end of the 1930s, at 16 he and his older brother emigrated to Canada. He first worked on a farm and, after completing his military service, at a factory. Later on Roman started doing business and founded the Denison Mines company eventually expanding his business activities to other areas such as agriculture, trading industrial raw materials, and finance. From the 1950s, his business flourished and he became one of the most successful entrepreneurs in Canada. He also made contacts in influential circles, both economic and political. The name "Roman's Empire" is eloquent to describe his business and position in Canada's business world. In fact, he was one of the richest businessmen in the country. Despite his success in business, he never forgot the difficult situation Slovaks had to endure in communist Czechoslovakia. At the end of the 1940s, he became a member of the Canadian Slovak League and a signatory to its resolution demanding the right of Slovaks to self-determination. He also took part in other activities carried out by the community of Slovak émigrés and tried several times to unite it in the 50s and 60s. A successful entrepreneur, he supported the publication of Slovak literature as well as different cultural institutions in exile. Being a highly regarded personality, he was a forefront defender of the right of Slovaks to self-determination throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In his opinion, Slovakia's future was to be built on religious and political ecumenism with the cooperation of all those who accept the idea of a free and democratic Slovakia in a free Europe. See also Jašek, Peter: "Roman's Empire" Never Forgot its Roots. In: National Calendar 2018. Martin: Matica slovenská 2017, pp. 214 – 215.

[7] *Bulletin SWC*, nr. 1, 1971, p. 6.

[8] Ibidem, pp. 11 – 13. After the first General Assembly in 1971, the commissions were transformed into departments. There were 9 in total: Organisation and Planning, Finances, Culture and Science, Politics, Religious Issues, Social Issues, Information, Youth, Education and Sport, and also the Department for Contact with Slovaks outside the Congress. Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress, nr. 6, 1971, p. 24. In fact, the organisational structure was revised continuously in order to make it more efficient and to make it meet the current needs of the Congress.

issues.[8] Besides functionaries, the Congress also had a Presidency and a Secretariat, headed by the Secretary General. From the very beginning, the SWC carried out several activities, the most visible of which were its general assemblies, at which decisions were made about the congress program line, the most important documents were approved, and officials were elected. The importance and prestige of the General Assemblies were endorsed by the presence of influential politicians of the countries in which they took place, especially representatives of the Canadian government and US congressmen.[9]

Despite the fact that the Congress had to face unjust defamation and was branded as a "fascist" organisation and a preserver of "populist" emigrants,[10] this supreme institution of Slovak exiles, which was represented by such prominent personalities as Štefan B. Roman, Dušan Tóth, Jozef M. Kirschbaum, Marián Šťastný, Štefan Osuský, Andrew Grutka, Jozef Mikuš, Ján Okáľ, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, Eugen Löbl, Jozef Staško and Emanuel Böhm, and which associated all major organisations and unions of Slovak émigrés including the Slovak League of America and the Canadian Slovak League, it had a clearly formulated anti-communist program and sought to achieve the right of Slovaks to self-determination. In addition, the congress itself was built on foundations of national and religious ecumenism, included Slovaks of different ideological factions, outlined Slovakia's democratic orientation after the fall of the communist regime in all its program documents, and openly committed to political pluralism, the ideas of Western democracy and the observation of human and civil rights.[11]

Foreign policy was of particular importance within the activities of the SWC, as the destinies of smaller nations always depended on the policy of the determining powers. The Congress attributed the Slovak question an international character and tried to persuade the representatives of the Western powers to consider it an international problem rather than an internal issue of Czechoslovakia.[12] For this demand it sought support not only on the American continent but also in Europe, where it actively monitored the integration process of the West European countries. The "European policy" of the SWC incited important meetings

[9] Unfortunately, Slovak historiography has not yet addressed the activities of the SWC. Although there are a few articles of a memoir character, the first comprehensive publication is the quoted collection of contributions from the scientific conference "*The Slovak World Congress in the Struggle Against the Communist Regime*". Ed.: Peter Jašek.

[10] The response of contemporary communist propaganda to the activities of the SWC, see Jablonický, Viliam: Slovak World Congress in the Struggle for a Free, Democratic and Pluralistic Slovak Republic. In: Anti-Communist Resistance in Central and Eastern Europe, pp. 864 – 866.

[11] See several declarations issued by Congress, e.g. Rome Declaration of the General Assembly of the World Congress of Slovaks on June 21, 1975 in Rome. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, a. 5, 1975, nr. 21, pp. 14 – 15; Manifest of the World Congress of Slovaks, adopted at the General Assembly in Washington DC in May 1978. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, a. 8, 1978, pp. 32 – 36; Resolution of the World Congress of Slovaks, adopted at the General Assembly in Toronto ON, 3. July 1987. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, a. 17, 1987, nr. 77, pp. 6 – 7; Resolution of the World Congress of Slovaks on the Persecution of Jews in the Slovak Republic during World War II, adopted at the General Assembly in Toronto ON, 3. July 1987. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, a. 17, 1987, nr. 77, pp. 6 – 7.

[12] See Hrabovec, Emília: Generálne zhromaždenie SKS v Ríme 1975 v kontexte slovenského a medzinárodného vývoja. In: *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*, p. 97.

of its representatives with leading Western politicians, such as the visit of a Slovak delegation headed by Štefan B. Roman to the European Parliament in Strasbourg or its regular presence at the Follow-up Conferences to the Helsinki Accords in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna. The Congress thus represented Slovakia at international events before the Western world and acquainted important world politicians with the Slovak question.

At the same time, SWC representatives issued memoranda and resolutions that systematically pointed out the problems Slovakia faced in communist Czechoslovakia. Worth mentioning are, for instance, the demand to create a Slovak ecclesiastical province (which was successfully fulfilled in 1977) or a protest against the occupation of Slovakia by Warsaw Pact troops. In several memoranda, they drew attention to the violation of human and civil rights as well as of religious freedoms in Slovakia. Perhaps the most significant act of this kind was *the Memorandum on Human Rights Violations* in Slovakia, submitted to US President Jimmy Carter. Other important events include the four World Festivals of Slovak Youth organised in the 1980s with the participation of hundreds of young Slovaks from different parts of the world, international conferences on Slovak history and culture, dozens of publications on Slovakia distributed to leading world libraries and, last but not least, the quarterly *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, which became one of the leading periodicals of émigrés in general.[13] Something that speaks for all the activities carried out by the SWC is the fact that the biggest protest against the communist regime during the normalisation period in Slovakia, known as the Candle Demonstration, was initiated within the Congress.[14] Worth mentioning are also several documents and memoranda that pointed out violations of human rights and religious freedoms in Slovakia.[15]

Creating the SWC was an extraordinary achievement in the history of the Slovak diaspora that in this way became united as it had never been before and would never be later on. From its very beginning, the Congress had its own foreign policy, gave the Slovak question an international character, and demanded "*international justice in the form of full democratic statehood*" for the Slovak nation, as stated in the declaration adopted at the preparatory General assembly of the Slovak World Congress in New York on June 21, 1970.[16] The SWC foreign policy focused on the western democracies. Equally important was its policy towards the nations that found themselves under the power of the Soviet Union. At the same assembly, an SWC resolution unequivocally declared its intention

[13] See Jašek, Peter: Bulletin Svetového kongresu Slovákov ako vrcholové periodikum slovenského exilu v 70. a 80. rokoch 20. storočia. In: *Periodiká v minulosti a súčasnosti*. Ed.: Angela Škovierová. Bratislava: Univerzitná knižnica v Bratislave, 2018, pp. 231 – 239.

[14] See Idem: Zahraniční Slováci a Sviečková manifestácia. In: *Sviečková manifestácia I. Štúdie*: *Spomienky a svedectvá*. Ed.: Idem – František Neupaer – Ondrej Podolec a Pavol Jakubčin. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2015, pp. 84 − 100.

[15] See, in particular, the Memorandum on the Violation of Human Rights in Slovakia. Washington: Slovak World Congress, 1978, 26 p; also *Memorandum on violation of human rights in Slovakia. Presented to the Government of the Signatory States … on the occasion of the Review Conference in Madrid*. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, a. 11, 1981, nr. 45, pp. 21 − 31.

[16] Declaration. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1971, nr. 1, p. 7.

to cooperate with the expatriate organisations and associations of all countries and nations on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This policy remained of foremost importance to the SWC throughout its existence until the fall of the communist regime. In the long run, this type of cooperation aimed to help the Slovak people to achieve freedom and equality with the other European nations, so that Slovaks would be able to determine for themselves their own fate as well as the form and political regime of their own country.[17] The SWC Commission for Politics, whose first head was a former diplomat during the first Slovak Republic, Dr. Jozef Mikuš, was responsible for this agenda as well as for building up contacts.[18] A major explicitly stated task was "*to cooperate with international and other national organisations developing parallel activities aimed at achieving a new order in Central Europe* [parallel to the activities of the SWC, note. P. J.]."[19] The SWC First General Assembly made some organisational adjustments after which this agenda became the responsibility of the Department for Politics. After further reorganisation made at the Chicago General Assembly in June 1973, building up contacts with representatives of other national diasporas was taken over by the Department of International Relations headed, again, by Jozef Mikuš.

The key issues addressed by the political commission were the geopolitical situation around the world and the respective standpoints of the western countries, the United Nations Organisation and the smaller nations that are not represented in it, communism and its superpower ambitions – which Slovaks considered to be covered by the Brezhnev Doctrine – after 1968, and European integration.[20] As for the UN policy, the Congress presented the issue of Slovakia within the frame of the position of small nations, and in official documents often referred to three communist federations: Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.[21]

Particularly important for the SWC and to which it paid special attention in its foreign policy was cooperation among all nations in Central and Eastern Europe. This cooperation was pre-determined by the fact that all these countries were within the Soviet sphere of influence and

[17] Relations of the WCS with exiled representations of nations neighbouring Slovakia. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1974, nr. 15, p. 1.

[18] Dr. Jozef Mikuš (1909 – 2005) was a Slovak diplomat, university teacher and exile worker. After graduating from the Faculty of Law at Comenius University, he worked in the diplomatic service from the mid-1930s, first within the Czechoslovak Republic, later on within the Slovak Republic, which he represented at embassies in Italy and Spain. After the end of World War II, being persecuted by the communist regime, he emigrated and settled in the USA, where he worked at several universities. Since the 1950s, he was actively involved in the activities of the Slovak political émigrés: first as a member of the Slovak National Council Abroad. Later on he participated in the creation and activities of the Slovak World Congress and became one of its most outstanding representatives.

[19] Course of the General Meeting. In: In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1971, nr. 6, p. 10.

[20] Mikuš, Jozef: Zahranično-politická činnosť SKS. In: Kirschbaum, Jozef M.: *Desať rokov činnosti SKS*, pp. 131 – 132.

[21] Resolution of the World Congress of Slovaks. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1973, nr. 11, p. 34. In a specific resolution that called on the UN to "*study the question of non-free nations on all continents, and hence Slovakia*", *the wording was mentioned:* "(…) *in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czecho-Slovakia itself, a ruling nation of power it holds the smaller peoples in a pseudo-federal structure which allows them to be gradually nationalized…*".

formed an integral part of the Soviet bloc. The SWC new organisation structure adopted at the first Toronto General Assembly in 1971 transformed the commissions into departments. One of the main tasks of the Department for Politics was to "*establish contacts with free organisations of Czechs, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Poles, Croats, Serbs, Slovenes and Romanians*".[22] As can be seen, the Congress explicitly listed Croatian expatriate associations as potential partners for mutual cooperation. In the same spirit, other SWC documents speak of the necessity to acquaint the world with Slovakia and its people, and to cooperate with partners seeking the fall of the communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe. The fact is, however, that the SWC specifically listed those nations that directly neighbour with Slovakia (namely Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Ukrainians), for these nations and Slovaks "*share not only a common destiny, but also a common interest in a new, fairer and more permanent order in Central Europe*."[23] In a speech at the Eighth General Assembly in Toronto in 1987, SWC chairman, Štefan Roman, once again confirmed this stance. The significance of this speech resides not only in the fact that it was Roman's last at the congress, but also that in 1987 the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War was already imminent, so all expatriate organisations, including the Slovak diaspora, were increasingly addressing issues concerning the new organisation of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the communist regime. In his speech, Roman explicitly stated that "*only cooperation among the subjugated nations*" can create the conditions necessary for Central and Eastern Europe to break free. However, he paid special attention to the relations between Slovaks and Czechs, but also made explicit mention of Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians and Austrians[24] – that is, the rest of nations Slovakia neighbours with.

This policy mirrored on the pages of the *SWC Bulletin*, especially in the early 1970s, which made frequent references to the Croatian community of exiles. SWC representatives noticed that the Croatian expatriate press reported on the establishment of the congress in a positive way. Indeed, the magazine of Croats in Canada *Naš put Glas Hrvatskich Republikanaca* informed about the establishment of the congress with the words: "*We wish the Slovak World Congress and the Slovak nation to achieve their national goals, and want to express our full solidarity with them*."[25] In turn, the Slovak expatriate press informed about anniversaries or deaths of important Croatian personalities and exiles. In 1973, for example, the Relations Section of the *SWC Bulletin* informed about the death of one of the leaders of the Croatian community of exiles in Argentina, Dr. Stjepan Hefer, in Buenos Aires in July 1973, who had headed the Croatian Liberation Movement after the death of Ante Pavelič. In this context, the author briefly wonders whether the Croatian émigrés would ever be able to "*overcome their differences*".[26]

[22] From Congress documentation. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1972, nr. 7, p. 11.
[23] Relations of the WCS with exile representations of nations neighbouring Slovakia. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1974, nr. 15, p. 1.
[24] Roman, Štefan Bohuš: Hrdí na vykonanú prácu, novej sa nebojíme. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, nr. 76, pp. 3 – 4.
[25] Ethnic Press in Canada. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1971, nr. 6, p. 19.
[26] *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1973, nr. 12, p. 18.

The *détente* policy and the resulting relaxation of the tensions between East and West within the Cold War in the second half of the 1970s also reflected in the pages of the *SWC Bulletin*. Efforts to promote the right to self-determination of nations and to build up contacts with expatriate organisations of the subjugated nations became a major issue again when the Cold War intensified after 1979. The congress magazine payed increased attention to this issue and published several statements by leading SWC representatives. A 1980 standpoint by František Braxátor, member of the SWC Commission for Politics, mentions in this respect:

> *"Striving to free Slovakia from the Soviet sphere of interest remains one of our main tasks. This consequently implies searching for allies. These include all those in the Western and Third World who fear Soviet imperialism and expansionism, as well as those who have experienced it firsthand, i.e. especially all Central European nations that are in the same situation and, among them, our neighbours in the first place* (…). *Our interest is the same as the interest of the divided Germans, the subjugated Romanians, the constricted Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and other nationalities of Yugoslavia, the Bulgarians, the subjugated peoples of the Baltic republics of the USSR…"*[27]

On this matter, Eugen Löbl, head of the SWC Commission for Politics, said:

> *"It is imperative for us to get the West to focus its foreign policy on the principle of self-determination of all nations that have been deprived of this fundamental right by Soviet imperialism and expansionism. In this respect we need to emphasise that we share the same interests not only with our neighbours, but with all oppressed nations as well…"*[28]

The right to self-determination for "*all nations under the Soviet rule*" is also emphasised in a key General Assembly document entitled *Ideological Foundations and Political Objectives of the SWC*.[29]

The fact that this policy is outlined in this form might give the impression that the Slovak community of exiles was carrying out efforts to develop intensive and close relations with representatives of expatriate communities of all other nations operating in the West. This is just partially true, though. As a matter of fact, the intensity of these mutual relations decreased in direct proportion to the distance between these nations and Slovakia. They were closest with Slovakia's direct neighbours and not so intense with more distant nations, like the Croats, for instance. Besides some common and uniting features, however, there were other aspects that hindered mutual cooperation between different groups of émigrés. The chairman of the SWC political

[27] Braxátor, František: The Poslanie zahraničných Slovákov v súčasnej medzinárodnej situácii. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, nr. 39, p. 18.

[28] Löbl, Eugen: Hovoriť za seba – nie však iba pre seba. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1980, nr. 42, p. 3.

[29] Ideological foundations and political objectives of the WCS. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1981, nr. 48, p. 19. The issue of the Slovak point of view is also addressed in other texts published in the Bulletin, eg. Kirschbaum, J. Stanislav: Seba určovacie právo národov a Slovensko. In: *Bulletin Svetového kongresu Slovákov*, 1986, nr. 71, pp. 7 – 8.

commission, J. Mikuš, named them explicitly. In connection with the Hungarians he wrote "*successful cooperation is hampered by Hungarian revisionist ideas towards the Hungarian minority* [in Slovakia]." In this respect, the position of the SWC was clear: to preserve the territorial integrity of Slovakia within its borders.[30] Mutual cooperation with Ukrainians, in turn, was hindered by "*growing Ukrainian nationalism and cultural expansion in eastern Slovakia*." The relations with the Poles seemed best, although they were also burdened by the loss of part of the northern territories of the Orava and Spiš regions. However, cooperation was considered necessary mainly with the aim to eliminate Soviet influence over both countries. It was the expatriate organisations of these three CEE countries that the SWC primarily wanted to nurture contacts with. This preference for the neighbouring countries and nations, which were supposed to play a direct role in the new organisation of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the communist regime, can be clearly seen in several scientific and cultural activities organised by the congress,[31] as well as in written articles on this topic published in the *SWC Bulletin*.[32]

Official records make brief references to regular meetings with representatives of the Croatian émigrés in the mid-1970s and 1980s in South America, namely in Argentina[33] and Uruguay.[34] No further references can be found in the *SWC Bulletin*, in spite of the fact that one would expect a kind of tacit and logical alliance between Slovaks and Croats resulting from their common Catholic religion as well as by the fact that after World War II the restoration of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia cost both nations to lose their own independent countries. Especially difficult was establishing direct contacts at a political level. Like the Slovak diaspora, the Croats were also very active; to some extent even more radical than the Slovak exiles.[35]

However, there was a bigger obstacle hindering mutual cooperation between both communities. The strong position Yugoslavia enjoyed in the West significantly limited the possibilities for open cooperation between the Slovak and Croatian diasporas. After the rift between Yugoslavia and Stalin in 1948, Yugoslavia had a special status in the policy of the West towards the Soviet bloc. For the West, Yugoslavia represented a qualitatively different entity. It was an independent socialist country, i.e. a completely different category than the rest of the countries on the other side of the iron curtain. Therefore, it was important for the Western powers to preserve Yugoslavia's specific position within the Eastern bloc rather than to weaken it. This is the reason why in its articles, the *SWC Bulletin* made sure not

[30] Mikuš, Jozef: Zahranično-politická činnosť SKS, p. 133.
[31] Ibidem, pp. 133 – 135.
[32] See Idem: Budúcnosť Slovenska v strednej Európe. In: *Bulletin Svetového kongresu Slovákov*, 1971, nr. 4/5, pp. 51 – 54.
[33] Správa podpredsedu SKS Alojza Maceka. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1975, nr. 21, p. 8.
[34] Slováci v Uruguaji oslávili 50. výročie Slovenského centra. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1981, nr. 49, p. 17.
[35] See Molnar, Christopher: The Radicalization of the Croatian Emigré Community in West Germany, 1955 – 1970. In: *Protikomunistický odboj v strednej a východnej Európe*, pp. 791 – 793. Representatives of Croatian exile eg. In Germany carried out a bombing attack against Yugoslav trade mission in Bonn-Mehlem in November 1962.

to criticise Yugoslavia even in questions directly connected with the principle of self-determination of nations, which was so important to the Congress.[36] The SWC and its publication were also careful when describing the conditions the Slovak minority had in Yugoslavia. In this respect, the SWC would repeatedly declare that Slovaks in Yugoslavia had "*significant opportunities for their national, cultural and religious development*."[37] At the same time, the SWC continuously monitored the conditions in which Slovak minorities lived in other communist countries. Especially in Hungary and the Czech Republic, Slovaks were being rapidly denationalised.

However, direct political contacts were not the only way how to establish relations between the communities of Slovak and Croatian expatriates. Another platform for mutual cooperation between the representatives of both diasporas were international forums, especially the follow-up conferences to the Helsinki Accords held in Belgrade (1978), Madrid (1980) and Vienna (1986). The SWC regularly sent delegations to participate at these conferences and on these occasions also issued memoranda condemning the violation of human, religious and national rights in Slovakia. Of course, émigrés from other nations published memoranda at these conferences, too, and also cooperated in preparing this type of documents. Existing records give brief account of cooperation between transnational communities of exiles in Switzerland. In May 1977, on the occasion of the Follow-up Conference to the Helsinki Accords in Belgrade, representatives of expatriate organisations from Central and Eastern Europe met, prepared and handed over to the Swiss government a Memorandum on the Right to Self-determination and Human Rights.[38]

Besides direct political negotiations, another good way for establishing contacts was to exchange information at a professional level. An important role in this respect was played by several scientific conferences the Congress organised in order to acquaint the world with Slovakia. An example to illustrate this type of cooperation was the 1979 scientific conference "*The Right to Self-Determination in Central Europe*", which was held in Switzerland and was accompanied by a relevant publication.[39] Even more important in this respect was the International Symposium of Nations that took place in November 1981 in Rome, to which the SWC sent some of its most prominent personalities and which was attended by representatives of more than 20 different nations.[40] The 1981 SWC

[36] Löbl, Eugen: Niektoré námietky k princípu samourčenia národov. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1980, nr. 41, pp. 9 – 10.

[37] Memorandum on the Violation of the Human Rights in Slovakia presented to the Governments of the Signatory States of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on the occasion of the Review conference in Madrid. In: *Bulletin Svetového kongresu Slovákov*, 1981, nr. 45, p. 25. On several occasions Yugoslavia' s liberal policy on minorities has been stated. See Národnostná mozaika v Európe. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1983, nr. 61, pp. 12 – 13.

[38] Memorandum švajčiarskej vláde k belehradskej konferencii. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1977, nr. 27/28, p. 9.

[39] Kniha o samourčení európskych národov. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1980, nr. 41, p. 22.

[40] -jmk- [Jozef M. Kirschbaum]: Dôstojná reprezentácia Slovákov na „Medzinárodnom sympóziu národov" v Ríme. In: *Bulletin Svetového kongresu Slovákov*, 1981, nr. 49, p. 3. Undoubtedly there were other similar conferences mentioned in the SWC Bulletin. See e.g. Slováci na medzinárodnej konferencii v Londýne. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1982, nr. 55, p. 12.

General Assembly in Toronto included a scientific conference on "*The Future of Central Europe*", which discussed the new organisation of the region after the fall of communism. However, the contributions concerned only Slovakia and its neighbouring countries.[41]

Alongside meetings and cooperation among political representatives of expatriate communities, contacts at a cultural level were equally important. A good example is the performance of Slovak artists from the Slovak-American Cultural Center at the Croatian Center in New York in February 1974. In fact, their presentation was such a success that they were invited again for another performance. The article the *SWC Bulletin* published on this event was significantly titled "*At Our Croatian Brothers*" (*U bratov Chorvatov*).[42]

Slovaks in exile were connected with the Croats by the personality of the writer Martin Kukučín. When in 1978 the SWC proclaimed the Year of Martin Kukucin, one of the important events was the ceremony under the Kukucin's statue in Slovak Jesuits at Cambridge, Ontario, which were created by Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. The whole event should also serve to highlight the friendship between Slovaks and Croats in exile.

This article has tried to outline the relations between the representatives of the Slovak World Congress as the supreme institution of the Slovak political exiles and the representatives of the Croatian émigrés. Preparing this paper unveiled a significant lack of sources concerning the activities carried out by Slovaks in this respect. In fact, the official periodical of the congress contains very little information on the mutual relations of the Slovak and Croatian expatriate communities.[43] Therefore, it was necessary to approach this topic from a wider perspective to include the relations between the SWC and representatives of the exile movements of other nations under the influence of the Soviet Union and the efforts carried out by the SWC to promote the policy of self-determination of nations for all the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. Future research on the issue should, therefore, focus mainly on expanding the existing source base on issues concerning both the Slovak as well as the Croatian communities of exiles.

[41] Konferencia o „Budúcnosti strednej Európy". In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, 1981, nr. 47, p. 18.
[42] U bratov Chorvátov. In: *Bulletin of the Slovak World Congress*, nr. 13, 1974, p. 19.
[43] Based on research in different Slovak archives in Canada, including the personal records of Ján Okál and Jozef Mikuš.

Beáta Katrebová Blehová*

The Split of the Czecho-Slovakia in an International Context: An Outline of the Issue

Rozdelenie Česko-Slovenska v medzinárodnom kontexte: náčrt problematiky / Razlaz Češko-Slovačke u međunarodnom kontekstu: prikaz problematike

Po júnových voľbách v roku 1992 bolo viac než isté, že Česko-slovenská federácia nebude mať trvácnosť a medzi najdôležitejšie otázky spoločných rokovaní medzi víťazmi volieb, Vladimírom Mečiarom a Václavom Klausom, patril spôsob a čas rozdelenia štátu. Z dokumentov uložených v archíve bývalého Ministerstva medzinárodných vzťahov, ktoré dokumentujú stretnutia predsedu vlády Mečiara s diplomatickými zástupcami Európy a Izraela, je zjavné, že slovenská vláda na rozdelenie štátu nebola v dostatočnej miere pripravená a jednoznačne preferovala konfederáciu pred samostatným štátom. Z dokumentov tiež vyplýva, že vlády štátov susediacich so Slovenskom ako aj Francúzsko a Taliansko brali možný rozpad Česko-Slovenska na vedomie, požadovali však ústavný postup, čo bolo v kontexte násilného rozpadu Juhoslávie viac než pochopiteľné. Najmä Poľsko a Ukrajina sa k vyhláseniu štátnej samostatnosti Slovenska stavali pozitívne a podporovali snahy slovenskej vlády. Postoj Spojených štátov amerických je zatiaľ možné verifikovať len na základe rozhovorov prezidenta Georga W. Busha s posledným česko-slovenským prezidentom Václavom Havlom. Z nich vyplýva, že USA síce rozdelenie Česko-Slovenska nevítalo, nepodniklo však žiadne kroky, aby mu zabránilo. Všeobecne však možno konštatovať, že postoj západných štátov, predovšetkým USA ako aj postoj Ruska k vzniku dvoch samostatných štátov v strednej Európe nebol dodnes historickou vedou a prakticky ani širším spoločenským diskurzom náležite reflektovaný. Bolo by preto zmysluplné aj s blížiacim sa okrúhlym výročím vzniku samostatnej Slovenskej republiky v roku 2023 venovať medzinárodnému kontextu rozpadu Česko-Slovenska náležitú pozornosť, prípadne usilovať sa o medzinárodný projekt, ktorý by bol prvou hĺbkovou sondou do uvedenej problematiky.

Kľúčové slová: Nežná revolúcia, slovenská diplomacia, rozdelenie Česko-Slovenska, Ministerstvo medzinárodných vzťahov

From the very beginning, the revolutionary events that took place in November and December 1989 had a different character and took a different course in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. In fact, in Slovakia these events are

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known as the "gentle" (nežná) revolution, while the Czechs called it the "velvet" (samatová) revolution. The generally accepted denomination worldwide derives from the Czech expression; i.e. *Samtene Revolution* in German and *Velvet Revolution* in English. Slovak historiography is, therefore, carrying out efforts to make the notion *Sanfte Revolution* or *Gentle Revolution* generally known and make it the matter of international discourse.[1] In Slovakia the Gentle Revolution began on November 16, 1989 – a day earlier than in the Czech Republic – with a student protest in downtown Bratislava. The march had not been authorised by the regime and was attended mainly by students of the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University who protested against the violation of academic freedoms at the university, as well as against the poor conditions in higher education in Slovakia.[2] Although the student march did not directly trigger the revolution or initiated the creation of the first strike committees, in Slovakia it is considered to have been a prologue to the Gentle Revolution.[3] However, its main participants speeded up the situation in Bratislava and in Slovakia when in the University auditorium they literally overthrew the directives of the Faculty of Arts in the morning of November 19 and *de facto* took over the leading position of the new student movement at this institution.[4] The revolutionary situation at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University, where students occupied the auditorium and prepared their first public statement, paved the way for the first revolutionary movement against the totalitarian regime, known as the Public Against Violence (VPN) to be established on November 19 at Umelecká Beseda Club, just a few meters away from the turbulent auditorium. Here, it is necessary to point out that this happened a few hours before its Czech equivalent, the Civic Forum, was established at the Drama Club in Prague. Equally noteworthy is the fact that the first resolutions demanding an investigation into

[1] For further details on the 1989 revolutionary processes in connection with the fall of the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia, see: Suk, Jiří: *Labyrintem revoluce*: *Aktéři, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize (od listopadu 1989 do června 1990).* Praha: Prostor, 2009; Blehova, Beata: *Der Fall des Kommunismus in der Tschechoslowakei*. Wien: Lit 2006; Ondruš, Vladimír. *Atentát na nežnú revolúciu*. Bratislava: Ikar, 2009; *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod*: *Od česko-slovenskej federácie k samostatnej demokratickej slovenskej štátnosti*: *Výber dokumentov a prejavov november 1989 – december 1992*. Ed.: Viera Hlavová – Jozef Žatkuliak. Bratislava: Literary information center, 2002; Jašek, Peter: The Fall of the Communist Regime in Slovakia (1989 – 1990). In: *Securitas imperii*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, p. 2 – 27; *1989*: *Rok zmeny*: *Zborník z vedeckej konferencie, Bratislava, 4. – 5. novembra 2014.* Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: National Memory Institute, 2014; *20. výročie Nežnej revolúcie*: *Zborník z vedeckej konferencie, Bratislava 11. – 12. novembra 2009.* Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: National Memory Institute, 2010; *Die Samtene Revolution*: *Vorgeschichte – Verlauf – Akteure*. Ed.: Niklas Perzi – Beata Blehova – Peter Bachmaier. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009.

[2] For more information on the November 16, 1989 student protest march, see: Juraj Kucharík: Students in Bratislava and March in the City on November 16, 1989. In: *1989*: *Rok zmeny*, p. 154 – 184; Milan Novotný: November 1989 at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava (The Preparation and Course of the 16 November 1989 March). In: *20. výročie Nežnej revolúcie*, p. 138 – 145; *Študentský prológ k Nežnej revolúcii*: *Bratislava 16. november 1989.* Ed: Mária Miková – Martin Homza – Milan Novotný. Bratislava: History of Slovakia, 2019.

[3] See also: *Kronika Slovenska 2*: *Slovensko v 20. storočí*. Ed.: Dušan Kováč. Bratislava: Fortuna Print, 1999, p. 503.

[4] For details see: *Študentský prológ k Nežnej revolúcii, passim.*

the events that took place on 17 November at Národní Třída Street in Prague had no connection whatsoever to each other.[5]

The first public discussion on Czechoslovak Television was broadcast within the Štúdio Dialóg program from Bratislava on November 24. It was the first time during the revolution that VPN leaders met senior communist officials. This actually meant bending the state rules for censorship on television. During the public debate, dissident Ján Budaj, a co-founder of VPN, alongside well-known actor Milan Kňažko, demanded the leading role of the Communist Party to be removed from the Constitution.[6] From the first demonstration in Bratislava Hviezdoslav Square on November 20, the pressure of the people rallying in squares in practically all major cities in Slovakia was so strong that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia met on November 26-27 and issued a resolution publicly demanding the abolition of the leading role of the Party. This happened before the Federal Assembly in Prague officially voted on the elimination of constitutional article no. 4 on November 29.[7]

Likewise, it is necessary to point out that immediately after the fall of the totalitarian communist regime, the problem of the constitutional order of Checho-Slovakia that had been centrally governed for over four decades, re-emerged in all its vigour. The first serious conflict in the relations between Slovaks and Czechs was the election of the new Czecho-Slovak president. Czech dissident Václav Havel was eventually elected by a mostly communist Federal Assembly with the support of the then federal prime minister, Marian Čalfa, known as the "Slovak from Prague". Slovak Alexander Dubček – the protagonist and symbol of the 1968 reform process and who still enjoyed unprecedented popularity twenty years after his political fall, – who was also aspiring to the post, did not become president despite the fact that he had been nominated by the Presidency of the Slovak National Council and was very likely to succeed had direct elections taken place.[8] The disputes over the new constitution, over the new name of the Czech-Slovak country, over the so-called Competencies Law (redistributing competencies between the two republics and the federal authorities) and, last but not least, the arguments over the way in which the economic reforms and the overall transformation from a planned to a market economy were to take place, were the main differences

[5] Ondruš, Vladimír: *Atentát na nežnú revolúciu*, p. 13. For more details on the establishment of VPN, see Jašek, Peter: The Fall of the Communist Regime in Slovakia, p. 11 – 14.

[6] Ondruš, Vladimír: *Atentát na nežnú revolúciu*, p. 14 – 15; Jašek, Peter: The Fall of the Communist Regime, p. 16.

[7] Measures dealing with the current situation, adopted at the extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee of the CPS, 26-27 November 1989. In: *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod*, p. 371 – 372, dok. no. 95. Printed also *Pravda*, 28 November 1989, p. 1, 4. See also Ondruš, Vladimír: *Atentát na nežnú revolúciu*, p. 16.

[8] For more on the election of the Czecho-Slovak president in December 1989 see Suk, Jiří: Prezidentské drama 1989: Alexander Dubček, nebo Václav Havel? In: *Dubček*. Ed.: Miroslav Londák – Slavomír Michálek et al.: Bratislava: Veda, 2018, *p*. 374 – 382. It is believed that the last communist president Gustáv Husák, a Slovak, in an effort to prevent his rival Dubček from replacing him at Prague Castle, appointed Marián Čalfa – who was known as the "Slovak from Prague" and was a communist – President of the Federal Government. According to the valid Federal law it was not possible for another Slovak to become president.

between the Slovak and the Czech leaders concerning the future of their common country. As this issue has already received plenty of attention, this paper will not approach it in more detail.[9]

In the first days after his inauguration, the newly elected first non-communist president, Václav Havel, underestimated the so-called Slovak question when as the goal of his first foreign trip he did not choose the capital of the second constitutional republic, Bratislava, but decided to go to West Germany instead. In fact, his visit to Bonn can be considered to be a sign that Czech foreign policy had abandoned its hitherto anti-German orientation. This friendly attitude towards a reunifying Germany signalised a return to the so-called St. Wenceslas' conception of Czech politics, meaning that the Czechs had turned their eyes away from Slovakia and towards Germany as their strategic partner for the future state conception of the Czech Republic.[10] As a matter of fact, support for Germany's reunification in the context of Europe's integration was not entirely alien to Czech dissident *Charter 77* circles and, obviously, the Federal Foreign Affairs Ministry headed by Jiří Dienstbier adhered to the past initiatives of this dissident movement.[11]

Havel's first speech at the Slovak National Council (SNR) on January 12, 1990, which the SNR presidency considered "*to strengthen the significance of the federal*

[9] For more information on this issue see: Rychlík, Jan: *Rozpad Československa. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989 – 1992*. Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press 2002; Hrnko, Anton: The Establishment of the Slovak Republic on 1 January 1993 (Contribution for discussion). In: *Na ceste k štátnej samostatnosti (Na pamiatku 140. výročia Memoranda národa slovenského).* Ed.: Ján Bobák. Martin: Matica slovenská, 2002; Hrnko, Anton: Political disputes in Slovakia in the summer and autumn of 1990. In: *Historický zborník*, a. 11, 2001, nr. 1, p. 69 – 100. See also the document edition *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod*.

[10] Hrnko, Anton: The Establishment of the Slovak Republic on 1 January 1993, p. 270. Czech dissident Jan Urban, who knew Havel personally, also commented on the fact that Václav Havel and his group underestimated the Slovak question: J. Urban: Václav Havel and his group completely underestimated Slovakia. In: *Teraz.sk*, 22. 11. 2019, www.teraz.sk/slovensko/j-urban-vaclav-havel-a-jeho-skupina-s (22. November 2019); See also: Gál, Fedor – Urban, Jan: *Veľký tresk*, Bratislava: Petit Press a.s., 2019, p. 96 – 97. Regarding the fundamental turn in Czech foreign policy, the words of the normalisation ideologue of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Jan Fojtík, in the presence of his former classmate and influential adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev, Vadim Medvedev, are interesting: "*What do you actually want from us*? *Do you want to throw us overboard*? *If so, then it is enough for us to take St. Wenceslas' crown and take it to the West Germans*." [Čejka, Jaroslav]: *Aparát*: *Soumrak polobohů*. Praha: Fajma, 1991, p. 139. See also Blehova, Beata: *Der Fall des Kommunismus in der Tschechoslowakei*, p. 217.

[11] On March 11, 1985, the so-called *Prague Appeal* was published as document nr. 77/1985 to *Charter 77*. The *Appeal* highlighted the idea of European integration as well as an unspecified "right to self-fulfillment", which was to be granted to the German nation as well. According to the *Appeal*, the Germans themselves had to decide how they imagined the future coexistence of their two countries, which did not indirectly exclude the possibility of Germany's unification. The *Appeal* also proposed the dissolution of military pacts in Europe, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact. The *Appeal* was signed by Czechs Václav Havel and Jiří Dienstbier, as well as by Slovak Ján Čarnogurský. See *Pražská výzva*: *Dokument Charty 77*, nr. 7/1985. www. Usd.cas.cz/wp-content/uploads/prazska_vyzva_listy_1985_2_zm_ocr.pdf (6. December 2019). For details on the relations between Czecho-Slovakia and Germany in the years 1989 – 1992 see: Kunštát, Miroslav: Die deutsche Einheit als erkannte Notwendigkeit: die tschechoslowakische Perspektive. In: *Europa und die deutsche Einheit*: *Beobachtungen, Entscheidungen und Folgen*. Ed.: Michael Gehler – Maximillian Graf. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017, p. 567 – 597.

system of our country and of Slovakia's position in it,"[12] lacked the relevant statesmanlike dimension, was too formal, and fell short of Slovakia's expectations.[13] The plan to create the position of vice-president, who would represent the interests of Slovakia and the position of Slovaks within the country, was also quickly abandoned. Instead, the well-known Slovak actor and revolutionary tribune leader, Milan Kňažko, became just one of President Havel's many advisers. He was supposed to represent the interests of Slovakia, but actually failed to put the Slovak and Czech interests in Prague in balance.[14]

Alongside the transformation process, ambitions of Slovak statehood appeared in Slovakia immediately after the fall of the Communist Party's monopoly. On the one hand, the struggle for self-determination was the logical continuation of the historical emancipation process Slovaks had been developing at least from the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, however, it was a reaction to some incautious steps by Czech political leaders, such as the attempt the federal government made to take over the necessary competencies to address the intricate Slovak-Hungarian relations, which was perceived in Slovakia as a manifestation of Prague's autocratic approach. Furthermore, president Havel wanted to bring back the name the republic had in the interwar period, what also meant adhering to to the Masaryk-Beneš tradition of Czechoslovakism from the First Republic. Likewise, Prime Minister Čalfa wanted to continue preparing a centralist constitution, known as tripartite. All these moves exacerbated animosity between Slovaks and Czechs.[15]

In addition to the long-term efforts towards Slovak statehood that the Slovak political diaspora had been carrying out from 1945, especially the Slovak Liberation Committee, the Slovak National Council Abroad, the Slovak Liberation Council and the Slovak World Congress – a topic that remains little known and largely ignored by historical science, – the first memoranda and political programs demanding the independence of Slovakia began to appear in the country around the spring of 1990.

The first demand to constitutionally anchor the Slovak Republic as a nation-state was raised by the *Memorandum of Slovaks from Southern Slovakia* from 3 March 1990, which included the need to make Slovak the official language in Slovakia.[16] This was followed by the *Memorandum of the Sovereign Slovakia Initiative* from 23 October 1990, known as *Sixty-One Steps to Slovak Identity*, which was the direct response to the very low familiarity with Slovakia among the international

[12] Introduction by the Speaker of the Slovak National Council (SNR) Rudolf Šuster. For more, see *Spoločná česko-slovenská digitálna parlamentná knižnica. Stenografická správa o 20. schôdzi SNR, konanej 12. januára 1990*. Stenozáznam. Www.nrsr.sk/dl//Browser/Document?documentId=1473 (21. May 2019).

[13] Ondruš, Vladimír: *Atentát na nežnú revolúciu*, p. 64.

[14] Ibidem.

[15] Hrnko, Anton: The Establishment of the Slovak Republic, p. 271.

[16] The so called *Šurianske memorandum Slovákov z juhu*. For more, see: Hrnko, Anton: Political Disputes in Slovakia, p. 69 – 70; Mulík, Peter. When the Door to Slovak Independence Opened. National Identity and State Sovereignty in Gentle Revolution Documents. In: *Slovenské národné noviny*, 22. April 2013. snn.sk/ked-sa-otvarali-dvere-slovenskej-samostatnosti (21. May 2019); *November 1989 a Slovensko*: *Chronológia a dokumenty (1985 – 1990).* Ed.: Jozef Žatkuliak Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation and Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1999, p. 95.

community in general and the resulting Slovak government's efforts to make Slovakia more visible in Europe and around the world.[17] In August 1971, an outstanding figure in the ecclesiastical history of Slovakia in the second half of the 20th century, Bishop Pavol Hnilica, who was consecrated in secret and had lived in exile in Rome from 1952, in an interview with the agent that communist Czechoslovakia's State Security had deployed to spy on him, declared that Slovakia was a completely unknown tourism destination due to the fact, among other things, that you could find practically no promotional material about Slovakia at the Czechoslovak embassies. Similarly, Bishop Hnilica also pointed out the fact that Slovak science and culture were virtually unknown abroad.[18] This is just one of many examples of the very little awareness the world had of the existence of Slovaks and Slovakia. As a matter of fact, important figures of Slovakia's cultural, scientific and even religious life were too often said to be Czech or Czechoslovak. For not having a sovereign country of its own, Slovakia was in fact *terra incognita* at the international scene.

Making Slovakia more visible abroad was one of the key tasks of the new Slovak Ministry of International Relations, which was established immediately after the June 1990 elections (this topic will be addressed later on).[19] The Memorandum of the Sovereign Slovakia Initiative demanded to declare the laws of the Slovak National Council sovereign over the laws of the Federal Assembly. This, in fact, represented the first step towards achieving state sovereignty. In the relaxed 1990 revolutionary atmosphere, nationally oriented associations and organisations demanding Slovakia's sovereignty were established, such as the Štúr Society and KORENE – the Intelligentsia Society of Slovakia. Matica slovenská, the traditional all-nation cultural institution of the Slovaks, was also reactivated. All these organisations gradually familiarised the public opinion with the idea of an independent Slovakia.[20]

Since the beginning of 1991, considerations of sovereignty began to materialise into real steps in this direction. It is in this context that we need to understand the Call for the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic from 14 February 1991, which was forged by transnational civic organisations,[21] as well as the *Second Memorandum of the Slovak Nation by*

[17] *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod*: *Výber dokumentov*, p. 125. The memorandum has been published as document no. 29 in the sources edition with the same name on pp. 121 – 125.

[18] ABS, f. Historical Fund of State Security, H-530, Mission "METÓD". Record nr. 121/71 (agent under the code name STANO), 6. September 1971, pp. 1 – 3.

[19] Mojžita, Miroslav: *Kňažko/Demeš/Kňažko*: *Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993*. Bratislava: Veda, 2019, pp. 17 – 18.

[20] On August 25 – 26, 1990, a memorial ceremony for Andrej Hlinka was held in Ružomberok, attended by tens of thousands of people from all over Slovakia. The massive multitude carrying banners "*For an Independent Slovakia*" urged the government to take steps to anchor the right to self-determination of the Slovak nation in the constitution and to make Slovak the only official language in the whole territory of the Slovak Republic. Hrnko, Anton: Political Disputes in Slovakia in the Summer and Autumn 1990, pp. 82 – 85.

[21] The Nationally oriented civic initiatives that compiled the memorandum: Sovereign Slovakia, 31 Steps to Slovak Identity, Korene, Slovakia's Intelligentsia Association, the Štúr's Society, Synthesis 90. Document published in *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod*: *Výber dokumentov*, pp. 170 – 173, document nr. 38: Draft Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, 14 February 1991.

Matica slovenská from 8 June 1991[22] and the appeal by the *Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia* on 11 September 1991, which was prepared by Korene, the Intelligentsia Society of Slovakia, and which was endorsed by important political figures such as Vladimír Mečiar, Michal Kováč, Milan Kňažko and Ján Budaj.[23]

On 19 June 1991, at the initiative of some MPs, mostly members of the Slovak National Party, the Slovak National Council discussed the declaration of sovereignty. However, the negative attitude of government officials and VPN leaders caused the proposal to fail.[24] In June 1991, in a special memorandum intended for the Slovak Government and the Slovak National Council, the Slovak World Congress (SWC) supported the declaration of sovereignty and the creation of a new constitution of the Slovak Republic.

In the memorandum, the SWC leadership backed the "*right to self-determination of the Slovak nation, expressed by its full democratic statehood*", which the SWC considered to be "*the goal of its political efforts*", declaring "*support for those political parties, movements and groups that endorse the immediate and most explicit ratification of the constitution of the sovereign Slovak Republic*." The document also recommended that Slovakia join the supranational structures (European Community) as an "*independent political unit*."[25]

The June 1992 parliamentary elections were *de facto* a referendum on the future legal form of Slovakia. As a matter of fact, in these elections the political parties that demanded that the Slovak Republic become an internationally recognised and accepted independent and sovereign country defeated those endorsing the concept of a unitary federation. Under these circumstances, the fact that the Slovak National Council adopted the *Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic* on 17 July 1992, the *Constitution of the Slovak Republic* on 1 September, 1992; *Constitutional Act no. 542/1992 Coll. on the Dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic* on 25 November 1992, and proclaimed the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic on 1 January 1993, was just the logical culmination of Slovakia's emancipation process.

The turbulent revolutionary last month of 1989, the "year of miracles", saw the first plans to establish an institution that would allow Slovakia to actively develop its own foreign policy. In December 1989, the so-called Slovak National

[22] *Dokumenty slovenskej identity a štátnosti*, vol. 2. Bratislava: National Literary Center – House of Slovak Literature, 1998, p. 569.

[23] The Appeal was signed by Mečiar, Budaj and Kňažko. See Copy of the Appeal with the text: I agree with the appeal of the Initiative For a Sovereign Slovakia from 11 September 1991. Korene Archive (in the author's archive). The author of this initiative was artist Viliam Hornáček.

[24] For more, see Rychlík, Jan: *Rozpad Československa*, pp. 196 – 198.

[25] Memorandum by the Slovak World Congress addressed to Slovakia's national bodies, June 1991, Bratislava. In: *Literárny týždenník*: *Časopis Spolku slovenských spisovateľov*, a. 4, 1991, nr. 25, 21 June, p. 2. The memorandum also recommended a referendum on the adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and accession to supranational organisations, the establishment of the Slovak Press Office, to select advisers to Slovak national authorities from among Slovaks expatriates, dual citizenship, the right of Slovak expatriates to vote in Slovakia, to take into account the know-how and experience of Slovak expatriates when establishing Slovakia's representative offices abroad, a recommendation to the Slovak national authorities to care for Slovak expatriates, and to establish regular radio broadcasting for Slovak expatriates. The author of this article does not know the background in which the memorandum was adopted or who wrote it.

Understanding Government, the product of the revolutionary process in Slovakia and which was intended to bridge the period from the Gentle Revolution to the first free elections, decided to create the International Relations Department at the Slovak Government Office.

The aim of the newly established department was to carry out foreign policy activities alongside the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the June 1990 parliamentary elections, the Ministry of International Relations was established, headed by Milan Kňažko. The relevant department at the government office became part of the new ministry. In spite of the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague did not really welcome the new Slovak ministry with open arms and that establishing it was not an easy and smooth process in the intricate struggle to overhaul the defective federation, its establishment definitely created the conditions necessary for Slovakia's independent foreign policy.[26]

Among the new ministry's priorities were increasing the awareness of Slovakia abroad, as well as developing contacts with Slovak expatriates. Gradually, the Ministry's own activities began to materialise and the first foreign visits were planned. The list of prominent politicians and state officials visiting Slovakia was really long. Just in 1991 Slovakia received the visits of German President Richard von Weizsäcker, Polish President Lech Wałesa, Hungarian President Arpád Gönz, Israeli President Chaum Herzog, Italian President Francesco Cossiga, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, US Vice President Dan Quayle, the British Heir to the Throne Prince Charles, and Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky. As a matter of fact, these were no longer just courtesy stops in Bratislava in the frame of a visit to Czecho-Sslovakia, but negotiations for the preparation of relevant documents.[27]

Prior to the June 1992 elections – which were eventually won by the dominant political parties in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, namely the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) led by Václav Klaus and the Slovak Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) led by Vladimír Mečiar respectively – it was already clear that the differences between these two parties concerning the legal arrangement of the federation were just growing bigger. Klaus demanded either a functional federation or the split of the country. Mečiar's HZDS supported a confederation and presented a gradual implementation plan in its election program, namely: 1. Declaration of Sovereignty by the Slovak Republic, 2. Adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 3. Granting Slovakia international legal subjectivity (which would make it possible for the country to establish direct bilateral relations), 4. Organising a referendum[28] on Slovakia's sovereignty and on revising the relations with the Czech Republic, and 5. Conclude

[26] For more on the establishment and functioning of the Ministry of International Relations headed by Milan Kňažko and Pavol Demeš, on the vicissitudes of the unequal status of the Federal Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Ministry of International Relations in Bratislava and on the definition of their competencies, see: Mojžita, Miroslav: *Kňažko/Demeš/Kňažko. Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993*, pp. 17 – 39.

[27] Ibidem, p. 52.

[28] Unlike Czecho-Slovakia, a successful referendum was held in Croatia on 19 May 1991. As many as 93% of the 83% of all eligible voters who took part in it, voted in favour of Croatia's independence.

an agreement with the Czech Republic. Except for the referendum, HZDS actually fulfilled all of these pre-election program points.[29]

After the elections, building up the Slovak Ministry of International Relations and its cooperation with its Federal counterpart in Prague's Czernin Palace reached a completely different level, especially in connection with Slovakia's declaration of sovereignty on July 17, 1992. It was already imminent that federal Czecho-Slovakia would not last beyond the end of the year. Therefore, it was necessary to develop efforts towards making Slovakia accepted and *de jure* recognised by the international community. An important recommendation determining the ministry's strategy to gaining recognition for the Slovak Republic was the outcome of the December 1991 Brussels meeting of the Council of the European Communities. At these meeting, the member states adopted the Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe and in the Former Soviet Union. Recognition under these principles required the new states to respect the provisions of the *Charter of the United Nations*, provide guarantees for the human rights and the rights of ethnic and national groups and minorities, respect the inviolability of all frontiers, accept all relevant commitments with regard to disarmament, and commit to settle by agreement all questions concerning State succession and regional disputes.[30]

In the first weeks after the 1992 elections, reelected Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar carried out a series of meetings with diplomats accredited at Prague and Bratislava embassies as well as with foreign politicians, aimed to inform their governments about the current situation and acquaint them with Slovakia's stance concerning this development. Part of these reports is stored in the diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava. Most of these meetings took place at the Slovak Government Office, more exactly at the Department of International Relations and Diplomatic Protocol, in the presence of the head of the department and an interpreter. At these talks, the Slovak Prime Minister made an introductory speech presenting the government's position on the main constitutional issues. From these words it is evident that in June and July 1992 he preferred a Confederation, even after Slovakia's sovereignty declaration. At a courtesy visit on July 22, Mečiar literally told Dutch Ambassador Hans J. Heinemann that Slovakia aimed to have a status of equality with the Czech Republic, "*becoming a Confederation, but the Czech Republic demands either*

The Serbian minority in Croatia boycotted the referendum. On 25 June 1991, the Croatian Parliament ratified Croatia's state independence in line with the result of the referendum. However, Croatia's independence was not internationally recognised until 15 January 1992 after military operations between Croatian military forces and the Yugoslav army, which left many casualties on both sides. See Edgar Hösch: *Geschichte der Balkanländer*: *Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 4th updated and extended edition. Munich: Beck, 2002, pp. 276.

[29] The State of Law in the election programs of the political parties and movements that made it to the Slovak National Council, 5 – 6 June 1992, In: *Dokumenty slovenskej identity a štátnosti* 2, nr. 313, pp. 575 – 576. See also Rychlík, Jan: *Rozpad Československa*, p. 274 – 275. In his book, Rychlík does not pay any attention to the Czech election program. The ODS must have had a plan for the division of the federation, though. This is a topic historiography has generally paid little attention to.

[30] For more details, see Mojžita, Miroslav: *Kňažko/Demeš/Kňažko*, pp. 71 – 72.

the current status or an immediate break-up" which, in his opinion, was not in the interests of neither republic.[31] On the same day he told German Ambassador Hermann Huber that "*while the Slovaks were still moving at an ideological level, the Czech leaders had been preparing for the split of the country for over one year.*"[32]

Mečiar told Special Commissioner of Austria's Foreign Affairs Minister, Albert Rohan, who arrived in Bratislava on July 20 for an update on the situation in Slovakia, that the Czechs had rejected all common priorities proposed by Slovakia in fields like a common market and currency, state defence, civil rights protection, free movement of capital and individuals, and foreign policy coordination. The Slovak PM emphasised that the Slovak government wanted to stick to the constitutional process, but admitted that the Czechs were considering taking unilateral steps. Before Rohan, Mečiar also commented on the succession rights: "*The Constitution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic grants succession rights to both republics, but the Czechs are pulling strings to take over full succession*."[33] The Slovak PM was even more open to Polish ambassador Jacek Baluch.[34] At the beginning of their meeting, Mečiar told Baluch the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was going through a crisis as there was no will to continue together. The Czechs were pushing the split of the country by the end of September 1992. This, however, was completely unacceptable for Slovakia. Mečiar also stated that the federal interior ministry, television and radio were trying to isolate Slovakia from the world. He even used the term "Cold War" to describe this regrettable situation. Slovak PM added that there were efforts to present the Czech Republic as the only successor state. The Czechs would have prepared a secret report in case of the division of the republic, on which they had been working since 1990. To this, the Polish ambassador replied that "*evidently Slovaks are not trying to unilaterally break up the republic*" and that Poland was ready to become a stabilising factor.[35] These brief statements by the Polish ambassador seem to support the split of Czecho-Slovakia. However, he also spoke of the necessity to find a suitable solution to the rights of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. In fact, according to the ambassador "*a deterioration of these relations would necessarily lead to the deterioration of the relations between Poland and Slovakia*."[36]

The Slovak Prime Minister was extraordinarily open in an interview with

[31] Diplomatic archives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MZVaEZ), Ministry of International Relations Fund (MMV), scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of the Dutch ambassador, 22 July 1992.

[32] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of the FRG in ČSFR, 22 July 1992.

[33] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of Commissioner A. Mock, 20 July 1992, pp. 1 – 2.

[34] Prof. Jacek Baluch (1940 – 2019) – Prominent Polish Polonist and Bohemist, literary historian, expert in Czech and Slovak literature, worked at Jagiellonian University and was Polish ambassador in Prague from 1990 to 1995. For more, see: O życiu, ambasadorowaniu i miłości do literatury: Rozmowa z profesorem Jackiem Baluchem. In: *Kontakty XVII.* Bratislava: Slovensko-poľská komisia humanitných vied, 2019, pp. 81 – 98.

[35] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of Polish ambassador, 22 July 1992.

[36] Ibidem.

the French ambassador, who showed concerns about bringing over war from Yugoslavia to Central Europe. Mečiar reassured him that Slovakia had not intentions of becoming a destabilising factor. In his opinion, a more imminent threat was the development in Hungary, which was witnessing growing nationalism, demanding collective rights for Hungarian minorities abroad and, in this respect, expressed concerns the Hungarian minority in Slovakia might want to split up. He literally said:

> *"Hungarian nationalist-oriented parties [in Slovakia] are receiving strong support from Hungary. That is why they made it into the parliament. They have created a picture of the Hungarian minority being in danger."*

Regarding President Havel's resignation, Mečiar told him that Havel was getting ready to run for President of the Czech Republic. Further into the meeting, Mečiar acquainted the French diplomat with the development that was expected to take place after both republics adopted their new constitutions: the Czechs would insist on the split of the country on September 30 or December 31, 1992 at the latest. The Slovaks would continue supporting the idea of a confederation, or at least the application of the Maastricht agreements between the Czech and Slovak Republics. He explicitly said Slovakia was not ready to split and would insist on a constitutional procedure and a referendum.[37] Mečiar repeated this same claim about Slovakia not being ready for independence to the Ambassador of the Great Duchy of Luxembourg during a courtesy visit to the Slovak Government Office on 16 July 1992.[38] Similar statements were made before the leaders of the World Jewish Congress who visited the Slovak Government Office on July 10. Mečiar told them that Slovakia would welcome being part of a confederation and declaring its sovereignty, but that the Czechs emphatically rejected this possibility.

He also said the Czech Republic was better prepared to become an independent country and did not want to wait beyond the end of 1992. The President of the World Jewish Congress, L. Keller, replied: "*it is sad to see the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic split*" and said that the World Jewish Congress still hoped the republic would not divide. He also expressed concerns about the spread of anti-Semitism.[39]

Except for the leaders of the World Jewish Congress, these diplomats did not object to the split of Czecho-Slovakia, but in general adopted a pragmatic approach and simply accepted the ongoing development. The Slovak Prime Minister was reassured several times that their governments were ready to accept the Slovak Republic as an equal partner. The concerns they expressed during these talks only regarded the way the federation was to be divided. The international community wanted to make sure that what happened in Yugoslavia would not repeat and that Czecho-Slovakia would

[37] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of French ambassador in ČSFR, 20 July 1992.

[38] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of the ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg E. Bremer, 16 July 1992.

[39] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), a record of the visit of the delegation of the World Jewish Congress, 10 July 1992.

split in a constitutional way without any use of violence. The Slovak Prime Minister provided all these guarantees to his foreign partners. The biggest concerns western politicians had regarded the domestic political development. At a meeting with Mečiar on 12 July 1992, Catherine Lalumière, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, expressed these concerns about Slovakia's domestic development, which in her words was marked by "*nationalism, ultranationalism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism*." She was also concerned that a war like that in Yugoslavia might follow and, as she literally put it, she was "panic-stricken" by such a possibility. She called the governing HZDS party a "national socialist movement," which was to evoke associations with the past [regime]. Despite these concerns, Lalumière assured the Slovak PM that "*the West respects the right of nations to self-determination*" and that the development in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was perceived as an internal matter.[40] To complete the overall picture of this conversation, it is necessary to add that Slovakia's PM dissipated all the concerns of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. He assured her that there were no "nationalist deviations" in Slovakia's political parties, that HZDS was a social-democratic movement, and that the basis of the Slovak constitution would be the *Charter of Human Rights*. He also denied that the Slovak government wanted to drive out members of the Hungarian minority and, in turn, expressed concerns about the Slovak minority in Hungary being assimilated. He concluded by saying that he had repeatedly assured his Czech counterpart that not a single shot would be fired from Slovakia.[41]

In August 1992, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations, Milan Kňažko, submitted a government proposal to change the name of the Ministry of International Relations for Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations. The reason for this move was that it was the new ministry's responsibility to integrate the Slovak Republic into the international community, which logically resulted from the requirement to anchor international legal subjectivity in Mečiar's government program.[42]

In this respect, the primary task was to deepen Slovakia's bilateral relations with its neighbouring countries, and to gain support for Slovakia's imminent independence. In the autumn of 1992 Minister Kňažko made several trips to neighbouring countries: in September he visited Italy, in October France, in November Austria and Ukraine, and in December Poland. Back in April 1992, his predecessor, Pavol Demeš, had visited Budapest and, reciprocally, Hungary's Foreign Affairs Minister, Géza Jeszenszky, visited Bratislava in September 1992.[43] At the very same time, Hungary unilaterally terminated the Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros Waterworks agreement and the leaders of the Hungarian minority parties in Slovakia raised a demand for the territorial autonomy of southern

[40] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 54 (diplomatic reports on visits), report on the visit of the Council Of Europe delegation, 12 July 1992.

[41] Ibidem.

[42] Mojžita, Miroslav: *Kňažko/Demeš/Kňažko,* p. 73.

[43] For more on the visit of Géza Jeszenszky, a descendant of Hungarian squires from Turec, see Ibidem, p. 76.

Slovakia. In spite of the fact that Hungary formally recognised the right of Slovaks to self-determination, it also tried to obstruct Slovakia's admission to the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the Council of Europe, and the Central European Initiative.[44] At an interview with Minister Kňažko during his visit to Poland in early December 1992, Polish Prime Minister, Hanna Suchocka, also acknowledged obstacles being laid by Hungary.[45]

The notorious December 1992 visit of Slovakia's Foreign Ministry delegation to Poland, and the very fact that Kňažko was received by the highest state representatives of this country, namely Polish Foreign Minister Krzystof Skubiszewski, Prime Minister Hana Suchocka, President Lech Wałesa, Senate Marshal August Chelkowski, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm Jacek Kurczewski, and the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, represented an effusive welcome to the new country on the eve of its establishment. It was also a signal to the Hungarian government that Poland did not intend to question Slovakia's sovereignty.[46]

In October 1992, Slovak Foreign Minister incited and paid a visit to France with the aim to deepen bilateral relations with such an important partner for Slovakia as France has undoubtedly always been. French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, declared that in his opinion the search for sovereignty was an essential part of the whole European process. Minister Kňažko informed him in detail about the development of the Slovak-Czech negotiations and the situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. In turn, Dumas promised to provide other member governments

[44] Ibidem, p. 77. The visit of International Relations Minister Pavel Demeš to Budapest took place on 22 April 1992 invited by Hungary's Foreign Minister. This was the first invitation at foreign ministers level by Hungary. They discussed various issues concerning mutual Slovak-Hungarian relations, especially the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Slovak minority in Hungary. Both ministers also addressed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In this respect, Hungarian Foreign Minister said that Hungary had good relations with Slovenia and Croatia, but not with Serbia. They agreed to strengthen the Slovak-Hungarian border crossings, as well as bilateral regional cooperation. Demeš drew attention to the "non-standard" meeting of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia with the State Secretary of Hungary's Foreign Ministry, historian A. Gergely in Komárno, without prior notice to Slovakia's Foreign Ministry and said that many members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia do not speak Slovak. For more, see: Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, reports from business trips abroad, reg. nr. 111 – 113, Travel report from an official working visit to the Republic of Hungary on 22 April 1992, pp. 2 – 6.

[45] According to the travel report from the official working visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Milan Kňažko, Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka said that signing a Free Trade Agreement between the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia would be advantageous for Slovakia for political reasons "*given that Hungary is trying to hinder Slovakia's entry into international life through various channels*." Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 66 (Ministry Office, travel reports), Travel report from the official working visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Milan Kňažko in Poland 8 – 9 December 1992, p. 3.

[46] On the visit to Poland see: Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 66 (Minister Office, travel reports), Travel report from the official working visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Milan Kňažko in Poland 8 – 9 December 1992. In an interview with the National Memory Institute, Kňažko admitted that he felt the greatest understanding towards Slovakia's independence in Poland. For more, see Milan Kňažko: *S otvorenými očami*. The interviewers were historians of the National Memory Institute Ondrej Podolec, Peter Jašek and (Beáta Katrebová Blehová). Banská Bystrica: TBB, 2019, p. 140.

of the European Community with a positive report on this visit and the issues discussed in it.[47] On 6 November 1992, at an official visit to Vienna initiated by Austrian Foreign Minister, Alois Mock, Austria recommended that the assessment of the transfer of the contractual obligations between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Austria to Slovakia and the Czech Republic be made in an accelerated succession process based on meetings of expert groups. This basically meant that Austria did not pose any obstacles to building proper bilateral relations with independent Slovakia.[48] The official working visit of a Slovak delegation to Ukraine on 25-26 November was received with the standards corresponding to bilateral relations between two sovereign states. Ukraine, just like Poland, looked at Slovakia's emancipation efforts with understanding and was ready to be among the first to recognise the Slovak Republic as a subject of international law and to establish diplomatic relations with it.[49] Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister, Anatoly Zlenko, expressed his gratitude in connection with the building that was being prepared for the Embassy of Ukraine on Bratislava's Radvanska Street. Slovakia appreciated the Ukrainian government's unbiassed position towards the Slovakia – Hungary dispute over the Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros Waterworks at the Danube Commission negotiation meetings, and promised not to make any territorial claims. In general, the reports from the official foreign trips Minister Kňažko made in the autumn of 1992 show that the Ukraine welcomed Slovakia's struggle for independence.

So far, it has not been able to establish whether any of the world powers, i.e. the United States, the Soviet Union, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, had a positive or negative attitude towards the split of Czecho-Slovakia and the resulting two new independent states in Central Europe. Practically no research has been carried out on this issue. This is mostly due to the fact that access to the diplomatic archives of these countries is restricted. Nevertheless, in some cases there are reasons to believe that the right diplomatic moves would make these sources accessible to some extent to specialised Slovak institutions. Especially important appears to be the position of the United States of America, which traditionally considers Czecho-Slovakia to be an achievement of their own. In fact, the country originated in 1918 in the framework of post-war Versailles peace treaty as the offspring of liberal democracy based on the right of nations to self-determination, which President Woodrow Wilson anchored in 14 points in January 1918. Although the United States referred to the *Atlantic Charter* of August 1941 and ultimately to the *Charter of the United Nations* itself on the right of nations to

[47] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 7 (Minister Department), Travel report from foreign business trip to France on 7 – 11 October 1992.

[48] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, scatula 66 (Minister Office, travel reports), Travel report from official working visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Milan Kňažko in the Republic of Austria on 6 November 1992.

[49] Diplomatic archive MZVaEZ, f. MMV, Reports from business trips abroad, reg. nr. 111 – 103, Travel report from the official working visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Milan Kňažko in Ukraine, Kiev, 25 – 26 November 1992, p. 1.

self-determination, in the case of Slovakia this right was actually ignored. This happened in spite of the fact that there was a strong community of American Slovaks in the United States throughout the 20th century, and despite the strong efforts the Slovak diaspora in the United States had been carrying out to support the idea of an independent Slovakia (in particular, the Slovak National Council Abroad and its USA branch, which operated directly in Washington and New York and was headed by Slovak diplomat Jozef Mikuš, and after 1970 the Slovak World Congress led by Štefan Boleslav Roman). From the very moment the joint Czechoslovak broadcast within Radio Free Europe was created, prominent Slovak expatriates cooperating with it saw the necessity to create a separate Slovak section. However, their demands were equally ignored. In fact, this requirement was not fulfilled until the day the Slovak Republic was established on 1 January 1993.[50] On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that the leaders of the American government were familiar with the Slovak question, mainly thanks to the Slovak League in America, which had contacts within the State Department by means of Karol Sidor. In June 1950, Sidor had personally visited the State Department.[51] Likewise, in June 1943, being Slovakia's ambassador to the Holy See, he had handed over the memorandum *La Question Slovaquie* to American diplomat Harold Tittman.[52] Last but not least, the establishment and activities of the Slovak World Congress in 1970 greatly helped make the Slovak issue visible to the public all over the world.[53]

Some insight into the attitude US President George W. Bush had towards the Slovak question in 1990 and 1992 can be obtained from documents in the George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). It is mostly transcripts of talks between him, his team of advisers, and members of Czech and Slovak delegations led mostly by President Havel during visits to the White House in Washington. In the first place, these talks show that Bush really respected and trusted President Havel. For example, in August 1991, when the Soviet Union was scheming a military coup against Gorbachev, President Bush called Prague and reassured Havel that Czecho-Slovakia had nothing to fear from Moscow (sic!).[54] At a personal

[50] Beáta Katrebová Blehová: Radio Free Europe and the Slovak World Congress. In: *Svetový kongres Slovákov*: *Zborník z vedeckej konferencie, Bratislava, June 2015.* Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: National Memory Institute, 2018, pp. 186 – 209.

[51] Department of State (Confidential). Memorandum of Conversation, June 14, 1950. Subject: Activities and Views of Karol Sidor. Document in the author's private archive. My gratitude to Mr. Igor Uhrík for providing me with it. See also: Beáta Katrebová Blehová: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku 1945 – 1950*. Bratislava – Rím: Slovak Historical Institute in Rome, 2019, pp. 64 – 66.

[52] For more, see Beáta Katrebová Blehová: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku 1945 – 1950*, pp. 22 – 23.

[53] For more on the activities of the Slovak World Congress, see *Svetový kongres Slovákov v zápase proti komunistickému režimu*. Ed.: Peter Jašek. Bratislava: National Memory Institute, 2018.

[54] In this telephone conversation, Bush literally told Havel: "*We see no Soviet threat to the security of Czechoslovakia nor do we believe they will want to give you any trouble because they have plenty of their own*." George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of telephone conversation (with Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia), 19. August 1991. My gratitude to Prof. Marek Kramer for providing me with documents from George Bush Presidential Library from Davies Center for Cold War Studies.

interview at the CSCE summit in Helsinki on 9 July 1992, Bush expressed full confidence and great respect for Havel.[55] It is no secret that President Bush considered the tense relations between Slovakia and the Czech Republic resulting from the negotiations on the new constitutional order of the federation to be an internal matter of Czecho-Slovakia.

On 22 October 1991, at one of the most important meetings between the presidents of the US and Czecho-Slovakia in Washington, Bush asked Havel to describe in detail the relations between Czechs and Slovaks. Havel told him: Czecho-Slovakia has three alternatives, either to continue the federation in more democratic conditions or to split into two separate states. In Havel's opinion, the second option seemed less likely. The third and worst possibility was legal chaos. Later on, Havel said he had proposed a referendum on the future of the country. However, he said some Slovak politicians had rejected it. Havel told President Bush that only one political party in Slovakia sought independence. According to Havel, Slovakia demanded maximum autonomy, but the Czechs believed that such a common state would sooner or later become inoperative. He literally said:

"I favour a federation but do not want to impose it. The people have the right to decide what kind of state they wish to live in. We support a federal solution by constitutional and legal means. We shall never use power to impose it."[56]

President Bush told Havel he saw the developments in Czecho-Slovakia as an internal political issue and that he was confident the federation would prevail. At the same time, however, he added that the US government was ready to establish a consulate general in Bratislava instead of the existing consulate, in order to strengthen relations with Slovakia:

"[We] are prepared to upgrade our consulate in Bratislava to a consulate general. We hope this will strengthen contacts with Slovakia and be symbolically helpful as well."[57]

After the June 1992 parliamentary elections, when Havel met the US President again at the CSCE summit in Helsinki, they already spoke of the split of the country. Havel described to Bush in detail how this was going to be done. He also reassured his US counterpart that constitutionality was going to be observed and both countries would refrain from any kind of violence. President Bush replied that the United States respected this process as an internal matter [of Czechoslovakia] and did not want to interfere with it. At the same

[55] "A*s the President of the United States, I want to express my full confidence in President Havel and my great respect for him*." George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of Conversation (Meeting with President Havel of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, 9 July 1992, p. 1.

[56] George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of conversation (Meeting with Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia), 22 October 1991, p. 2.

[57] Ibidem. The request to re-establish a US Consulate in the Slovak capital was presented in a Slovak World Congress memorandum to the State Department on November 4, 1989. Memorandum to the Department of State. SNA, f. Dušan Tóth, scatula 15. Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar repeated this request before the American President. George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of Conversation. Meeting with Slovak Leaders, 17 November 1990.

time, Bush made it clear that he accepted the development towards the independence of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. He literally said: *"if there are two separate countries, we want to work with both of them."*[58] Anyway, President Bush openly asked if there was anything the US government could do within the limits of international law to maintain federal Czecho-Slovakia, showing a clear preference for the federation.

The biggest concern of the USA after the end of the Cold War was not whether Gorbachev's perestroika would prevail or fail. What the US diplomacy was afraid of was that Gorbachev's idea of a "common European house" could become true and that the CSCE would become the new security structure replacing the Warsaw Pact as well as the North Atlantic Alliance. According to Mary Elise Sarotte, a US history professor at Harvard University, the main purpose of Washington's (and Bonn's) policy in the early 1990s was to speed up events, to present to the world one *fait accompli* after another in order to keep NATO in Europe.[59] The US administration intended to expand the Atlantic idea over Central Europe. In this respect, at their October 1991 meeting in the White House, Havel reassured Bush:

> *"Czechoslovakia is convinced that the US should be present in Europe* (…). *We believe in the trans-atlantic dimension, not only in the security field, but also the civilisational ties between our countries."*[60]

During his first visit to the United States as president of Czecho-Slovakia in February 1990, Havel had spoken in favour of dissolving all military alliances in Europe. Eventually, however, he seemed to agree with the idea of NATO expanding to Central Europe, which obviously pleased the American president.[61] A diplomatic report from 6 March 1990 by Soviet Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Viktor Lomakin, mentions that Havel supported the presence of the USA in Europe. This suggests that immediately after returning from his official visit to the United States in February 1990, Havel began to favour the presence of NATO in Europe. The secret report by Lomakin states that the priorities of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy had changed towards a clear pro-Western orientation. In his report, Lomakin quotes Havel saying that *"a united Europe shall guarantee a worthy place for the world's strongest democracy, the US."* He added that the US and NATO would become a stabilising factor, and expressed support for US troops remaining in Europe. In this respect, Lomakin writes that "*this completely new approach in Czechoslovakia's foreign policy is dominant*."[62]

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[58] George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of Conversation (Meeting with President Havel of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, 9 July 1992, p. 2.

[59] Mary E. Sarotte: Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to "Bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In. In: *International Security*, a. 35, 2010, nr. 1, p. 136.

[60] George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Memorandum of conversation (Meeting with Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia), 22 October 1991, p. 4.

[61] For more, see Beáta Katrebová Blehová: "Novoje myšlenie" as a revolutionary changes factor in East and Central Europe. In: *1989*: *Rok zmeny*, p. 35.

[62] Političeskoje pismo posla SSSR v ČSSR V. P. Lomakina „O vnešnepolitičeskich aspektach izmenenij v Vostočnoj Jevrope.", 6 March 1990 (tajné). In: *Konec epochi*: *SSSR i revoľucii v stranach Vostočnoj Jevropy v 1989 – 1991 gg.*: *Dokumenty*. Ed.: I. V. Kazarina – T. M. Kuzmičeva – M. J. Prozumenščikov – P. Ruggentaler. Moscow: Rosspen, 2015, pp. 704 – 705.

The current lack of archival sources does not make it possible to completely reconstruct the attitude of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation towards the division of Czecho-Slovakia. The documents that have hitherto been made public, mainly from the former Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which determined the Soviet government's approach towards the countries of Eastern Europe, make no mention whatsoever of the Slovak question.[63] The same applies for the reports by the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System at the Soviet Academy of Sciences (IEMSS) headed by Oleg Bogomolov, a renowned expert on Eastern Europe. As a matter of fact, the IEMSS analysis on the development in Czecho-Slovakia from the Prague Spring to Perestroika, prepared for the Central Committee of the CPSU – the part that has been made public, to be exact – does not address the Slovak question or the relations between Slovaks and Czechs at all.[64] The published part of the report criticises Gorbachev's passive attitude towards the communist nomenclature in the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, and proposes to replace Soviet Ambassador Viktor Lomakin who did not support the new Soviet line. According to the report, the non-interventionist attitude of the Soviet leadership and its subsequent reluctance to reconsider the events of 1968 were the main obstacles hindering economic and political reforms in former Czecho-Slovakia.[65]

During a visit to Slovakia from April 4 to 9, 1989, the Ambassador's adviser at the Soviet Embassy in Prague, Marat Kuznetsov, met Ignác Janák, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS), Slovak Prime Minister Ivan Knotek, and Slovak National Council Speaker Viliam Šalgovič. Kuznetsov traveled virtually throughout the whole Slovakia, met top party officials at district and regional level, and discussed with them the political situation in the country. However, in the only report published so far, Kuznetsov makes no mention of the Slovak question as such. Only partially does the report deal with the relations between Czechs and Slovaks mentioning that the Slovak communist leaders were against the Communist Party being federalised. On the other hand, however, these officials criticised the insufficient representation of Slovaks in the federal bodies as well as Prague's efforts to centralise the economy.[66] Therefore, Moscow must have been at least partly familiar with the fact that

[63] See, for instance, Karner, Stefan –Kramer, Mark –Ruggenthaler, Peter –Wilke, Manfred et al.: *Der Kreml und die Wende 1989*: *Interne Analysen der sowjetischen Führung zum Fall der kommunistischen Regime*: *Dokumente*. Innsbruck – Wien – Bozen: StudienVerlag, 2014.

[64] The original analysis, which is stored in the archives of the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow, has 143 pages. It is, therefore, possible that the Slovak question is addressed to some extent in the original document. See Die Lage in der Tschechoslowakei "*muss geradezu Unruhe hervorrufen. Den sowjetischen Botschafter und führende Sowjetdiplomaten in Prag auszutauschen.*" Bericht des Leiters des Wirtschaftsinstituts der Sowjetischen Akademie der Wissenschaften O. T. Bogomolovs an das ZK der KPdSU, 16 March 1989. In: Karner, Stefan et al.: *Der Kreml und die Wende*, pp. 308 – 313, document nr. 44.

[65] Ibidem.

[66] Dubček, Alexander: "Meine Zeit wird kommen." Bericht der sowjetischen Botschaft in Prag, 18 April 1989. In: Karner, Stefan et al.: *Der Kreml und die Wende*, pp. 335 – 338, document nr. 50.

the Slovak communists were not happy with the situation in the *de facto* inoperative federation.

The most unambiguous stance concerning the relations of Slovaks and Czechs can be found in the report by the Soviet Foreign Affairs Ministry, which was prepared for the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the Department of Socialist States in Europe on May 16, 1990, that is, immediately before the first free elections in Czecho-Slovakia.[67] In general, the report describes big changes in the political system, a fundamental turn in its foreign policy, the strong influence of the Christian Democratic Movement in Slovakia, as well as "growing religious trends in Czechoslovak society after the visit of Pope John Paul II" which would result in the Civic Forum being displaced by the Christian Democrats in the approaching parliamentary elections. Regarding the Slovak issue, the report reads:

"The issue of Slovak self-determination seems to be a serious problem for the future of Czechoslovakia. With the end of the restrictive government of the Communist Party, Slovak nationalism is becoming uncontrollable. It is necessary to prepare for Czechoslovakia becoming a confederation but keeping in mind that there are moods favouring the full independence of Slovakia."[68]

From this unique report from the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is possible to conclude that Moscow counted with the possibility of Slovakia becoming independent as early as in the spring of 1990. In view of the regular diplomatic relations that existed between the Soviet Union and Slovakia between 1939 and 1941, this might not be such a big surprise.[69]

The division of Czechoslovakia and, more exactly, the attitude of the Western democracies and Russia to having two new independent states in Central Europe, which emerged as the successor states of the Czech and Slovak federation, still needs to be properly studied by historical science and become the subject of a wider social discourse. In fact, it is the complete opposite situation to that of the German unification process (and the stance of the international community towards it), which actually constitutes one of the most exhaustively processed events in world and, above all, European history. Likewise, historians have shown notorious interest in the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Therefore, it seems necessary to pay due attention to the international context of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia,

[67] Informacia upravlenia stran Evropy MID SSSR „Vnutripolitičeskaja obstanovka v Čechoslovakii i perspektivy jejo rozvitia," 16 May 1990. In: I. V. Kazarina, et al.: *Konec epochi*, pp. 713 – 715. The report was written and sent to the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU by the Director of the Department of Socialist States at the Soviet MID G. Gorinovich, with the knowledge of I. P. Aboimov. The head of the secretariat of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, V. Carenko, became acquainted with it on 31 May 1990. I. P. Aboimov was Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR.

[68] Ibidem, p. 715.

[69] For more on the Slovak-Soviet relations, see: Beáta Katrebová Blehová: Die slowakisch-sowjetischen Beziehungen, 1939 – 1941: eine ungleiche Partnerschaft. In: *Prague Papers on the history of international relations*. Praha: Karlova Univerzita, 2008, pp. 375 – 428.

or to initiate an international project that can become the first deep study of this issue, especially bearing in mind the approaching round anniversary of the independent Slovak Republic in 2023.

Due to the ongoing war in Yugoslavia, none of the world powers were really interested in slowing down or reversing the split of the Czech and Slovak federation in the second half of 1992. However, it is necessary to consider – and Slovak historical science should pay more attention to this issue – up to what extent this more or less welcoming attitude of the world powers and neighbouring countries towards Slovakia was the result of fears that the war in Yugoslavia would repeat in Central Europe, as well as up to what extent it was the result of more deeply rooted historical circumstances. Respect for the right to self-determination of nations enshrined in all binding international standards, particularly in the 1948 *Charter of the United Nations*, seems to have played an essential role in this regard. The so far available archival sources show that the most favourable attitude to Slovakia's declaration of independence was that of Poland and Ukraine. On the contrary, they also reveal that Hungary's diplomatic circles tried to slow down the integration efforts of the Slovak Republic after its establishment.

Although the shaping of Slovakia's diplomacy and the first years, or rather months, of its activities are also very interesting, little attention has been paid to this topic. The birth of Slovak diplomacy can be dated back to the revolutionary changes in Slovakia during the Gentle Revolution in November and December 1989. Little known remain the efforts carried out by the Slovak diaspora, especially the Slovak World Congress, the Slovak League in America – one of the most important expatriate organisations – and other organisations of Slovak exiles that gradually emerged in the free world after 1945. This paper can, therefore, be considered the first excursion into the international circumstances surrounding the division of Czecho-Slovakia, and the first of many and more scrutinising studies in this field.

Ondrej Podolec*

Milestones in the Development of the State Legal Status of Slovakia in the 20th Century (Parallels with Croatia)**

Štátoprávne míľniky Slovenska v 20. storočí (paralely s Chorvátskom) / Međaši razvitka državno-pravnoga statusa Slovačke u 20. stoljeću (Paralele s Hrvatskom)

Štúdia sa zaoberá štátoprávnym vývojom Slovenska predovšetkým v 20. storočí aj s čiastočným zreteľom na paralely pri komparácii s vývojom v Chorvátsku, kde je možné nájsť množstvo spoločných znakov. Slovensko bolo až do konca dvadsiateho storočia súčasťou viacnárodných štátov, Slováci tak zdieľali osud viacerých slovanských národov strednej a (juho)východnej Európy. V rámci nich bola limitom štátoprávnych ambícií všetkých slovenských politických reprezentácií až do konca tridsiatych rokov dvadsiateho storočia autonómia. K jej realizácii nakoniec došlo až po dvadsaťročí existencie Československej republiky, za zložitých okolností po Mníchovskej dohode v roku 1938, pričom vývoj dospel až k vzniku samostatnému štátu, ktorý bol v satelitnom postavení voči nacistickému Nemecku.

Vývoj postavenia Slovenska v rámci obnoveného Československa v povojnových rokoch 1945 – 1948 bol charakterizovaný zavedením asymetrického modelu vzťahov, postupným okliešťovaním právomocí autonómnych slovenských národných orgánov až po návrat k unitárnej podobe štátu. Centralistický model riadenia komunistického československého štátu po roku 1948 sa v najkoncentrovanejšej podobe odzrkadlil v ústave z roku 1960 (tzv. socialistickej). K zásadnejšej úprave česko-slovenského vzťahu potom došlo až federalizáciou Československa v roku 1968. Obnovením politickej plurality po páde komunistického režimu v roku 1989 sa problematika národnej emancipácie, ktorú totalitný režim neumožňujúci slobodu prejavu len „zakonzervoval", okamžite stala kľúčovou témou domácej politiky. Po kultivovanom procese rozdelenia štátu vývoj vyvrcholil vznikom dvoch nástupníckych samostatných štátov v roku 1993.

Kľúčové slová: Dejiny, štát, právo, ústava, Slovensko, Československo, Juhoslávia, Chorvátsko, národ, právo na sebaurčenie, autonómia, federácia, druhá svetová vojna, komunizmus, nacizmus, fašizmus, 1989

Until the end of the 20th century, Slovakia formed part of different multinational states. For this reason Slovaks shared a common fate with several other Slavic nations in Central and (South) Eastern Europe. This article deals with the different constitutional forms Slovakia went through in the 20th century and, in line with the spirit of this publication, compares this development to

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that in Croatia while pointing out some existing parallels.

It is really remarkable to find so many common features in the development of the legal form of these two countries (nations). From a "sociological" point of view, both countries are Slavic in nature, have very similar populations, and are predominantly Catholic in their confession. Before WWI (especially in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries), both nations were among those struggling for their national existence within the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hungary. The main difference being that unlike Croatia, Slovakia did not have any type of legal personality. The "spring of nations" in the revolutionary years 1848/49 saw some close cooperation between representatives of these two peoples. Worth mentioning are several activities Count Josip Jelačič carried out in favour of Slovaks.[1] Another major chapter is the scientific, cultural, political and religious relations between them. In the case of Slovakia, worth mentioning are the activities carried out by Štefan Moyzes, Juraj Haulík and Martin Kukučín.

After 1918, Slovakia and Croatia became "state-building" elements of two multinational Slavic successor states that following the Treaty of Versailles emerged on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, namely the Czechoslovak Republic and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that would eventually become Yugoslavia. However, neither the Slovaks nor the Croats were what could be called the dominant or "ruling" nation of their respective countries, whose members would occupy a major part of the positions within the highest constitutional bodies. From their very establishment, both countries had a multinational character. Nevertheless, also from their early stages they underwent increasing centralisation that, in turn, found expression in the respective constitutions.[2] Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (or Yugoslavia) cooperated closely in the frame of the Little Entente,[3] as both countries feared Hungarian irredentism.

As for national emancipation among Slovaks, autonomy within a multinational state was the pinnacle Slovak political leaders could aspire to until the end of the 1930s. However, due to the fact that Slovakia formed part of multinational countries, which had a unitary character, most of these ambitions never came true. The first struggle for autonomy in Slovakia date back to the mid 19th century, i.e. during the revolutionary years of 1848/49,

[1] For more information, see: *Československo a Juhoslávia*: *Z dejín československo-juhoslovanských vzťahov*. Ed. Jozef Hrozienčik. Bratislava: Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 1968; Podolan, Peter – Viršinská, Miriam: *Slovenské dejiny*, vol. *III: 1780 – 1914*.Bratislava: Literary Information Centre, 2014, p. 158 et seq., Podrimavský Milan et al.: *Dejiny Slovenska*, vol. III: *Od roku 1848 do konca 19. storočia*. Bratislava: Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1992, p. 26 et seq.

[2] For more information, see: Tejchman, Miroslav: *Balkán ve 20. století*. Praha: Karolinum, 2017; Pirjevac, Jože: *Jugoslávie 1918 – 1992*. Praha: Argo, 2000; Havlíková, Lubomíra et. al.: *Dějiny jihoslovanských zemí*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001; *Československo a Juhoslávia. Z dejín československo-juhoslovanských vzťahov*. Ed.: Jozef Hrozienčik. Bratislava: Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1968.

[3] For more information, see: Sládek, Zdeněk: *Malá dohoda 1919 – 1938*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2000; Ferenčuhová, Bohumila: *Sovietske Rusko a Malá dohoda*. Bratislava: Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1988.

when the wave of awakening nationalism that swept over the whole Europe did not spare the Slovak people either. This process included the first rather comprehensive efforts to define the administrative boundaries of the territory with a predominantly Slovak population, which was to be administered by self-governing bodies within the defined competencies. The *Demands of the Slovak Nation*, announced in the city of Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš (today's Liptovský Mikuláš) on 10 May 1848, included different civil and social issues but – most importantly – a demand for Slovak autonomy. Unlike later documents of the kind, this one did not include any institutional or territorial definitions. The only legal institution the document specified in more detail was a kind of national assembly as a self-governing body.[4] More specific demands for autonomy were formulated in the 1861 *Memorandum of the Slovak Nation*. However, the first really comprehensive and precisely formulated document striving to achieve Slovak autonomy were the *Privileges of the Upper Hungary Slovak District* (*Privilégium Slovenského okolia*) presented on 12 December of the same year in Vienna. It was a kind of legally revised version of the original memorandum and as such was presented to the monarch in Vienna by a deputation headed by Bishop Štefan Moyzes. The state entity it proposed, the Slovak District, whose boundaries were precisely delimited, was to consist of five predominantly Slovak counties[5] as well as of several mostly Slovak parts of other ethnically mixed counties.[6]

Fig. 1: *Map of the Upper Hungary Slovak District (according to Martin Homza and Daniel Gurňák)*

[4] Demands of the Slovak Nation. In: *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti*, vol. I. Bratislava: National Literary Centre – House of Slovak Literature, 1998, pp. 307 – 310.

[5] The issue here were the Trenčín, Orava, Turiec, Liptov and Zvolen Counties.

[6] These counties were considered to have a mixed population: Bratislava, Nitra, Tekov, Hont, Novohrad, Gemer, Spiš, Šariš, Turna and Abov.

World War I meant a turning point for Slovakia. Weakened by the lasting repressive policy of the Hungarian Kingdom, the complete break-out of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy meant such an ambitious goal for the political leaders of the Slovak people that they failed to address with the necessary strength the conditions that would guarantee the position of Slovakia within the future Czechoslovak state. Far more farsighted in this respect – and in many others – were the representatives of different Slovak expatriate organisations in North America who, hand in hand with their Czech counterparts, developed notorious efforts to support the creation of Czechoslovakia. Being the main donors of foreign resistance capital, they were in the position to demand guarantees to secure Slovakia's position in the proposed common country. These guarantees were anchored in the agreements that defined the future legal relations of the constitutive nations, which were concluded in the USA. The 1915 *Cleveland Agreement* stipulated a federal, i.e. symmetrical conception whose member bodies were to manage their affairs autonomously. These were intended to have a wide range of competencies, including financial autonomy and an separately managed state administration.[7] The 1918 *Pittsburgh Agreement* enshrined an asymmetric model in which Slovakia was to represent an autonomous entity. That meant, in fact, a backdown from the original model stipulated in the *Cleveland Agreement*. Once more, the cornerstone of self-government was to be an assembly. However, neither this time was its position more clearly specified. State administration and the judiciary were to be autonomous as well. Alongside these expatriate organisations, a key player in the agreement creating the Czechoslovak Republic was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, chairman of the leading body of the foreign resistance – the Czecho-Slovak National Council, who drafted the document himself. The *Pittsburgh Agreement* also played an important role as one of the key arguments in the ensuing domestic political struggle for Slovak autonomy (alongside the role the future president had played in its creation). Undoubtedly, it represented a strong political commitment, although the opponents to Slovak autonomy argued mainly that the document was not legally binding for the further development of Czechoslovakia.[8]

However, the Czechoslovak Republic (which in the Treaty of Versailles appears as the Czech-Slovak Republic) was eventually established as a centralist country, and the notion of a unified Czechoslovak nation – known as Czechoslovakism – was anchored in the 1920 constitution as one of its basic state doctrines.[9] This idea was legitimately justified at the moment the country was created as it paved the way for its international recognition and, perhaps, also from a domestic political perspective, in order to guarantee the security of the emerging state. For Slovakia, however, it became a regressive factor in the further development of Czechoslovakia. From a legal viewpoint, the Slovak people was considered to be kind of an eastern branch of the "state-building" "Czechoslovak

[7] Cleveland Agreement. In: *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* I, 1998, pp. 445 – 447.
[8] Pittsburg Agreement. In: *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* I, pp. 485 – 487.
[9] Constitutional Law No. 121/1920 *Sb. Coll. et seq.*

nation," and their language, Slovak, a form of "Czechoslovakian". The official state policy aimed at gradually making this legal fiction come true, i.e. a political nation that would eventually merge into a single ethnic element as well. As for both nations having their own distinct languages – which is one of the attributes of national identity – a parallel situation can be found in Yugoslavia as well, namely in connection with the state policy towards the Serbian-Croatian relation, i.e. Serbian and Croatian vs. "Serbo-Croatian". Demands for autonomy could have been raised from two different points of view. First, following a "state-building" conception, i.e. the nation in question is a state-building element of the country. The second one is the right to self-determination of a nation living as a minority within the country. Therefore, it would not be a minority group of a nation that has achieved its self-determination in a neighbouring country, but rather an analogy to the population of Subcarpathian Rus' (also known as Carpathian Ruthenia and Transcarpathian Ukraine).[10]

Despite the fact that Slovaks already had the status of state-forming nation in the new Czechoslovakia, and this new country objectively created the conditions for the modern Slovak nation to continue to evolve, until 1938 there were no significant changes in its legal position from the status stipulated in the adopted constitution. While interwar centralism was seen as a temporary concession made by Slovaks in favour of the consolidation and security of the new country, some flexibility was still expected to allow compromises concerning some extent of decentralisation.[11]

Demands for autonomy thus became one of the central issues of Slovak politics in the interwar Czechoslovak Republic. The key question of the existence of a distinct Slovak nation enjoying the right to self-determination conditioned the character of the demanded autonomy. If its existence and right to self-determination were recognised, this would mean the achievement of their legitimate legal ambitions within the existing country. On the contrary, in the context of the official state doctrine, which acknowledged just one Czechoslovak nation, only some local specificities would be taken into account for regional administration purposes, i.e. the degree of decentralisation of public administration. Assuming the non-existence of a separate Slovak nation, and based on the assumption that the state works most effectively when it is unitary and centralised, autonomy in the international political and security situation of the time had no rational justification.

Politically, the dispute over the form of Slovakia's legal status was not only a struggle Slovak autonomists led against the political centre, Prague, but also an internal political and ideological dispute among Slovaks themselves. For even among the Slovak political leaders there were some who – for various reasons and with different intensity – supported not only a centralist system, but also

[10] Vládní nařízení no. 17/192 *Sb. Col. et seq.*; Law No. 122/1920 *Sb. Col. et seq.*; The Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library, National Assembly 1935 (1935 – 1938), Senát – tisky Senát Narodního shromáždění R. Čs. r. 1938., IV. volební období. 7. zasedání, Tisk 713. (citované 17. júna 2019). See http://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Default?legId=8&termNr=1935

[11] Letz, Róbert: *Slovenské dejiny*, vol. IV: *1914 – 1938*. Bratislava: Literárne informačné centrum, 2010, p. 156.

the concept of a single "Czechoslovak nation". Opponents to the autonomy program usually argued that Slovakia did not need any autonomy or that it already had it, de facto.[12] Those who adhered to the idea of Czechoslovakism were right to see in the demands of the Slovak People's Party (HSĽS) an obstacle hindering the creation of a unified political and, eventually, also ethnic nation. Like the "centralists", in Slovakia's autonomy policy they saw a threat to the unity of the country and the germ of separatism, and accused those who supported it of cooperating with the hostile stances of Hungary, Poland and Germany.[13]

Many of them were aware that within a self-governing unit they could be outnumbered in democratic elections by the Slovak People's Party (HSĽS), which was stronger and – except for a short period – had always been in the opposition. Consequently, the existing political system did not make it possible for the election results in Slovakia to "find reflection" in actual positions of power. Slovakia's demand for autonomy was then a kind of "flagship" of the political program of the predominantly opposition party HSLS, and efforts to enforce it were formulated in several bills submitted to the Chamber of Deputies of the National Assembly. For this reason, decentralisation proposals made by other parties (perhaps with the exception of the Slovak National Party) tended to avoid this notion. The lack of political and conceptual agreement – both on the side of supporters and opponents – made it even more difficult to define the necessary clear constitutional foundations to demand autonomy.

Slovak autonomy finally came true (simultaneously with Subcarpathian Rus') only under the radically changed domestic political conditions created by the *Munich Agreement* in 1938. The significantly weakened centre of Prague, moreover, facing the possibility of Slovakia splitting up completely with the support of Germany, was forced to accept the autonomist demands of the two eastern parts of the republic.[14]

From a geopolitical point of view, the penetration of Nazi Germany into Central and Eastern Europe led to the disintegration of two multinational states, namely Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The democratic powers of Europe gave up the Versailles system of European borders, whose existence they had guaranteed until then, ceding this geographical area to the sphere of interest of the Third Reich (or Mussolini's Italy).

[12] Ibidem, pp. 156 – 158.

[13] Ibidem, p. 155.

[14] For more information on the domestic political development in the period of the Second Czech-Slovak Republic, see: Gebhart, Jan –Kuklík, Jan: *Druhá republika 1938 – 1939*: *Svár demokracie a totality v politickém, spoločenském a kulturním životě*. Praha – Litomyšl: Paseka, 2004; Bystrický, Valerián: *Od autonómie k vzniku Slovenského štátu*: Bratislava: Prodama, 2008; Rataj, Jan: *O autoritativní narodní stát*: *Ideologické proměny české politiky v druhé republice 1938 – 1939*. Praha: Karolinum 1997; Hoensch, Jörg K.: *Slovensko a Hitlerova východná politika*: *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana medzi autonómiou a separatizmom*. Bratislava: Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2001; Bystrický, Valerián – Deák, Ladislav: Od Mníchova k rozbitiu Česko-Slovenska. In: *Slovensko v Československu 1918 – 1939*. Eds.: Milan Zemko – Valerián Bystrický. Bratislava: Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2004, pp. 199 – 239; Bystrický, Valerián: Prestavba republiky na federáciu v roku 1938. In: *Slovensko v politickom systéme Československa (Materiály z vedeckého sympózia Častá 11. – 13. novembra 1991)*. Bratislava: Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1992, pp. 65 – 67.

In both cases, it was in the interest of Hitler's policy to break up the two states that had been "products" of peace agreements after WWI.

For this purpose, he made use of the unfulfilled national emancipation ambitions of Slovaks and Croats to change them into independent countries as client-states of Germany (or Italy in the case of Croatia).[15] A remarkable coincidence is that in both cases, the declaration of independence was preceded by the central government being forced by the circumstances to grant autonomy to both nations (the Autonomous Land of Slovakia and the Banovina of Croatia). Moreover, in both cases these were territorial units that had formed part of the administrative system of the preceding countries, i.e. they did not need to be created anew.

When comparing them, the Slovak State (later on the Slovak Republic) appears to be a more consolidated independent state entity in terms of basic theoretical attributes (effective state power, state territory, population), as well as in terms of international recognition. Its existence was also based on greater support from the population, most of whom identified with it for different reasons, at least in the first phase. The Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska) could only to a lesser extent rely on the effectiveness of state power. Moreover, its effective application throughout the whole country was questionable.[16] When comparing the two undemocratic political regimes, it is possible to say that the one in Croatia had a more repressive character.

Both client states and their political regimes faced domestic and foreign anti-fascist resistance, which grew into uprisings and partisan-like warfare. In both cases, the resistance set the restoration of the interwar multinational countries, i.e. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, as one of their main program goals.

The creation of the Slovak State was officially presented internally and externally as the exercise of the nation's right to self-determination by means of the parliament as its representative body. From an international point of view, it was recognised (at various diplomatic levels) by a relatively high number of states (27),[17] including the West European democratic powers, namely Great Britain and France (diplomatic relations with them lasted until the outbreak of World War II).[18]

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[15] Rychlík, Jan: Slovenský štát a Nezavisna država Hrvatska. In: *Ve službách česko-slovenského porozumění/porozumenia*. Eds.: Ivan Guba – Michal Macháček – Marek Syrný. Praha: Československé dokumentační středisko, o.p.s., Praha,ve spolupráci s Fakultou politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov Univerzity Mateja Bela a s Múzeom Slovenského národného povstania v Banskej Bystrici, 2016, pp. 154 – 160; Rychlík, Jan – Perenčevič, Milan: *Dějiny Chorvatska*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2011; Tejchman, Miroslav: *Balkán ve válce a revoluci 1939 – 1945*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2008; Tkáč, Ján: Slovensko-juhoslovanské a slovensko-chorvátske vzťahy v rokoch 1939 – 1941. In: *Historický zborník*, a. 19, 2009, nr. 1, p. 154 – 168; Idem: *Chorvátsko v politike Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1941 – 1945. In: Historický časopis*, a. 58, 2010, nr. 4, pp. 659 – 683; Hradská, Katarína – Kamenec, Ivan et al.: *Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: Veda, 2015.

[16] Rychlík, Jan: Slovenský štát a Nezavisna država Hrvatska, pp. 154 – 160; Idem – Perenčevič, Milan: *Dějiny Chorvatska*; Tejchman, Miroslav: *Balkán ve válce a revoluci 1939 – 1945*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum 2008.

[17] Petruf, Pavol: *Zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Publishing House Typoset print, ltd., 2011, p. 55.

[18] Ibidem, pp. 150 – 170.

From the constitutional point of view, however, there are several factors that make it difficult to perceive the establishment of a country simply as the exercise of a nation's right to self-determination. The way the Assembly of the Slovak State was created – under the conditions of an authoritarian state – cast a shadow over its legitimacy. Although there really was a self-determination process of the Slovak nation aimed to obtain certain forms of statehood, and it had the potential to evolve into full accomplishment in the form of an independent country, the lack of a greater degree of free will questioned whether it was legitimate for them to exercise their right to self-determination. In fact, the Slovak State was declared under the ultimatum of the German führer and under the real threat of Slovakia being occupied. From an international legal viewpoint, the political leadership at the time was under pressure from Germany and its neighbouring states, that is, in conditions of overwhelming coercion and extreme need.[19] A fundamental limitation to the sovereignty of the new country was its relationship with Germany. It was regulated by the *Protection Treaty* (*Schutzvertrag*) signed on March 18th and 23rd 1939 in Vienna and Berlin for a period of 25 years. This treaty codified and deepened Slovakia's subordinate status to the dominant power in the region, which could be traced back to the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic. It made the German Reich a kind of "Protector" over the Slovak State and its task was to guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of its "protégée". The treaty allowed Germany to establish a "Zone of Protection" covering a wide strip along the border, in which it could deploy troops. The treaty also established extraterritorial jurisdiction of Germany's legislation and judiciary for German nationals in that territory. Other two articles of the treaty subordinated Slovakia's foreign policy and armed forces, which needed to follow the line of the German Reich.[20] There was also a secret protocol on economic and financial cooperation, which subjected Slovakia's economic and financial policies to control by the Reich.[21]

The borders of the Slovak State did not correspond to the current borders of the Slovak Republic. (Also in this respect there is a parallel with the development in Croatia.) In fact, it was affected by the territorial changes caused by the intervention of Nazi Germany into the Versailles system by means of the *Munich Agreement* (Czechoslovakia had lost some territories). Based on it, Germany occupied strategic parts of the capital Bratislava (the right bank of the Danube, i.e. Petržalka, as well as the village of Devín at the confluence of the Danube and the Moravia), Poland used the ultimatum to annex several municipalities in the north, and after the *First Vienna Award*, Hungary took control of a strip

[19] Beňa, Jozef: *Vývoj slovenského právneho poriadku*. Banská Bystrica: Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica, 2001, pp. 46 – 50.

[20] Agreement on the Protective Relationship Between the German Reich and the Slovak State nr. 226/1940 *Code of Laws of the Slovak Republic* (hereinafter Sl. z.).

[21] Ibidem, compare: Mičko, Peter. *Hospodárska politika Slovenského štátu. Kapitoly z hospodárskych dejín Slovenska v rokoch 1938 – 1945*. Krakov: Spolok Slovákov v Poľsku, 2010, pp. 105 – 108.

of territory along the border. Some other minor adjustments to the borders were done during the first year of existence of the new country before they were definitely settled. Shortly after the Slovak State was diplomatically recognised, neighbouring Hungary attacked it militarily from the territory of Subcarpathian Rus', which it had occupied on March 15, 1939. While in the *Vienna Award* Hungary had pledged itself to respect the Slovak-Hungarian border, the occupation of Subcarpathian Rus' allowed it to question its new eastern section, which had formed the administrative border of two administrative units within the Czech-Slovak Republic (i.e. Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus'. This military aggression initiated a military conflict, which would become known as the Little War. The advance of the Hungarian army was stopped, but the already occupied territories were left under Hungarian possession with the consent of Germany. (These were areas around Snina and Sobraniec with over 40,000 inhabitants.)[22] The northern border of the country also saw some territorial changes. Slovak Army units took part in Germany's military aggression against Poland, which began on September 1, 1939. Once Poland was defeated, Slovakia issued a constitutional law incorporating to its territory those areas that had been part of Czechoslovakia before September 30, 1938 but Poland had occupied based on the ultimatum resulting from the *Munich Agreement*.

Territories that had been part of the Kingdom of Hungary until 1918 and were ceded to Poland after WWI were also annexed. By the end of WWII they were occupied by Slovakia but became part of Poland again after the borders of Czechoslovakia returned to their pre-Munich form.[23]

The official name of the country was Slovak State and it had a constitutionally provisory political system. Its bodies originated or gradually evolved to fit the conditions of an independent country although their mutual interconnection was often vaguely defined.

The constitutional foundations for the establishment of the Slovak State were laid by Act no. 1/1939 of the Slovak Code of Laws (hereinafter Sl. z.) of 14 March 1939. In § 1, the Autonomous Land of Slovakia was declared an independent country and the Assembly of the Land became the Assembly of the Slovak State (also called Slovak Assembly). Paragraph 2 provisionally established the highest executive body of the government, which was appointed by the Presidency of the Assembly. Most ministries as well as the Office of the Prime Minister were able to follow up on the relevant Ministry of the Autonomous Government or on the Office of the Prime Minister of the Land of Slovakia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence needed to be built from the beginning, though. *Act no. 1/1939 Sl. z.* was, therefore, a kind of small

[22] For more information, see: *Malá vojna (Vojenský konflikt medzi Maďarskom a Slovenskom v marci 1939).* Ed.: Ladislav Deák. Bratislava: Stála konferencia slovenskej inteligencie Slovakia plus, 1993; Podolec, Ondrej: Vojenský konflikt na pozadí prvých týždňov samostatného štátu. In: *Malá vojna v marci 1939 a jej miesto v pamäti národa*: *Zborník z konferencie organizovanej Ústavom pamäti národa a mestom Spišská Nová Ves v dňoch 19. – 20. marca 2015.* Ed.: Martin Lacko – Michal Malatinský. Bratislava: Spolok Slovákov v Poľsku, o.z. Múzeum ozbrojených zložiek SR 1939 – 1945, pp. 76 – 92.

[23] Constitutional Law Nr. 325/1939 Sl. z.

provisional *sui generis* constitution[24] that defined the "constitutional core" of the emerging country in the form of its two highest bodies of legislative and executive power, i.e. the parliament and the government, and regulated their mutual relationship.

As for the judicial power, no radical changes were done immediately after Slovakia's independence. In fact, the courts in the Autonomous Land of Slovakia had been completely separated from the Czechoslovak system on the basis of the November Constitutional Act. The new country was able to take over the existing judicial structure as a whole, as well as the corps of judges and civil servants. Under the 15 March 1939 decree, the only condition to be appointed to these posts was to take an oath to the new country.[25] The only urgent task to be solved was establishing the Supreme Court to replace the one in Brno, which was temporarily functioning as the highest judicial instance for the Autonomous Land of Slovakia. Consequently, the government issued the relevant decrees establishing the Slovak Supreme Court,[26] the Supreme Administrative Court[27] and the Main Insurance Court.[28]

The final structure of the constitutional bodies was only defined by the state constitution adopted by the parliament in July 1939.[29] Besides the models taken over from the "protector power," i.e. Nazi Germany (concerning, above all, citizenship and racial laws), it was prepared based on the constitutions of Italy, Portugal and Austria. Despite Slovakia's affiliation to the sphere of interest of Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1945, its political system did not copy the Nazi model. It only copied some provisions regulating the recognition of citizenship and several racial legislation issues. The conservative wing, led by Prime Minister Jozef Tiso, identified more with the authoritarian corporatist models of Portugal, former Austria and, in part, Italy. The final form of the hybrid political system was influenced by several factors, mainly the dominant position of Tiso's supporters in the legislative process, the constitutional traditions of former Czechoslovakia, and the development of Nazi Germany's policy towards its satellite state. In its essence the state worked on a traditional parliamentary governmental model[30] but also allowed for professional organisations to be established. The codified name of the country was Slovak Republic, but Slovak State continued to be commonplace.

Four basic factors shaped the final form of the political system: 1. domestic political struggle, 2. the policy of the "protective power", 3. the attitudes and activities of the legally literate community of "lawmakers" and of the law enforcement bodies, 4. foreign models copying European authoritarian and totalitarian political regimes, and 5. the fact that

[24] Law nr. 1/1939 Sl. z.

[25] Government Regulation zo 6/1939 Sl.z. Sudcovskí čakatelia skladali túto prísahu „*Prisahám na Boha živého, že vždy budem verný Slovenskému štátu a poslušný jeho vláde, prísahám, že budem plniť povinnosti svojho úradu usilovne, svedomite a nestranne podľa zákonov a že úradné tajomstvo neprezradím. Tak mi Pán Boh pomáhaj.*"

[26] Government Regulation nr. 49/1939 Sl. z.

[27] Government Regulation nr. 62/1939 Sl. z.

[28] Government Regulation nr. 27/1939 Sl. z.

[29] Constitutional Law nr. 185/1939 Sl. z.

[30] Slovak National Archives (SNA), Assembly of the Slovak Republic Fund, facs. 68.

WWII was going on, which often made it necessary to adopt the mentioned *ad hoc* measures, and resulted in substantial reforms being postponed. A completely unprecedented element in the legal order was racial legislation, which affected all legal sectors. It defined the constitutional human and civil rights of Jews, interfered with their property rights to movable and immovable property and butted into lease arrangements concerning buildings and land. It excluded Jews from any standard relations in all areas regulating relations in administrative law, including professional associations. This legislation was prepared under the direction of the pro-Nazi political wing and was the area in which most German models were adopted.[31] The political reality of the authoritarian state corresponded only partially to its written constitution, and its application was limited and adjusted according to the current power and political conditions.

The position of Germany's policy line concerning its interference with that of Slovakia was not clearly defined, mostly due to the fact that determining the exact form or structure of the political system of the satellite country was not a priority. Rather, it focused on specific issues, which it addressed either *ad hoc* or, in the long run by means of an adviser (*Berater*). These included the solution of the so-called Jewish question as well as interventions in the Slovak economy in order to ensure the material needs of the Wehrmacht. Even within Nazi circles, there was no uniform strategy on the extent of interference with the internal affairs of their satellite states. Some of its members even claimed that National Socialism was not an "export item." Nevertheless, some domestic Slovak political forces carried out efforts to create a bizarre synthesis of National Socialism and political Catholicism. Over the last years of the war, it is better to talk about political pragmatism whose main priority was to maintain a political *status quo* that would guarantee the Wehrmacht safe conditions at the front. In the case of Slovakia, this meant maintaining a power balance between the pro-Nazi and the conservative-clerical wing, or at least to maintain fair enough positions for the group around Vojtech Tuka, which had already lost the domestic struggle for power.[32]

A major turning point in the development of the Slovak Republic was the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising (SNU) on 29 August 1944. From that moment on, the liberating front advanced through the territory of Slovakia dividing it into two separate states whose existence and legitimacy mutually excluded

[31] A comprehensive overview of anti-Jewish legislation is provided in the edition of documents *Holokaust na Slovensku*, vol. 2: *Prezident, vláda, Snem SR a Štátna rada o židovskej otázke (1939 – 1945)*: *Dokumenty*. Ed.: Eduard Nižňanský – Ivan Kamenec. Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation – Jewish Religious Community, 2003.

[32] For more information, see Nižňanský, Eduard: Rokovania nacistického Nemecka o deportáciách Židov v roku 1942 – príklad Slovenska, Rumunska a Maďarska. In: *Historický časopis*, a. 58, 2010, nr. 3, pp. 471 – 495; Podolec, Ondrej: Až do poslednej chvíle… (Činnosť vlády Štefana Tisu). In: *Slovak Republic 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov V. (Slovak Republic medzi Povstaním a zánikom 1944 – 1945)*. Ed.: Michal Šmigeľ – Peter Mičko – Marek Syrný. Banská Bystrica: Ústav vedy a výskumu UMB – Katedra histórie FHV UMB – Štátna vedecká knižnica, 2006, pp. 15 – 31; *Slovenské národné povstanie*: *Nemci a Slovensko 1944*: *Dokumenty*. Ed.: Vilém Prečan. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1965; Schvarc, Michal: Pod „ochranou" tretej ríše. In: Mičev, Stanislav et al. *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944*. Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania, 2009, pp. 18 – 25.

each other. The western part, which was still controlled by Germany was the Slovak Republic. In the east was Czechoslovakia, whose legal renewed existence had already been recognised by the anti-Hitler coalition countries, which considered it an occupied country after the *Munich Agreement*. The authorities of Czechoslovakia could actually exercise executive power over the insurgent territory, although the legal relationship between the Slovak National Council (hereinafter SNC) and the bodies of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, also known as Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia in London remained full of contradictions. The existence of the Slovak Republic, on the other hand, depended on the persistence of the order established by Nazi Germany in Europe.

A visible sign of the new domestic political situation, or rather the beginning of a new stage in the development of the country, was the change of government. After the suppression of the Slovak National Uprising, Slovakia was *de facto* a militarily occupied country. Therefore, the biggest problem of Štefan Tiso's new government was its limited ability to actually exercise executive power in the territory of Slovakia as it was, in fact, unable to prevent any arbitrary practices by the German armed forces. The front line advancing through Slovakia practically divided the shrinking territory of the Slovak Republic (under the jurisdiction of Bratislava's government) and the territory of the renewing Czechoslovak Republic, in which the Slovak National Council – which was constituted during the SNU – seized power. On 4 April 1945, when the Red Army conquered Bratislava, the highest constitutional officials of the Slovak Republic, i.e. the president and the government, left the territory of Slovakia and were temporarily evacuated to Holíč and Skalica. Later on, while exiled in Austria, they became prisoners of war of the United States. Several of them (including the president) were subsequently repatriated by force to face retributive justice along with other members of the former regime.

The Slovak and Croatian post-war diasporas in the West found themselves in a very similar situation. Their activities (especially towards the representatives of the Western democratic powers) were problematic because in addition to their efforts to restore the independent statehood of their nations, they were "tainted" for having been allies of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, and for the undemocratic political regime their recent "war" statehood was associated with. This troublesome factor was exacerbated by the fact that several of their representatives had been members of these former regimes (often even high representatives of ruling parties or constitutional bodies). The number of Slovak exiles from 1945 outnumbered the "parallel" group of émigrés that adhered to Czechoslovak statehood. Their position was not only against the communist regime, but also against the renewed Czechoslovak Republic.[33]

[33] For more information, see: Špetko, Jozef: *Líšky kontra ježe*: *Slovenská politická emigrácia 1948 – 1989*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2002; Vondrášek, Václav – Pešek, Jan: *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970*. Bratislava: Veda, Ústav politických vied SAV, 2011. *Slovenský politický exil v zápase za samostanté Slovensko*. Ed.: Vladimír Repka. Bratislava: Dom zahraničných Slovákov, 1996; Kaplan, Karel: *Poúnorový exil 1948 – 49*. Liberec: Dialog 2007; Katrebová Blehová, Beáta: *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku v rokoch 1915 – 1950*. Bratislava – Roma: Slovak Historical Institute in Rome, 2019.

The end of WWII and the defeat of Nazi Germany meant *restitutio ad integrum* in the case of Slovaks and Croats, i.e. the return to the interwar arrangement of states within their interwar borders. While post-war Yugoslavia was built as a federation of national republics from the beginning of its restoration, Czechoslovakia still saw political struggle for the recognition of a separate Slovak nation.[34] Post-war Czechoslovakia did not try to become a federation, the legal state oder of the multinational communist states within the Soviet bloc, especially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (until 1963 the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia).[35]

The arrival of the totalitarian communist regime kind of "suppressed" this "national issue" in both countries. However, as soon as the conditions within the regime began to relax, this question found itself again in the spotlight. In fact, the result of "Slovakia's Early Spring" from 1963 – 1967 as well as of "Czechoslovakia's Spring" in 1968 was Czechoslovakia becoming a federation.

The onset of the communist regime was different in both countries.[36] In Yugoslavia, the communist resistance eventually became the dominant element of the resistance tackling the German and Italian occupation (or in this case rather a kind of protectorate) basically on its own. In the case of Slovakia as a part of post-war Czechoslovakia, the development of WWII was the determining factor leading to the inclusion of the country in the area of interest of the victorious communist superpower. The front passing through its territory translated into military occupation or, in other words, to the presence of Red Army units as an allied country. The different ways the countries were freed from the dominion of Nazi Germany (or fascist Italy) also predetermined the different satellite character the two communist countries had towards the USSR, as Moscow looked at any attempts at a more "independent" policy line by a satellite communist country to be a dangerous and unacceptable precedent. The efforts the leading figure of Yugoslavia's resistance and post-war Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, made for a partially independent policy eventually resulted in a confrontation with the USSR personified by Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin and in Yugoslavia's isolation from the entire Soviet bloc for many years. A similar attempt at emancipation and at developing their own political line was Czecho-Slovakia's Spring in 1968. The different position of the two countries also showed in the approach the communist superpower chose to "solve" such attempts. While the pinnacle of Stalin's confrontational line was just a form of "expulsion" (or isolation) of Yugoslavia's regime, his successor chose to retreat and try to gradually normalise their relations.

[34] Klimeš, Miloš – Lesjuk, Petr – Malá, Irena – Prečan, Vilém: *Cesta ke Květnu Vznik lidové demokracie v Československu do února 1948*, vol. 1. Praha: Nakladatelství československé akademie věd, 1965, pp. 425 – 437.

[35] For more information, see Zdobinský, Stanislav et al.: *Státní zřízení evropských socialistických zemí*. Praha: Orbis 1973; Zdobinský, *Stanislav et al.: Státní právo evropských socialistických zemí*. Praha: Orbis, 1976.

[36] For more information, see Vykoukal, Jiří – Litera, Bohuslav – Tejchman, Miroslav: *Východ*: *Vznik a, vývoj a rozpad Sovětského bloku 1944 – 1989*. Praha: Nakladatelství Libri, 2000.

On the contrary, Moscow considered Dubček's policy to be an acute threat to the integrity of the Soviet bloc and a potential disruption of the geopolitical line the Red Army had fought out in WWII.[37] Its August military intervention was immediately preceded by an official visit by J. B. Tito to Czechoslovakia, which can be interpreted as a gesture of support.[38]

The constitutional development in Slovakia after 1945 had (at least initially) a completely autonomous character. During the Slovak National Uprising, after "picking power up from the sidewalk", the illegal SNC declared itself the sole bearer of all power in Slovakia, and until the so-called three *Prague Agreements*, it managed to keep its legislative sovereignty in the country. The validity of any legal regulation by the competent national authorities was, therefore, conditioned by approval by the SNC. Besides that, its presidency had several head-of-state-like powers. The SNC had also created its own executive bodies called commissions. Likewise, a provisory separate judiciary was created within the rebel territory. The existing lower instance courts were subordinated to the newly created higher instances.[39] Especially in view of Slovakia's position in renewed Czechoslovakia, the SNC automatically refused to recognise the validity of Czecholovakia's 1920 constitution, as from its viewpoint the idea was to establish an internally new (or newly formed) country. The SNC recognised the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic only from an international legal perspective (as a subject of international law). Concerning the validity of the Constitution, the SNC adopted the following stance at a secret session on 29 September 1944:

> *"Due to the needs of the resistance movement at home and abroad, the actual development overcame many essential principles of the 1920 constitution and, in fact, the revolutionary bodies in exile contravened them in many respects. We are, therefore, of the opinion that the constitution as a whole cannot serve as the basis for the new inner political order of the Czechoslovak Republic".*[40]

Regarding the efforts by President Edvard Beneš to subordinate the SNC as a local national committee (it would just be an executor, not a sovereign bearer of power), this body took a clear stance refusing to submit to his powers.

Immediately after the restoration of Czechoslovakia, the division of competencies between the government and the SNC was dealt with on a "case-by-case" basis. Later on, it gradually became determined by the three *Prague Agreements*.

Instead of renewing the interwar constitution,- the *Košice Government Programme* (*Programme of the New Czechoslovak Government of the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks* from 5 April 1945) was a kind of unofficial *sui generis* constitution. This program represented a new

[37] For more information on the development in Slovakia in Czechoslovakia in 1968 see Londák, Miroslav – Sikora, Stanislav – Londáková, Elena: *Od predjaria k normalizácii*. Bratislava: Veda 2017.

[38] Another exponent of a "more independent" policy also visited Czechoslovakia at that time – the leader of communist Romania, Nicolae Caucescu.

[39] Beňa, Jozef: *Vývoj slovenského právneho poriadku*, p. 124.

[40] Prečan, Vilém: *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty*. p. 600; Beňa, Jozef: *Vývoj slovenského právneho poriadku*, p. 126.

stage in the development of the "Slovak question" in post-war Czechoslovakia. It was precisely the question of Slovakia's position the most controversial issue during the negotiations on its content.[41] Czech political parties were unwilling to acknowledge that Slovaks were a distinct nation (Czechoslovak National Socialist Party members even temporarily left the talks in protest). On the other hand, the Slovak National Council delegation strove for a federal country. In the end, article VI of the Program recognised Slovaks as a separate nation (for the first time ever the official Czechoslovak authorities did so), enshrined an asymmetrical arrangement of Czechoslovakia and the existence of autonomous Slovak national authorities. At that time, it was loftily called the new "*Magna Carta of the Slovak Nation*".

The *Košice Government Program* was the result of negotiations in Moscow in March 1945 between the Czechoslovak political parties in exile in London and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. President Edvard Beneš appointed the new government, led by former Czechoslovak envoy to Moscow, Zdeněk Fierlinger, in Košice on 4 April 1945. Although the *Košice Government Program* did not contain any formal legal regulations, it laid the foundations for a new post-war political system, known as people's democracy. It contained several authoritarian elements, did not foresee any kind of political opposition, and limited political pluralism by preventing free competition among political parties. In the end, it paved the path for the rise of a totalitarian communist regime in February 1948.

The Communist Party made use of its dominant negotiating position (the negotiations took place in Moscow, Czechoslovakia became part of the Soviet bloc and Soviet army units were located in its territory) to push many elements that had no precedence in the interwar First Republic of Czechoslovakia. Among them, were for example the declared turn in its foreign policy orientation (in favour of the Soviet Union), socialising measures in the national economy (nationalisation), and a new local government system (national committees).

Once the government program was adopted, the existence of an independent Slovak nation was no longer controversial. The new basic issue was the extent of the competencies of the national autonomy. The autonomous bodies, the legislative ones, i.e. the Slovak National Council and the Executive Board of Commissioners, were officially called Slovak National Bodies. Later on, some Marxism-Leninism elements (proletarian internationalism) were used as an ideological pretext to weaken their competencies (the Board of Commissioners was completely abolished). The February 1948 communist coup actually meant the return to the unitary character of the country.

The re-establishment of centralist Czechoslovakia, i.e. the SNC and the Board of Commissioners being gradually deprived of all relevant powers, was definitely anchored in the so-called three *Prague Agreements*.[42] Like the *Košice Government Program*, these agreements

[41] Klimeš, Miloš – Lesjuk, Petr – Malá, Irena – Prečan, Vilém: *Cesta ke Květnu Vznik lidové demokracie v Československu do února 1948*, vol. 1. Praha: Nakladatelství československé akademie věd, 1965, pp. 378 – 453.

[42] Kvetko, Martin: *Dohody o štátoprávnom usporiadaní Čechov a Slovákov v oslobodenej vlasti*. Bratislava: Bystrica, vydavateľské a podnikateľské družstvo, 1947.

were considered generally binding, although they did not take the form of a law. In fact, the *First Prague Agreement* was published as an annex to a decree of the Minister of the Interior.[43] Nevertheless, a constitutional law also made reference to it.[44]

The *First Prague Agreement*[45] concluded on 2 June 1945, which was the result of negotiations between the countrywide government and the SNC Presidency, enshrined Slovakia's political autonomy with some elements of federalism. In it, the SNC was declared the bearer of state power in Slovakia, but its competency was limited to the areas not covered by the central authorities. In fact, the countrywide authorities were given exhaustive powers in twentieth areas, which covered almost the entire government agenda. It even dealt with, for example, the representation of Slovaks within the highest instance courts.

The *Second Prague Agreement*,[46] concluded on 11 April 1946, basically limited the powers of the Slovak national authorities in personnel matters transferring them to the President of the Republic. It also merged the two supreme courts into one based in Brno, and strengthened the position of the countrywide authorities in issues having to do with the economy (prices, central planning, statistics and control). At the same time, the contracting parties stated in the addendum that the regulations published in the *Collection of Laws* had countrywide validity and effectiveness. To resolve any possible conflicts between the Slovak and the countrywide laws, a coordinating body was established within the Prime Minister's Office with equal representation of Czechs and Slovaks.[47]

The form of the *Third Prague Agreement*[48] was fundamentally influenced by the success of the Democratic Party in Slovakia in the 1946 elections and the resulting fundamental change in the policy of the Communist Party of Slovakia. Its sudden affinity with Prague centralism resulted from the fact that it was loosing its position within the Slovak national authorities and, therefore, it opted for their total marginalisation. The addendum to the agreement made the area of domestic administration part of the common countrywide affairs. The most significant change reflecting Czechoslovakia's return to centralism was the new status of the Slovak national authorities. They were no longer power bearers, but just the executors in Slovakia of decisions made by countrywide authorities. Any regulations adopted by the SNC needed to be subjected to preventive and posterior control by the government in order to establish whether the new legal regulation concerned matters of countrywide nature. The SNC, the legislative body of Slovakia, was in fact subordinate to the executive body at countrywide level.

In the area of executive power, the minister of the countrywide government could decide whether to exercise their authority in Slovakia directly or by means of a subordinate commissioner.

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[43] Interior Minister Decree nr. 66/1946 Col.
[44] Constitutional Law nr. 65/1946 Col.
[45] *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti*, vol. II. Bratislava: National Literary Centre – House of Slovak Literature, 1998, pp. 430 – 432.
[46] *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* II, pp. 442 – 444.
[47] Beňa, Jozef: *Vývoj slovenského právneho poriadku*, p. 196 et seq.
[48] *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* II, pp. 445 – 448.

The coordinating body created to resolve discrepancies between countrywide and Slovak legislation was replaced by a unification commission appointed by the central government whose task was to replace older SNC regulations with countrywide ones. The agreement was concluded between the parties of the Czech and Slovak national fronts and had the legal relevance of a government resolution.

The definite subordination of the Board of Commissioners to the countrywide government was achieved by an amendment to the *Third Prague Agreement* in the form of a "*Binding Interpretation of the Provisions of Article II. Paragraph 2 of the Third Prague Agreement*" from 18 November 1947. The Government was given a veto right over appointments to these posts, as well as the possibility to revoke the commissioner at any time without giving a reason. At the same time, it could easily take over the direct nomination of the commissioners.[49] Therefore, appointing the commissioners by the Slovak National Council was nothing but a formality. This division was more or less reproduced in the first communist constitution of Czechoslovakia from 1948 (the *Ninth-of-May Constitution*).[50]

The centralist model of communist Czechoslovakia's government was most evident in the 1960 constitution (known as *Socialist*). The Slovak national authorities were deprived of their remaining symbolic competencies, and their executive body, the Board of Commissioners, was abolished. Another illustrative example of the political line of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný, was the abolition of Slovakia's historical symbol in its coat of arms, a double cross standing on the middle peak of a mountain consisting of three peaks, which was replaced by a non-heraldic new creation (a partisan bonfire under Mount Kriváň).[51]

Fig. 2: *Bonfire under Mount Kriváň as the new symbol of socialist Slovakia.*

The development of Slovakia's position within Czechoslovakia after 1945 was characterised by the reestablishment of the asymmetric mode and the gradual curtailment of the powers of Slovakia's autonomous authorities until the final return to unitary Czechoslovakia. The relationship between Czechs and Slovaks did not change much until 1968 when Czechoslovakia became a federation and the asymmetric model was abandoned for the very first time.

In fact, the federal model was the only "achievement" of the attempt to democratise the communist regime in Czechoslovakia's 1968 Spring, which was truncated by the troops of five Warsaw Pact

[49] Ibidem, p. 454.
[50] Constitutional Law nr. 150/1948 Col.
[51] Constitutional Law nr. 100/1960 Col.

states. This way, Czechoslovakia joined the USSR and Yugoslavia as the third communist federation in Eastern Europe. The new symmetrical model created two national republics (the Socialist Republic of Slovakia and the Czech Socialist Republic) with their parliaments and governments, which were subordinated to the federal bodies (also parliament and government).[52] However, right at the beginning of the so-called normalisation period, some centralising adjustments were made to the original project. Moreover, the real centre of power, i.e. the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was not federalised. Instead, it continued to operate following the traditional asymmetric model in which the inhabitants of the Slovak Socialist Republic were formally members of the Communist Party of Slovakia, which was, in turn, subordinated to the "countrywide" Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

In a communist regime, the constitutional bodies are nothing but executors of decisions made by the leadership of the ruling party. Therefore, their mutual arrangement in the constitution has a merely symbolic character. Slovakia'a constitutionally enshrined "veto" (a tool to avoid being outnumbered by the Chamber of the Nations of the federal parliament, i.e. the Federal Assembly), only became relevant in the "standard" political struggle that followed the fall of the communist regime.

The return of political pluralism following the fall of the communist regimes immediately opened the question of the rearrangement or continued existence of the multinational post-communist countries. The new key topic in domestic politics was national emancipation, a question the totalitarian regime, which did not allow freedom of speech, had just "suppressed". While the republics of former Yugoslavia did not constitute ethnically homogeneous units and, therefore, the price for their independence was a vicious war, there were no relevant territorial disputes between the Czech and Slovak parts of the Czechoslovak Republic. Paradoxically, the Czech leadership, confronted with Slovakia's unbreakable constitutional veto, eventually became the driving force behind the peaceful and cultivated dissolution of the country into two successor republics.[53] At present, it is the general opinion in both republics that their mutual relations are now better than in the times they lived in one common country.

[52] Constitutional Law nr. 143/1968 Col.

[53] For more information, see Rychlík, Jan: *Rozpad Československa*: *Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989 – 1992*. Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002; Stein, Eric: *Česko-Slovensko konflikt roztržka, rozpad*. Praha: Academia, 2000; Gjuričová, Adéla – Zahradníček, Tomáš: *Návrat parlamentu*: *Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění 1989 – 1992*. Praha: Argo, 2018.

Ana Holjevac Tuković*

The End of the Croatian Homeland War: Military Operations and Peaceful Reintegration

Koniec chorvátskej občianskej vojny: Vojenské operácie a mierová reintegrácia / Završetak Domovinskog rata u Hrvatskoj: vojne operacije i mirna reintegracija

Nakon što je zaustavila srpsku i crnogorsku agresiju do kraja 1991., te postigla međunarodni legitimitet priznanjem država Europske zajednice 15. siječnja 1992. i primanjem u članstvo Ujedinjenih naroda 22. svibnja 1992., temeljni cilj hrvatske politike bio je ostvarivanje punog suvereniteta i teritorijalnog integriteta u njenim međunarodno priznatim granicama. Do potpune realizacije toga cilja došlo je tek 15. siječnja 1998. godine, predajom uprave Hrvatskog Podunavlja iz nadležnosti UN-a (UNTAES – United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia) pod ingerenciju hrvatskih vlasti. Ključni događaj koji je inicirao politički okvir mirne reintegracije preostalog dijela Hrvatske (Hrvatsko Podunavlje), bila je vojno-redarstvena operacija „Oluja" 1995. godine.

Ključne riječi: Vojni redarstvene operacije Oluja, Bljesak, Hrvatsko Podunavlje, Erdutski sporazum, UNTAES.

In the multiparty elections (1990) after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the Croats, as well as the majority of European peoples, said no to communism. In accordance with the will of the citizens as expressed in the 19 May 1991 referendum, on 25 June the Croatian Parliament adopted *the Constitutional Decision on the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia*, *the Declaration on the Establishment of a Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia* (whose entry into force was deferred by three months so that the negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis could be resumed) and *the Charter on the Rights of the Serbs and Other Nationalities in the Republic of Croatia*.[1] However, the Serbian leadership, after refusing to recognize the democratically elected government in Croatia and accept any reform of Yugoslavia, pressed ahead with its Greater Serbian plans. It first organized

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[1] *Constitutional Decision on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Croatia*, *Declaration on the Proclamation of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia*, *Charter of the Rights of Serbs and Other Nationalities in the Republic of Croatia*, see – *Narodne novine*, a. 1991, nr. 31, 25 June 1991. See also *Domovinski rat – pregled političke i diplomatske povijesti*. Ed.: Ante Nazor – Tomislav Pušek. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus – Hrvatski memorijalno dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata. 2018, pp. 93 – 95.

a rebellion of the Serbs in Croatia, which was followed by the merciless aggression of the federal army („Yugoslav People's Army") and Serb and Montenegrin troops which by the end of 1991 resulted in the occupation of almost one third of Croatia, which at the start of the aggression was disarmed (as ordered by the then state government) and practically without its own army. In the occupied territories the Serbs committed numerous crimes against Croats, with almost all non-Serbs being expelled.[2]

Despite the forecasts of military analysts that were based on the aggressor's unrivalled supremacy both in terms of weaponry and technology, Croatia was not conquered. Croatian defenders succeeded in stopping the advance of aggressors on all Croatian fronts and towards the end of the year the first major liberation operations were carried out in Western Slavonia. This resulted in the conclusion of a peace treaty in Sarajevo (2 January 1992) which temporarily suspended largescale military operations in Croatia.[3]

Croatia achieved its international affirmation by the member states of the European Community on 15 January 1992. Then, on 22 May 1992, Croatia, together with the former Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, became a member of the UN. However, after the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992 (Croatia immediately recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent and sovereign state), the Serbs, with the help of the Yugoslav People's Army, launched a war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During 1992, 1993 and 1994, the Government of the Republic of Croatia tried mostly by peaceful means and with the help of European and international diplomacy and the newly-arrived UN Peace Forces to restore the occupied parts of its territory.[4] At the same time, due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia also had to both provide for the defence of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and prevent Serb troops from threatening the territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia from their positions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a consequence of the Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the breaking out of the Croatian-Muslim war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 400,000 Croats were forced to leave their homeland. By mid-October 1994, and therefore also during the Croatian-Muslim war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 600,000 refugees and displaced persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina were given refuge in Croatia (around 425,000 Bosniak Muslims, around 170,000 Croats and around 5,000 others).[5]

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[2] Živic, Dražen: *The Demographic Framework and Losses*: *The Creation of the Croatian State and the Homeland War*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest. Školska knjiga, 2006, p. 470; Branđolica, Renato: Witness of time. In: *Domovinski rat*: Ana, Holjevac Tuković - Petar Mijić (eds.). Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata. 2019, pp. 11 – 12.

[3] Nazor, Ante: *Greater-Serbian Aggression on Croatia in the 90's*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2011, pp. 105 – 106.

[4] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: The Croatian East through the Operation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in the Homeland War. In: *Croatian East in the Homeland War – Experiences, Cognition and Consequences*: *Proceedings of the Ivo Pilar Institute*, Book 48. Zagreb: Institut Ivo Pilar, 2015, pp. 121 – 141.

[5] Report of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the progress of return and care of and exiles, refugees and displaced persons so far. In: *Narodne novine*, a. 1998, nr. 92 / 1248, 7 July 1998.

The existence of the occupied area, ie the self-proclaimed "Republika Srpska Krajina" in the heart of the Croatian state, was a serious obstacle to the political and economic development of Croatia. On the eve of the liberation operations of the Croatian forces *Flash* and *Storm* in Croatia were registered 210,592 displaced persons (83,683 displaced persons from the Croatian Podunavlje and 126,909 displaced persons from the occupied territories about to be released in the above mentioned operations) and 188,672 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and FRY, which means that the Republic of Croatia then cared for a total of 399,264 displaced persons and refugees.[6]

In early 1995 the leadership of the insurgent Serbs turned down another proposal of the international community – the so-called *Z-4 Plan* on the political resolution of the crisis in Croatia. The plan envisioned an exceptionally wide-ranging autonomy for the Serbs in Croatia, almost a "state within a state", in the areas of the districts of Knin and Glina, which would comprise all the municipalities with a majority Serbian population. With their refusal the Serbian politicians clearly showed that they would not under any condition accept peaceful reintegration into the constitutional system of the Republic of Croatia, or coexistence with the Croats. Since all later attempts of the Croatian government and the international community to deal with the issue of occupied territory also failed, in early May 1995 Croatia launched another liberation military&police action *Flash*. The aim of Operation *Flash* was to defeat the Serb forces and liberate the occupied area of western Slavonia, reach the Sava River and establish a defensive line along the river. The operation started on May 1, 1995. It took the Croatian forces only a day to soundly defeat the Serb forces. Some Serb troops managed to retreat across the Sava River to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The encircled Serb forces near Pakrac surrendered on May 4. With Operation *Flash* the Croatian Army liberated western Slavonia – UN Sector West (about 600 km^2) and accomplished all the objectives. In only two days, on 1 and 2 May – the resistance of Serbian units was crushed, and Okucani, Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška liberated. The remnants of defeated 18th Corps of the "Serbian Army of Krajina" surrendered at Pakrac in the afternoon hours on 4 May. Organized resistance of the special forces of the insurgent Serbs ceased the next morning at 06.00 hours at Omanovac. Croatian casualties included killed and 162 wounded. The Serb losses are estimated at 350 – 459 killed and more than 1,000 wounded.[7]

In retaliation, the Serbian leadership ordered the rocketing of Croatian towns. One of the cities attacked was Zagreb, the Croatian capital: the Children's Hospital, the Academy of Dramatic Arts and a secondary school were among the many buildings hit; seven civilians were killed and at least 176 wounded. During and after *Flash* Croatian authorities ensured humane treatment *and all civil rights to the Serbian population, and members of Serbian units were guaranteed protection under the Amnesty Act. In spite of that, the majority of the Serbian population*

[6] Ibidem.

[7] Marijan, Davor: *Homeland war.* Zagreb: Despot infinitus – Hrvatski institut za povijest. 2016. pp. 330 – 335.

in the occupied part of Western Slavonia left the area on the eve of and during Operation Flash. Under the great pressure of the Serbian leadership and faced with the threat of the resumed shelling of Zagreb the UN organized the *Safe Passage* operation in which most of the remaining Serbian population left Western Slavonia.[8] During the entire occupation of a part of the Croatian territory, and officially since the beginning of 1993, there was a constant threat of artillery attacks, and in fact actual terrorist attacks, by the Serbian units from the occupied areas to the cities and towns in the free Croatian territory (the so-called „real threat strategy"), which rebel Serbs in Croatia intended to use to force the Croats to give up the liberation of the occupied territory. Accordingly, in response to *Flash* Operation, the Serbian forces attacked Sisak and Karlovac along with Zagreb.[9]

After their defeat in *Flash*, the Serbian leadership tried to unite the remaining occupied territory of Croatia with parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Serbian control. The process climaxed in July 1995 with the drafting of *the Constitution of the United Serbian Republic*.[10]At the same time, Serbian forces were about to enter Bihać (a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina close to the border with the Republic of Croatia). The conquest of Bihac would have been a strategically important victory for the Serbs, and it would have provoked a new humanitarian disaster and a huge loss of civilian life in the area. Because of all this, military action necessarily turned out to be the only and immediate solution for the problem of occupied Croatian territory but also for the Bihac crisis.

Operation *Storm*, by which the self-proclaimed „RSK" was completed, took place in a broader context than Operation *Flash*, that is, it was closely related to operations that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tuđman and the President of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, signed the *Declaration on the renewal of the Washington Agreement, joint defence from the Serbian aggression and realization of a political solution with the aid of the international community*. The immediate aim of this agreement was to enable the Croatian forces to legitimately participate in the unblocking of the besieged and attacked Bihac, in which the BiH Army had a hard time resisting the attacks of the Republika Srpska Army and the Serbian Krajina Army. Based on the agreement reached by Tuđman and Izetbegović in Split on July 22, 1995, the Croatian forces mounted an operation for helping Bihać by advancing in the direction of Livno – Bosansko Grahovo and in the direction of Livno – Glamoč. In doing so, they stop the enemy offensive against Bihać and create conditions for the liberation of Knin and other areas under Serb occupation in Dalmatia and Lika. Operation *Summer-95* started on July 25, 1995, and ended by the end of the month. All the objectives were achieved.[11]

On the political scene, the last attempt for a peaceful solution of the problem

[8] Nazor, Ante: *Greater-Serbian Aggression on Croatia in the 90's*., pp. 167 – 168.
[9] Sisak and Karlovac on strike again. In: *Večernji list*, 02 May 1995. pp. 5.
[10] Decision of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina on Accession to the Implementation of the Unification of the RSK and the Republika Srpska. In: *Službeni glasnik RSK*, a. 1995, nr. 5, p 135.
[11] Marijan, Davor: *Homeland war,* pp. 345 – 346.

– the occupation of part of Croatian territory – was made on 3 August in Genthod near Geneva at the meeting of the representatives of the Croatian government and of the insurgent Serbs from Knin. The requests of the Croatian delegation were almost identical to the requests made in the peace initiative of President Franjo Tuđman in November 1993: immediate peaceful reintegration of occupied areas; immediate opening of all communications across the occupied areas, in particular the opening of the Zagreb-Split rail route via Knin; the opening of the oil pipeline within 24 hours of the completion of the negotiations, under control of the Croatian authorities along the entire pipeline route; immediate enforcement, in the occupied areas, of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and of the provisions of the Constitutional Act on the rights of the Serbian ethnic community to which the Croatian government guarantees political, civil and ethnic rights; surrender of weapons to Croatian authorities, witnessed by UNCRO, within 3 to 8 days, with the guarantee of civil safety and general amnesty to all persons other than perpetrators of war crimes. The insurgent Serbs of Croatia were also offered the holding of free elections for local selfgovernment, and participation in civil and police authorities in line with the ethnic composition of the population as of 1991, and the implementation of the other provisions of the *Constitutional Act*. However, the leadership of the insurgent Serbs turn down the proposals and draw out the negotiation process. This exhausted all the possibilities for a peaceful solution of the occupied territory of the Croatian state and all the possibilities for a peacefulsolution of the occupied territory of the Croatian state.[12]

The final military police operation for the liberation of the occupied areas, called *Storm*, was launched by Croatia between 4 and 7, that is until 10 August 1995. In the first hour of *Storm* the President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tuđman called on members of hostile units to surrender their weapons guaranteeing amnesty to all those who had not perpetrated war crimes under Croatian laws, and citizens of Serbian nationality in the formerly occupied areas were invited to remain at home and await Croatian authorities without any fear.[13] The Croatian Army and special police units attacked on 4 August at 04.00 hours along a front line long more than 630 kilometres, from Bosansko Grahovo in the south to Jasenovac in the east. Croatian forces in Eastern Slavonia and southern Dalmatia were put on alert because of possible attacks by the Yugoslav Army and the Army of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The greatest success during the operation was achieved in the morning hours on 5 August, when the 4th and 7th Croatian guards brigades (whose members originated from Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zagorje and other areas) liberated Knin. Over the next few days the Croatian forces reached and secured the state borders, and then started to clear the liberated areas of northern Dalmatia, Lika, Banovina and Kordun (about 10,500

[12] Nazor, Ante: *Greater-Serbian Aggression on Croatia in the 90's*., pp. 168 – 169.

[13] Marijan, Davor: *Storm*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2007, pp. 138 – 140.

sq.km. or 18.4% of the total area of the Republic of Croatia).[14] At the same time, during these operations the majority of the Serb population, who lived there during the four-year occupation, left that area (according to data from the 1998 Government Report, about 130,000).[15] Following Operation *Storm* and pursuant to the agreement between President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tuđman and President of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegovic signed in Split (the Split Declaration of 22 July 1995), the Croatian forces continued fighting against the Serb forces in the territory of the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina. With their victorious operations (*Maestral* in September and *Southern Move* in October 1995) the Croatian forces, in coordination with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, liberated a significant part of the occupied territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina and dealt a deadly blow to the Serb army. In such circumstances, the international community forced the warring parties to reach an agreement in Dayton, USA, in November 1995 (*the Dayton Agreement*).[16]

In conclusion, it could be said that the military-police Operation Storm was a key event that changed the balance of power and created a new geopolitical reality. The defeat of Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina paved the way for political negotiations and the achievement of the *Dayton Peace Agreement* for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was signed in Paris in December 1995. With this agreement, the war in BiH ceased, and during the *Dayton Agreement*, the *Erdut Agreement* was agreed which started the process of peaceful reintegration of the remaining occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Danube Region).

The issue of reintegration of occupied areas under the care of the United Nations into Croatia proper was given new meaning during key political negotiations in the end of 1995. Despite the readiness of the Croatian army and a strong pressure by the Croatian public to return the occupied parts of the Croatian Danube region and Vukovar, the symbol of defence and suffering of Croatia during the Homeland war, through a military action, the leadership of the Republic of Croatia decided to negotiate with the insurgent Serbs i.e. occupational authorities. Thanks to the negotiations of the Croatian government and the Serbian occupational forces and the effort to peacefully resolve the problem of the remaining occupied territory, it became possible to reach an agreement regarding a peaceful and gradual transition of that area under Croatian authority. Croatian government and Serb leadership signed the *Basic agreement regarding Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem* (*the Erdut Agreement*) on November 12, 1995, in Erdut and in Zagreb. The agreement enabled the establishment of stability in that area, previously destroyed by wartime actions, human suffering, migrations and general social and economic regression. Aside from the peace brokers, the Agreement was signed by Hrvoje Šarinić, the representative of the Government of Croatia and

[14] Nazor, Ante: *Greater-Serbian Aggression on Croatia in the 90's*., p. 172.
[15] Report of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the progress of return and care of and exiles, refugees and displaced persons so far. In: *Narodne novine*, a. 1998, nr. 92 / 1248 (7 July 1998).
[16] Marijan, Davor: *Homeland war,* p. 383 – 386.

Milan Milanović, for the Serbian side. The Agreement envisioned a transition period of one to two years during which the Croatian Danube region would be placed under the administrative supervision of the UN. This made the peaceful reintegration possible, as well as the establishment of peace and the return of Croatian sovereignty in the Croatian state territory with no need for further military operations and, most importantly, with no new casualties. In the course of the two-year process of peaceful reintegration, the participants of the process faced a series of problems and issues that manifested themselves through the consequences of war time destruction as well as the necessity of acceptance of the fact of the breakdown of a political ideology that spoke in favour of the idea of all Serbs living in a single country. Regardless, the mission was successful thanks to the well thought-out diplomatic moves of the Croatian government in various world institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union, as well as the cooperation in the field of the Croatian authorities, part of the Serb community and the transitional Authority of the United Nations.[17]

The realization of the peace accord begun with the acceptance of the Resolution 1037 of the UN Security Council on January 15, 1996. The resolution introduced the Transitional Authority of the United Nations (UNTAES – United Nations Transitional Authority to Eastern Slavonia), headed by the American general Jacques Paul Klein. The resolution ensured and affirmed the reintegration of the occupied area into Croatia by conducting it in an agreed upon time period.[18]

The execution of peace accords from the Agreement included the disarmament of Serbian forces, demilitarization of the Croatian Danube region, organizing free and just local elections and the return of the Croatian Danube region into the constitutional and legal system of the Republic of Croatia. The goals of the mission were maintaining multi-ethnic and multicultural character of that area and respect for the highest standards of human rights and basic freedoms. It was necessary to promote the climate of trust and allow all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes freely. The successful execution of the process of peaceful reintegration included the reintegration of social and economic structures, particularly of education, health, traffic, communication and municipal infrastructure. For that purpose, it was necessary to promote the development and reconstruction of the area. Therefore, Croatia invested US$ 1.7 billion from its budget and public companies into Croatian Danube area during the process of peaceful reintegration. Only 2 percent of the money was donated by the international community, i.e. US$ 34 million.[19] This means that Croatia was the one that has borne almost all the consequences of the aggression of the Yugoslav people's army and the Serbian forces.

[17] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: *The Process of Peaceful Reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata – Despot infinitus, 2015, pp. 79 – 87.
[18] Ibidem.
[19] Government of the Republic of Croatia, 6.7.2.4, Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the letter from the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the completion of the peaceful reintegration process (September 22, 1997).

The basic prerequisite for the successful completion of the process of peaceful reintegration was focused on the demilitarisation of the Croatian Danube region. When the UNTAES forces arrived to the area of Eastern Slavonia and Western Srijem, the 11th corps of the army of Serbian Krajina consisting of some 15000 to 20000 soldiers was there and new forces were expected, particularly forces of the local militia (around 1500 people) and paramilitary forces (Arkan's tigers, Scorpios, Vipers) consisting of some 2000 personnel. The demilitarization was completed with no incidents in the previously agreed upon time and included around 15000 Serbian soldiers, 118 tanks, 19 armoured vehicles, more than 150 pieces of artillery weapons and 40 to 50 anti-aircraft systems. In the course of a full month, which is how long the demilitarization lasted, some 90% of heavy weaponry were withdrawn (the majority of 100 tanks was taken to Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia). [20]

In addition to the aforementioned demilitarization process, UNTAES organized the so-called *Weapons Buy-Back Program* – a very successful operation during which the Croatian government bought weapons and other military equipment from civilians. In this way, 9,700 rifles, 6,375 anti-tank weapons, about 15,000 hand grenades and 2 million rounds of ammunition were collected. The Weapons Buy-Back Program was rated as very successful by the UN and, together with other aspects of the peace process, enabled the stability of the UNTAES-administered areas. When compared to the other programs that took place in the immediate vicinity (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo), only *the Weapons Buy-Back Program* in Croatia included money compensation for people who brought the weapons they owned. The Government of the Republic of Croatia paid about 1.6 million USD for the implementation of this program.[21]

One of the main prerequisites for the return of refugees was demining. Since the demining process begun in July 1996 and lasted until September 1997, 8 364 183 square kilometres of the Croatian Danube region were classified as demined out of the total of 760 million square kilometre of the territory that had to be demined in the Republic of Croatia. The total of 3653 objects were checked for mines and debris was removed from 170 273 cubic kilometres, 6000 different mines and explosive devices were found and destroyed. The process of demining in the Croatian Danube region that lasted from July 1996 until June 1997 cost 81.506,673 kn.[22]

According to the provision regarding the conduct of the peacekeeping mission under the administrative supervision of the UN, a multinational police force was supposed to be established on the territory of the Croatian Danube region. In April 1996 the first group of police officers left for Budapest where they were supposed to be trained as a multi-ethnic force. This was also the first attempt to conduct a programme which

[20] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: *The Process of Peaceful Reintegration*, p. 93.

[21] Boothby, Derek: The UNTAES Experience: Weapons Buy-backin Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, Croatia, Bonn: Internacional center for conversion. In: *Brief*, a. 12, 1998, pp. 16 – 22.

[22] Government of the Republic of Croatia, 6.7.2.4, Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the letter from the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the completion of the peaceful reintegration process (September 22, 1997).

included both Croatians and Serbs. The training in Budapest was supposed to prepare them for joint work as well as work in ethnically divided areas.[23]

On December 15, 1997 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Croatia took command of 1715 members of transitional police forces (829 Croats, 834 Serbs and 52 members of other national minorities). By including the transitional police forces into the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the process of reconstruction of police forces in the Croatian Danube region was completed. The numeric conditions of the national composition of the police force were met and that constituted the guarantor of safety for all citizens of that area. Regardless of that, following the request of the Croatian government, the UN civil police forces remained active for nine additional months after the departure of the UNTAES, which was confirmed by the *Resolution 1145*, that provided additional security to the inhabitants of that area.[24]

The peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region influenced the beginning of the normalization of intergovernmental relationship between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) on a regional level as well as the beginning of normalization of the Croatian-Serbian relationships in the Republic of Croatia. The Agreement of the normalization of relationships between Croatia and the FRY was signed on August 23, 1996, based on mutual recognition and respect of territorial integrity.[25] By signing the Agreement of normalization of relationships, Serbia recognized the international borders of Croatia and, in a way, publicly denounced its territorial claims on Croatia.[26] It can be said that this was also a strong message to the Serbs in the Croatian Danube Region to turn to Zagreb and accept geopolitical realities. Serbian leadership and church representatives of the Serbian orthodox church clearly advised the Serbian inhabitants of the Croatian Danube region to remain living in that area. Although there were cases of people deciding to emigrate to Serbia, a large part of the Serbian population of that area listened to that advice.

One of key moments in the return of the legitimate Croatian authority to the Croatian Danube region were local elections to municipal and city councils as well as the councils of Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar-Srijem counties. The condition for voting in the elections and realizing other rights on Croatian territory was the acceptance of Croatian documents. Regardless of terrible crimes that had happened in its territory, Croatia was sometimes forced into painful compromises in order for the reintegration process to end successfully. One of them was *the Amnesty Law* that granted amnesty to the participants of armed uprising and protected them from criminal prosecution in the Republic of Croatia.

Until August 31, 1997, 154,443 certificates of nationality were issued. The number of Serbs who received certificates of nationality was significantly

[23] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: *The Process of Peaceful Reintegration*, p. 105.
[24] Ibidem, p. 110.
[25] Agreement on normalization of relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In: *Narodne novine. International Treaties*, a. 1996, nr. 10, September 24, 1996.
[26] Nobilo, Mario. *Croatian Phoenix*: *Diplomatic processes behind closed doors 1990 – 1997.* Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 2000, pp. 518 – 519.

higher than the pre-war number of them in the Croatian Danube region (1991: 70,000) and was higher than their number before the arrival of UNTAES (1996: 120,000). According to the report of the Government of the Republic of Croatia *"as many as 50,000 people, previously related to the riot, then displaced in the region, received Croatian documents, and 34,443 people now living in other countries in the region"* also received Croatian documents, i.e. certificates of nationality.[27]

The elections were held on April 13, 1997 and the political system that was established was identical to the one existing in other parts of the Croatian territory. By participating in the elections, the members of the Serbian minority were given the opportunity to elect their legitimate representatives to the bodies of local government and self-government. After the elections, Serbian population took an active part in the political life of Croatia and has been participating in its executive government. The same was allowed Serbian officials from the time of the Republic of Serbian Krajina by the Law of Amnesty.[28]

To conclude the process of peaceful reintegration successfully, the Croatian President dr. Franjo Tuđman founded the National committee for the reestablishment of trust, speedy return and normalization of life in war-torn areas of Croatia in October 1997. The Committee chair was Vesna Škare Ožbolt, and her deputies were Ivica Vrkić and dr. Vojislav Stanimirović. The committee for Vukovar was founded on November 3, 1997.[29]

The peaceful integration of the Croatian Danube region influenced the beginning of normalization of intergovernmental relationships between Croatia and FR of Yugoslavia regionally, as well as the beginning of the normalization of relationships between Serbs and Croats in the Republic of Croatia. The issue of return of refugees and displaced persons was one of the main points of the Basic Agreement and a prerequisite for the successful completion of the process of peaceful reintegration. In accordance with the assumed responsibilities, Croatia guaranteed to respect minority and human rights in the spirit of European standards. A common task-force in charge of the return of refugees and displaced persons consisting of representatives of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, UNTAES and UNHCR-a (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), upon reaching the agreement on April 24, 1997, signed the *Agreement of the work group regarding operational procedure of return*.[30] The Agreement defines the basic principles of return to the Croatian Danube region and from the Croatian Danube region to other parts of the Republic of Croatia. According to the data from the Office for refugees and displaced persons of the Government of the Republic of Croatia from 1998, 13500 people of Serbian nationality returned from the Croatian Danube region

[27] Government of the Republic of Croatia, 6.7.2.4, Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the letter from the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the completion of the peaceful reintegration process (September 22, 1997).

[28] General forgiveness act of 20 September 1996. In: *Narodne novine*, a. 1996, nr. 80.

[29] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: *The Process of Peaceful Reintegration*, p. 259.

[30] Croatian National Archives, Zagreb: Croatian office for the EC Monitoring Mission, Working group agreement on operational return procedures, April 1997, scatula 36.

to other parts of Croatia and 18700 people of Serbian nationality returned from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republic of Srpska to the Republic of Croatia.[31] The UN Security Council fully supported the conclusion of the UNTAES mission to Croatia by *Resolution 1145*, dated December 19, 1997. Despite problems and issues that followed the peaceful integration and had become a part of the heritage of that area (and still are, even today), the peaceful reintegration was conducted with no new casualties or material damage, proving that Croatia is fully devoted to the ideas of peace, democracy and coexistence.[32]

In conclusion, the key event that initiated the political framework for the peaceful reintegration of the rest of Croatia (the Danube Region of Croatia) was the 1995 military-police operation *Storm*. After a series of negotiations, the crisis created by the rebellion and war in Croatia was resolved by the final military operations that followed in 1995. In May and August 1995, the Croatian Armed Forces liberated the occupied territory in western Slavonia and in Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun and Banovina by Operation *Flash* and *Storm*. After the defeat of the rebellious Serbian forces in the course of the military – police operations the only remaining part of the Croatian territory still held by the rebellious Serbs was the one located in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and the Western Syrmia. The Croatian political leaders decided to restore occupied parts peacefully, starting the negotiations with the Serb representatives from Danube Region. The process of peaceful reintegration ended on January 15, 1998 when the Republic of Croatia established full control over its territory within its internationally recognized borders. Based on various experiences regarding the running of the process of peaceful reintegration, the UNTAES mission is considered to be one of the most successful missions of the UN in the world and Republic of Croatia one of the few countries that, following military operations, managed to end the war peacefully.

[31] Report of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the progress of return and care of and exiles, refugees and displaced persons so far. In: *Narodne novine*, a. 1998, nr. 92 / 1248 (7 July 1998).

[32] Holjevac Tuković, Ana: *The Process of Peaceful Reintegration*, p. 265.

Tomáš Černák*

Political Situation and Acts of Violence at Football Stadiums in the Early 90s in Croatia and Slovakia

Politická situácia a prejavy násilia na futbalových štadiónoch na začiatku 90. rokov v Chorvátsku a na Slovensku / Politička situacija i nasilje na nogometnim stadionima ranih 1990-ih u Hrvatskoj i Slovačkoj

Predkladaná štúdia sa snaží priblížiť, ako sa turbulentná politická situácia a zložité národnostné vzťahy pretransformovali do správania sa spoločnosti na verejných podujatiach. Keďže emócie a skutočné názory i vnútorné pocity ľudí sa najčastejšie naplno prejavia počas vypätých situácií, štúdia približuje násilné udalosti počas vypätých futbalových zápasov. Práve prejavy diváckeho násilia na štadiónoch boli neraz spôsobené, resp. do veľkej miery podnietené, komplikovanou vnútropolitickou či medzinárodnopolitickou situáciou. Navyše, futbal bol a je, tak v Chorvátsku, ako aj na Slovensku, najpopulárnejším a najviac navštevovaným športom. Z tohto dôvodu štúdia približuje všetky tieto faktory na príklade nikdy neodohraného futbalového zápasu medzi Dinamom Záhreb a Červenou hviezdou Belehrad z 13. mája 1990 (teda chorvátsko – srbský konflikt) a porovnáva ho so situáciou na Slovensku počas zápasov Slovana Bratislava so Spartou Praha a Ferencvárosom Budapešť z rokov 1991 – 1992. Pretože, paradoxne, medzi obyvateľmi rozpadajúceho sa Česko-Slovenska boli oveľa horšie vzťahy medzi Slovákmi a maďarskou národnostnou menšinou, než medzi Slovákmi a Čechmi. Začiatok 90. rokov bol na území bývalej Juhoslávie, ako aj v bývalom Česko-Slovensku, veľmi komplikovaný. Prejavovalo sa to najmä v národnostných vzťahoch. V krajinách bývalej Juhoslávie vyústil tento stav až do krvavej občianskej vojny, kým v česko-slovenskom prípade do relatívne pokojného rozdelenia štátu.

Key words: Football, Violence, Ethnic Relations, Football Fans, Yugoslavia

This article describes the turbulent political situation and the tense relations among different nationalities, and how they affected people's behaviour at public events. For this purpose I have chosen a sport, namely football, as it is in tense situations that people show their purest emotions and opinions. In fact, manifestations of violence at stadiums have often resulted from or been fuelled by an intricate domestic or international political situation. Moreover, football is the most popular and most visited sport both in Croatia and Slovakia. Therefore, I would like to present all these factors on the example of the football match

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between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade that was supposed to take place on May 13, 1990 but was never played (the conflict between Croats and Serbs), and compare it with the situation in Slovakia at the matches Slovan Bratislava played against Sparta Prague and Ferencváros Budapest in 1991 – 1992. Paradoxically, crumbling Czechoslovakia saw more edginess between the Slovak and Hungarian populations than between Slovaks and Czechs.

The early 1990s was a very troublesome period for both former Yugoslavia and former Czechoslovakia. This showed best in the agitated relations among the different nationalities. While in the countries of former Yugoslavia this situation led to a vicious civil war, in the case of Czechs and Slovaks it resulted in the relatively peaceful split of their country. Perhaps the first major manifestation of growing animosity among the different nationalities in former Yugoslavia were the riots at Maksimir Stadium in Zagreb before the Dinamo Zagreb vs. Red Star Belgrade football match on May 13, 1990. This happened in the middle of increasing friction between Serbs and Croats, which eventually resulted in a war.

This period also saw a lot of fundamental political changes. The Croatian constitution had been amended as early as January 11, 1990, which would make it possible for non-communist political parties to appear and free elections to take place. Indeed, new political parties were created and a new electoral law was passed allowing free elections.[1] On 28 February 1990, the inaugural convention of the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) was chaired by a former general of the People's Army of Yugoslavia, political prisoner and historian Franjo Tudjman. As a matter of fact, this party became the strongest political force in Croatia. At that time the official name of the country was still Socialist Republic of Croatia (Socijalistička Republika Hrvatska – SRH), and it was still one of the republics forming the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija – SFRY).

In its program and at pre-election assemblies, Tudjman's party emphasised the national demands of the Croatian people. These gradually evolved into expressions of radical nationalism and anti-communism. Party representatives would not restrain from displaying anti-Serbian animosity either. As for the form of the country, the Croatian Democratic Union initially proposed a confederation. As historian Jan Rychlík put it, the term confederation was intended to make the program of the Croatian Democratic Union more acceptable to pro-Yugoslavia oriented Croats who did not want the country to break up completely.[2] However, total independence ambitions became increasingly popular and were accompanied by growing radical nationalism. Consequently, those Serbs who lived in Croatia and wished to remain in Yugoslavia began to object to

[1] For more on the development in Croatia at the beginning of the 90s see: Rychlík, Jan – Perenčević, Milan: *Dějiny Chorvatska*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2007, pp. 357 – 376 or Mosković, Boris: *Mezi Titem and Tudjmanem: Chorvatsko v letech 1989 – 1990*. Prague: Faculty of Arts at Charles University 2017, pp. 221 – 263.

[2] Rychlík, Jan – Perenčević, Milan: *Dějiny Chorvatska*, p. 361.

this policy and the first Serbian political parties were formed.

The Serbian Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka – SDS), established in February 1990, became the strongest and most influential Serbian party in Croatia. Psychiatrist Jovan Rašković from Knin became its leader and from the very beginning the party followed the spirit of Rašković's ideas.[3] In fact, the city of Knin had become a kind of political centre of the Serbs living in Croatia. This was no surprise, as up to 88% of the Serbian population in Croatia lived in the Knin County. It is necessary to mention that Serbs accounted for about 12% of the total population of Croatia.[4] There were also Serbs living in the largest Croatian cities such as Split, Rijeka, Osijek and, of course, Zagreb.

Animosity between Croats and Serbs had been increasing sharply from the early 1990s, literally from month to month. This was fuelled mainly by anti-Serbian statements made by representatives of the Croatian Democratic Union. Among other things, these leaders refused to grant the Serbian population the status of second state-building nation in the new constitution. Serbian Democratic Party politicians, in turn, began to make use of Greater Serbia rhetoric, bringing up the genocide against Serbs promoted by the Croatian Revolutionary Movement, known as Ustasha, during WWII. Many of them claimed that nothing good could await Serbs in an independent Croatia. At a great rally of Serbs held on March 4, 1990 at Petrova Gora – which has a symbolic character for Croats – the crowds chanted slogans such as "*We do not want division*", "*This is Serbia*" or "*Death to Tudjman*".[5]

Most Croats took this demonstration as a provocation, and the already deteriorating relations between the two nations got even worse. Animosity grew on both sides as the day of the elections draw nearer. Elections were scheduled for April 22-23, 1990 with a second round on May 7. The first round clearly showed that the Croatian Democratic Union was going to win a landslide victory. Only five representatives of the Serbian Democratic Party made it to the Croatian *sabor* (parliament), too few given the Serbian population in Croatia. After the vote, Jovan Rašković issued a relatively moderate statement asking the Serbian population to remain calm. He even acknowledged that no one could deny the Croatian people the right to their own country, and suggested that the Serbian population should work side by side with the Croatian people to build up a common country.[6] There was also a meeting between Rašković and Tudjman, which at first glance seemed to have had a positive outcome. However, Tudjman and his followers did practically nothing to ease the tension among the Serbs.[7] A short spell of tranquility between Serbs and Croats lasted for just a few days before the animosity – which had not disappeared – showed again fuelled, among other things, by the football match between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade.

[3] Mosković, Boris: *Mezi Titem a Tudjmanem*, p. 247.
[4] Rychlík, Jan – Perenčević, Milan: *Dějiny Chorvatska*, p. 367.
[5] Ibidem, pp. 362 – 363.
[6] Mosković, Boris: *Mezi Titem a Tudjmanem*, p. 259.
[7] Pirjevec, Jože: *Jugoslávie 1918 – 1992: Vznik, vývoj a rozpad Karadjordjevićovy a Titovy Jugoslávie*. Prague: Argo, 2000, p. 469.

This was the heated socio-political atmosphere in which the risky match was to take place.[8] Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade were the most successful and popular clubs in their respective countries, Red Star being perceived almost as a national symbol of Serbia. Both clubs had a huge fan base outside Croatia and Serbia, so a very tense and risky match was to be expected. The Dinamo Zagreb fan base has a very active group called *Bad Blue Boys*, while the Red Star Belgrade fan base has the *Delije* or "Brave studs". Later on, members of both groups would join different paramilitary units fighting in the war.

Supporters of both clubs prepared for this match very intensively, exacerbated by the tense political situation in Croatia and the strained Croatian-Serbian relations. It was not just fans rooting for their favourite club, as it would be the case at other matches. It was more than that. In spite of the fact that the championship title was already clear – as Red Star was leading the standings with 47 points, followed by Dinamo with 42 points and with only two matches to the end of the competition (at that time a win represented just two points) – both teams still wanted to win and prepared for the match thoroughly, and so did their fans. It was a question of national prestige. The standings did not really matter. Before the match, it was clear the situation was going to be tense.[9]

On Sunday, May 13, 1990, about 3,000 Red Star fans travelled to Zagreb for the football match, including the man who would eventually lead the *Tigers* paramilitary group, Željka Ražnatovič, better known as "Arkan". He was to ensure the safety of the Belgrade group and did not join the other Red Star fans in the stands. Serbian fans arrived in Zagreb not only from Belgrade, but from virtually all areas of Yugoslavia where Serbs lived. Trains heading to Zagreb from Belgrade gradually filled up with fans from Syrmia, Slavonia, as well as from Knin and surrounding areas. Serbian fans headed for Zagreb not only by train, by also bus or hitchhiking.

The situation on the other side was not any different. Croatian fans flocked to support Dinamo from other towns and villages, not only Zagreb. Paradoxically, the *Torcida* fan group of Hajduk Split, the biggest rival of Dinamo Zagreb within Croatia, also went to support Dinamo at Maksimir Stadium. In other words, in the Dinamo – Red Star match people saw a duel between Croats and Serbs. For both parties the recent elections in Croatia and following development were still vivid and sore.

The clashes between Serbian and Croatian fans broke out right after the first Red Star supporters arrived in Zagreb, on Sunday morning, May 13, 1990. Fights began at the railway station, continued in downtown Zagreb, mainly in Zrinjevac Park and Republic Square (today – Ban Josip Jelačić Square), and gradually made their way towards Maksimir Stadium.[10] In the city centre this unrest left shop windows, shops and cafes broken and destroyed and even some injured victims. The police had to intervene and they actually managed to suppress the riots and escort the Red Star fans to the south stand of Maksimir Stadium.

[8] A documentary film on this match is available on the Internet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d8Rw2kp160.

[9] See, for instance: *Borba*, a. 69, 1990, nr. 134, May 12 – 13, p. 17.

[10] *Borba*, a. 69, 1990, nr. 135, 14. May, p. 1.

No one can accuse the police of having underestimated the situation. Television footage available on the Internet shows body and bag searches at the gates of the stadium in order to prevent weapons from being brought in.[11] However, the organisers placed the segregated visitors zone in the lower southern stand, while local fans were in the upper part. There was no robust barrier to separate the two groups. So, it was just a question of time for collision to get underway. That moment came when the teams appeared on the field to warm up for the match.

At that time, the Serbs started shouting slogans such as "*Zagreb je Srbija*" ("Zagreb is Serbia") and "*Ubit ćemo Tudjmana*" (Kill Tudjman), while the Croats chanted "*Srbe na vrbe*" ("Serbs to the Willows [gallows]"). The Dinamo fans in the stands above the visitors zone began throwing stones and verbally insulting the Serbs below. Before long, the guests managed to brake through the barriers and started to tear off advertising hoardings and seats, and eventually made their way towards the Dinamo fans. Only a few police officers were guarding the southern stand, so they had no chance of preventing acts of violence to spark. In short, the police failed to intervene resolutely and the *Delije* had no problem attacking the Croatian fans and expelling them from the stands. Both enemy camps used torn seats as weapons, throwing them all over the southern grandstand. Anyone failing to escape would be lynched. Literally.

Wanting to respond to this attack, Dinamo's *Bad Blue Boys* tried to make their way towards the Red Star fans, first through the stands, then through the field. They were able to take hold of several visitors' flags. It was already clear that the match would not take place. Only then did the police intervene but met a raging crowd of domestic fans who started fighting them right there on the field. The police used water cannons and tear gas against the hordes of local fans, who were throwing stones at them and attacking them with anything they could take hold of. Naturally, there were plenty of injuries both on the side of the police and of the spectators. The editor of the *Borba* daily, M. Mitrović, wrote that he felt he was a war correspondent from Beirut and that he had never seen anything like it.[12]

Meanwhile, Red Star fans stood isolated in the upper sectors of the south stand staring at what was going on below them. The home fans tried to attack them throwing stones from the field, but the police were already pushing them out of the stadium. However, the riots continued outside the stadium and the police had great difficulty to suppress them. Later on, the Croatian side accused the police of tolerating the disorders caused by the Serbian fans while intervening against the locals harshly. In their opinion this was because the police was predominantly Serbian. It was not that simple, though, for the police corps were formed by Croats, Serbs and Muslims. As a matter of fact, the composition of the police corps reflected the population of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia. Several Dinamo players remained on the field trying to defend their fans from the police. It would later became infamous how footballer Zvonimir Boban kicked a police officer in the chest.

[11] See, for instance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UYLkPHIcFQ.
[12] *Borba*, a. 69, 1990, nr. 135, May 14, p. 1.

Ironically, that officer was not a Serb, but a Muslim named Refik Ahmetović. Boban was proclaimed a national hero for the Croats. For the Serbians he became a Croatian nationalist.

The next day the press accused the police of having failed to intervene in time, when the riots were still in the bud. "*The question that bears asking is why the police did not react, why they did not prevent the fans of Dinamo and Red Star to collide*," read an article in the *Borba*.[13] With regard to the attack, Zvonimir Boban said: "*He hit me first, so I automatically hit back. I saw that policeman baton striking our player Škrinjar and, as the captain I am, I had to defend my player.*"[14] It was great luck such turmoil left no casualties.

The press informed that the Football Association of Yugoslavia (Futbalski savez Jugoslavije) reacted very quickly to the incident and began to investigate it. The riots in Zagreb did not go unnoticed in other European countries or within the UEFA either. The whole situation was all the more critical as the 1990 World Cup in Italy was drawing near and the national team of Yugoslavia was one of the participants. In the end, they traveled to the World Cup without Zvonimir Boban, who had been suspended for six months for kicking the police officer. This is how one of the best players of Yugoslavia paid for his actions. But not only him, the whole national team suffered as they would have been stronger with Boban. Red Star was awarded a walkover victory of the match.

On May 15, 1990, the Czech and Slovak press reported on the riots at Maksimir Stadium:

"The biggest scandal in the history of Yugoslav sport occurred before the first league match between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade. Both fan camps started to fight at the stadium, fuelled by the national disputes between Serbs and Croats, so the director of the stadium decided to cancel the match."[15]

The editor of the Slovak daily *Smena*, Ivan Drábek, presented an interesting opinion on the whole incident in an article with the title A Defeat on Both Sides at Maksimir:

"Apparently the sports arena was just the background for an outburst of animosity that has been accumulating among the peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia. Such an incident was bound to happen wherever thousands of Croats and Serbs met face to face as it happened in Maksimir. If someone thinks that the fights between the fans of Dinamo and Red Star, which resulted in ninety people with minor and ten with severe injuries, is just an act of outrageous football behaviour, they do not understand anything. In the last but one league round, neither Dinamo or Red Star had anything to win. Unfortunately, in the end it was the whole Yugoslav federation that suffer a terrible defeat.

Not by chance did yesterday's Borba, in connection with last Sunday's Croatian-Serbian riots, wondered whether this cannot not the beginning of something dreadful, something the hostile nationalist hordes on both sides

[13] Ibidem, p. 11.
[14] Ibidem.
[15] *Československý sport*, a. 37, 1990, nr. 112, May 15.

of the barricades are just waiting for. The Belgrade gazette goes even further claiming that the fights between the fans had been prepared in advance by forces that are now ready to use them for their chauvinistic goals.

Concerns that Zagreb's 'football war' could trigger a wave of violence are not at all inflated. Yugoslavia, with its fifteen ethnic groups, over a dozen languages, six republics and two different alphabets, has recently been more of a compromise than a united country… However, the future of Yugoslavia, its further existence, will most likely be decided by Belgrade and Zagreb, the capitals of the two largest and strongest republics. This is why both Serbs and Croats need to learn as much as possible from Sunday's defeat on both sides at Maksimir. In fact, if one of the parties longed for retaliation and began to call for blood and violence, it would be pushing the whole country into a fratricidal civil war Yugoslavia would hardly be able to overcome."[16]

The violence at Maksimir Stadium in Zagreb provoked a great deal of reactions throughout the then Yugoslavia. Both parts blamed each other of planning to ignite acts of violence. The political elites of Croatia and Serbia did not hesitate to try to get political profit from these riots. Today, foreign media still consider these events to be the beginning of the war between Croats and Serbs. This claim seems exaggerated, though. These riots were just one in a series of displays of growing animosity between Serbs and Croats, not the beginning of anything. However, the game brought to light the real situation between the two ethnicities. If these riots had not taken place here, similar unrest would have broken out on any other occasion, at which a larger number of Croats and Serbs would meet face to face.

As for the situation in former Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, animosities between Slovaks and Czechs were never as bad as between Serbs and Croats. Nevertheless, displays of national intolerance could also be seen at football matches between the best Czech and Slovak teams. Its most common form were offensive slogans being shouted, and less often major confrontations of fans. This applied mostly for clubs with a wide fan base that were popular and often competed for the first slots in the standings.

From the very beginning, fans had been predisposed by the political events that erupted right after the fall of the communist regime. The first dispute started over the new name of the republic, which had ceased to be "socialist". The Czechs wanted to call it Czechoslovak Republic, but this proposal was turned over by the leaders of Slovakia, as it reminded of the interwar republic and its official ideology of Czechoslovakism. These disputes went on for two months, from February to April 1990, and strained the relations between Slovaks and Czechs even more. In the end, a compromise was reached and the new country was named Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (CSFR).

The relations of Slovaks and Czechs were also affected by the negotiations over the further character of the federation, namely over the competencies

[16] *Smena*, a. 43, 1990, nr. 112, May 15.

of the national and federal bodies. Slovaks demanded a more loose federation and greater competencies for the national authorities. At the same time, ambitions of total independence for Slovakia gradually grew stronger among the political elites of the country. The differences regarding the form of the common country of Czechs and Slovaks did not disappear until the summer of 1992, when the final decision was made to dissolve the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and create two independent states. This federal republic lasted for two and a half years and witnessed constant disputes between the Slovak and Czech political representatives.

Slovakia, however, also struggled with animosity between its Slovak population and its large Hungarian minority living in the country. The leaders of this Hungarian community demanded greater rights and even autonomy for their people. This situation did not help to ease the tensions with Hungary, which were already deteriorated by the Slovak-Hungarian dispute over the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros waterworks. These tensions showed at football matches between Slovak teams and the FC DAC Dunajská Streda, whose fan base consists of Hungarians living in Slovakia. Thus, at the stadiums Slovak football fans had frictions not only with their Czech opponents but also with their Hungarian rivals.

The beginning of the 1990s saw Slovan Bratislava, which had become one of Slovakia's national symbols, trying to usurp the first position in the standings from Sparta Prague. As a matter of fact, the biggest federal derby matches between these two rivals took place in 1991 – 1993, exacerbated by the fact that the common state of both nations was falling apart and animosity between them was growing stronger. Politics could not avoid football and in the end it made it to the stands of the stadiums. Hostility and vulgar insults on both sides as well as tension in the stands were commonplace at football matches between the best Slovak and Czech teams. The more edgy the political situation between the two nations became, the more this reflected in the stands. And not just there. In fact, violent clashes spread onto the streets as well. More and more often, the police had to intervene during football matches. Especially risky were those games Slovan Bratislava played against Sparta Prague, Slavia Prague and Baník Ostrava.

It is important to keep in mind the circumstances of the political events going on at the background of these matches. The disputes between the Czech and Slovak political leaders regarding the further advance of the common state were escalating. On 14 March 1991 at SNP Square in Bratislava, during the celebrations of the 52nd anniversary of the establishment of the first Slovak Republic, Slovak protesters kicked and spat upon the convoy in which the President of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, Václav Havel, was passing by. The same situation repeated at the very same place on October 28th 1991. Meanwhile, voices demanding the independence of Slovakia were growing louder.

Slovakia saw a really turbulent 1991 spring, a situation that came into light in the stands. Aversion towards Slovaks was growing in the Czech Republic and vice-versa. Moravia, whose inhabitants also began to define themselves against the Czechs, was an exception in this regard. Therefore, it is not surprising that Slovan Bratislava also had its fans in South Moravia.

According to a police report, only seventeen Sparta Prague fans arrived in Bratislava for the match between Slovan

and Sparta at the beginning of May 1991. They had a segregated visitors sector at Bratislava's Tehelné Pole Stadium. Since they were expecting much higher numbers, both the stadium crew as well as the police troops guarding the stadium had been strengthened, and a corridor for the visiting fan sector had been created. According to the press, the situation at the stadium was relatively peaceful, except for a few nationalistic slogans being heard. At the end of the match, it was the Slovan players – not the Czechs —who had to put up with a load of insults for their poor performance. Unrest only occurred after the game.

Groups of domestic fans were trying to make their way towards the Spartan fan sector, so the police offered to take the visiting fans in their cars to the train station. However, when the Spartans were getting into the police cars, riots between Slovan fans and the police broke out. Fans threw stones and other objects at the police which, in turn, used batons against them and detained nine local fans. One police officer was injured.[17] At that time this kind of scenarios were commonplace at similar derby matches. The same applied for the matches Slovan played in Prague or Ostrava, just that – as can be expected – in Bohemia and northern Moravia it was Slovan fans who were attacked.

Another match against Sparta Prague in the spring of 1992 in Bratislava was supposed to be a football celebration for the whole federation and for Slovakia in particular. Slovan had played a series of 27 matches without a loss and this attracted about 43,000 spectators to Bratislava's Tehelné Pole stadium. In case Slovan won, the championship title would be most probably theirs. Therefore, the match against Sparta literally set the whole Slovakia in motion. Fans from all over the country, including eastern Slovakia, flocked to Bratislava to attend it. However, Slovan did not perform very well and suffered a 0:3 defeat at home. Surprisingly, there were no incidents during the match. This, however, cannot be said of another ethnically motivated incident at a stadium.

This time it was the relations between Slovaks and Hungarians that were to be tested during the matches of the first round of the European Cup between Slovan Bratislava and Ferencváros Budapest. Both matches took place in September 1992. It was the first duel in Bratislava that poured oil into the fire that had broken out between Slovaks and Hungarians after the fall of the communist regime. In fact, democracy unveiled many latent ethnic problems socialism had just suppressed. The Hungarian minority feared the creation of an independent Slovakia claiming that their fundamental rights and freedoms would not be guaranteed after the split of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. In Hungary some political leaders shared this view and the Hungarian press addressed this issue again and again. And neither of them hesitated to use this football match to support their arguments.

Even before the game there were concerns about what might happen. When asked about the possible risks in the stands and outside the stadium, Ferencváros President, István Szivos, said: "*Sport and politics are two different things. I expect both camps to be noisy but rise to the challenge*."[18]

[17] *Pravda*, a. 72, 1991, May 7, p. 17.
[18] Už som hral proti Galisovi. In: *Denník Šport*, a. 46, 1992, nr. 219. September 16.

Coach Tibor Nyilasi spoke in a similar vein. It is necessary to add that among the supporters of his team there were also large numbers of fans coming from the south of Slovakia. At that time they were still Czech-Slovak citizens of Hungarian nationality. This fact was no relief for the organisers. Nevertheless, neither the organisers or the fans were expecting riots, nor the resulting police intervention to reach the proportions they were about to witness. It was precisely the intervention of the Slovak police and, above all, that of a special commando deployed against the Hungarian fans that escalated animosity in the Slovak-Hungarian relations and aroused intense protests and passions in Hungary.

Violent clashes between fans had taken place the day before and culminated on the day of the match. About ten thousand fans, mostly from southern Slovakia, streamed to Bratislava to support Ferencváros. Although before the match the police confiscated from Ferencváros fans knives, brass knuckles, sprays, iron bars and nunchakus, several other objects were smuggled into the stadium. This was the scenario in which one of the most risky matches in the history of Slovak football began at 5:00 p.m. on 16 September 1992.

Part of the Ferencváros fans were not able to cope with the impending defeat of their team, and started throwing cans, cups, pieces of concrete, and various iron items onto the pitch. The amount of flying objects grew in direct proportion to the number of balls making it into the goal of Hungarian goalkeeper Balogh. A piece of concrete broke the head of photo reporter Dušan Koutný, of the daily *Šport*. Well-organised hooligans, in turn, attacked the police and provoked fights with Slovak fans.

The commander of the police unit guarding sector C, Major Ludek Buchar, later said:

> *"After Slovan scored their first goal, you could hear nasty nationalistic insults, and the suffocating atmosphere escalated with every further goal the locals scored. After the third goal, both camps started throwing at each other cans full of beer and soda, stones, iron items wrapped in fabric and dangerous glass marbles. In an effort to separate the two camps, the police needed to intervene vigorously using all the means the law allows. "About 60 fans were expelled from the stadium."*[19]

This resolute intervention included an anti-terrorist commando in balaclavas coming to sector C and baton striking Hungarian fans. Tear gas was also used. The Police literally drove many Ferencváros fans out of the stadium. The stands applauded the intervention.

However, there was imminent danger that some people could get trampled in a panic stampede trying to avoid the police batons. The commander of security procedures at the stadium, Lieutenant Colonel Anton Kršák, commented as follows:

> *"Every police intervention was a response to fans breaking the law. At about half past six, a fight broke out in the lower rows of the AS stand. Our officers detained the main initiator, a Hungarian fan. As he was being led out of the stadium, a Ferencváros supporter approached*

[19] Hanba. In: *Smena*, a. 45, 1992, nr. 220, September 17.

and hit one of the policemen in the eye, probably with brass knuckles. The officer suffered corneal damage and is still unfit for work.

Three city police officers were also injured by Hungarian fans in the parking lot outside the nearby Inter stadium. The commander of Sector C asked me for reinforcements. These were members of the Emergency Squad. Had I not given the order to intervene, the conflict could have evolved into a mass fight in which fans would be trampled to death. We also feared that the fences would collapse and that the whole stadium would become a battlefield. Every police officer is responsible for the intensity of the coercive means they use. But in my opinion, even if they went beyond the regular limits, it was not on purpose. Before the match, I instructed everyone responsible for maintaining order to keep in mind not to cause any severe injuries."[20]

The commander leading the intervention in Sector C commented on the action as follows: *"It [The intervention] was really justified and proportionate. In line with the law. We made use of grabs, kicks and baton strikes*." When asked if he did not fear that a stampede might occur resulting in fans getting trampled, he said:

"Absolutely. We very much knew what direction the fans would run. The hooligans went right onto the street behind stand C… The most aggressive groups were very well organised in groups of 10 to 20 and they tried to isolate and physically attack our officers. Our Hungarian colleagues in plain clothes wanted to help them but also got their share. I saw with my own eyes how members of the Ferencváros fight group kissed their leader, who was wearing a green scarf, after a successful attack."[21]

The match and, above all, the following events provoked a wave of reactions and protests in Slovakia and Hungary. After the match, the news the Hungarian media reported would make a third-party reader think it was about the then war-torn Yugoslavia. They spoke of dead fans, national intolerance, police beating people just for being Hungarians, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia being in danger, etc. These events even made it to the negotiation tables of the Hungarian and Slovak governments, and exacerbated the already poor relations on both sides of the Danube.

The *Magyar Nemzet* wrote:

"Of course, you also have to see the responsibility of Ferencváros fans, several of whom had already got a few slaps from the police all over Europe. The brutal way the Slovak police intervened was also caused by the fact that some of the Hungarian fans were defiant, provocative and arrogant. In the end, these inebriated green eagles in the stands foolishly walked into the trap Slovaks had prepared for them. The Ferencváros players on the field did not get any luckier."

The *ÚJ Magyarország* went even further*:*

"Ferencváros Fans went through an ordeal just for being Hungarians… the police were systematically going

[20] Futbalogika. In: *Smena*, a. 45, 1992, nr. 222, September 19.
[21] Fradi tromfli rowdies. In: ibidem.

from sector to sector looking for Hungarians to beat them. Seeing these events, we really need to be concerned over the Hungarian population in Slovakia. In fact, independent Slovakia has already found its new enemy, this time at a football match."

The *Magyar Hírlap* had a more sober opinion:

"Obviously underneath the surface there is hidden tension in the Hungarian-Slovak relations. So, what can be done? The competent Hungarian authorities must prevent something similar from happening in the Budapest retaliation match. In this respect, it would be good to ponder whether the Hungarian authorities did everything they could have before the match to prevent the clashes."[22]

The Hungarian Government discussed the issue at one of its sessions and described the intervention of the emergency units as unprecedented and unjustified. The Foreign Affairs Committee at the Hungarian Parliament approached the topic in a similar way. The Consulate General of the Republic of Hungary in Bratislava also protested against the intervention. The chairman of Ferencváros issued a statement stating that the intervention of the police units against their fans had also affected the mental condition of the players and, therefore, also protested against the irregularities at Tehelné Pole stadium.

Thus, the UEFA in Zurich also dealt with this European Cup first round match and asked the president of Slovan Bratislava, Jaroslav Čaniga, as well as the then legal adviser of the club, František Laurinec, to appear before them in person. Of course, the Slovan representatives needed to provide the UEFA authorities with a written statement on the whole incident. The final result of the match remained unchanged, though. In fact, UEFA confirmed the final score but penalised both clubs with financial fines. Ferencváros for the riots caused by their fans, and Slovan for the shortcomings in the organisation of the match. UEFA also declared the retaliatory match to be of high risk.

The Czech-Slovak embassy in Budapest also had to go through some unpleasant days following the game. On September 17, 1992, the then Ambassador Rudolf Chmel wrote in his diary:

"This morning (in fact, since last night) we have been dealing with wave of protests: Slovak police officers beat Ferencváros fans (Slovan won 4:1). Even the Hungarian Foreign Ministry protested – I did not go but sent my second secretary, Michal Černý. Lots of phone calls. An anonymous man threatened to blow up the embassy. What a nice and pleasant situation! One more slap somewhere in a pub and a local conflict can break out. A raucous Hungarian fan would have smashed the car of the editor of the Rudé Právo daily at a crossroads in Budapest if he had not said he was from Prague. What a great, bright future!"[23]

A few days later, the Foreign Affairs Committee at the Hungarian Parliament met:

[22] Hungarian Press Reactions. In: *Denník Šport*, a. 46, 1992, nr. 221, September 18.
[23] Chmel, Rudolf: Moja maďarská otázka. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996, p. 249.

"The Foreign Affairs Committee at the Hungarian Parliament considers the intervention of the police troops at the Slovan – Ferencváros match to have been groundless and brutal. The Minister of the Interior, Péter Boross, and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, András Kelemen, also commented on the whole incident and stated, among other things, that Bratislava must identify the perpetrators of the atrocities against Hungarian citizens and that those responsible need to apologise and pay for the caused damages." How touching!"[24]

Indeed, the situation in Hungary was tense and critical at the time. The police intervention at Tehelné Pole became the number one topic in the country for many days. Both, media and politicians instigated animosity to the extreme. It was dangerous, as Rudolf Chmel finally put it, to drive through Budapest with Czechoslovak plates or just to utter a word in Slovak in public. Sappers needed to inspect the embassy of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic twice due to bomb threats. Telephone threats were commonplace. Also Slovan Bratislava received threatening letters. For this reason, organising the retaliation game became a major issue. Slovan fans had got tickets for the revenge match even before the first one, but attending the game would have been too dangerous given the circumstances. Except for one Slovan fan, in the end no one traveled to Budapest.

Before the retaliation game, groups of Ferencváros hooligans combed Budapest looking for Slovan fans in order to take revenge for what had happened in Bratislava. In some statements they made later on, they even said they could imagine the revenge in Budapest ending up with casualties.[25] Thanks to the fact that Slovan supporters stayed at home, there were no incidents to regret. However, the whole Bratislava team had to be escorted to the stadium in secret. As soon as the local fans saw them approaching the stadium, they started to throw stones at their bus. During the retaliation, which ended 0:0, you could feel the very tense atmosphere. Animosity in the relations of Slovaks and Hungarians did not disappear even after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic.

[24] Ibidem, p. 250.

[25] Mareš, Miroslav – Smolík, Josef – Suchánek, Marek: *Fotbaloví chuligáni*: *Evropská dimenze subkultury.* Brno: Strategic Studies Centre, 2004, p. 103.

Albert Bing*

Croatia's Transition to the European Union

Chorvátska cesta do Európskej únie / Put Hrvatske u Europsku uniju

Prilog se bavi dugotrajnim procesom pristupanja Hrvatske Europskoj Uniji. Uz pregled najznačajnijih događaja i tranzicijskih procesa apostrofirani su problemi s kojima se Hrvatska suočavala na svom „europskom putu". Raspad jugoslavenske države, državno osamostaljenje Hrvatske te nametnuti rat obilježili su formativno razdoblje hrvatske tranzicije. Te okolnosti u bitnom su obilježile proces priključivanja EU. Kao osnovni motiv naznačen je kontinuitet euroatlatske orijentacije Hrvatske unatoč značajnim oscilacijama u raspoloženju građana – od izrazitog entuzijazma za priključivanjem EU do euroskepticizma. Članak uključuje i osvrt na držanje međunarodne zajednice, posebice EZ/EU prema Hrvatskoj i bivšoj Jugoslaviji, što je u bitnome odredilo dinamiku pridruživanja euroatlantskim strukturama.

Ključne riječi: Hrvatska, Europska unija, tranzicija, Bivša Jugoslavija, rat u Hrvatskoj i BiH, euroskepticizam

Probably no current member of the EU had such the complex and dramatic process of joining a European Union like Croatia. Specific circumstances that significantly characterized Croatia's European integration were the dramatic breakup of the Yugoslav state and the wars that waged in the soil of Croatia and neighboring BiH in the first half of the 1990s. The achievement of statehood in 1992 and the liberation of the country in 1995 were imposed as priority goals in relation to transition processes and accession to the desired Euro-Atlantic associations. All of these problems have been compounded due to Croatia's very complex past. The briefest summary of Croatian history in the twentieth century was probably made by sociologist Slaven Letica in his collection of articles under the meaningful title *Obećana zemlja* (*The Promised Land*):

> *"For the Croatian people and all citizens of Croatia, the twentieth century did not bring much good historical fortune or a happy life.* (…) *The Croatian people are leaving a multiply ruined history behind them: three wars (two World Wars and this most recent Serbian-Croat war), two failed ideologies (fascist and communist) to which only a minority adhered, two bankrupt etatist ideas (Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav), a quarter-century under a Greater Serbian dictatorship and king (1918 – 1941) and a half century under communism."*[1]

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[1] Letica, Slaven: Obećana zemlja – Politički antimemoari. Zagreb: Globus International, 1992, book cover.

All of these historical fitures represented the important components of the contemporary Croatian history reflex.[2]

Throughout history, Croatia has been the border-land:

> *"At a peripheral distance from the East and from the West alike, Croatianhood (Croatia) never in the history the East, and never entirely the West – under the fatal influx of strong civilizations, southern Mediterranean and northern German, a transitional area of strong economic interests and conceptions in all four directions of the compass – to week to be formed into an autonomous political and state body, and yet so resistant that it is not melted down (overturned)* (…) *Croatianhood, always equally anemic and wounded as a persecuted beast in hunt of disproportionately stronger forces, with only one thought to save itself from the miserable peasant conditions and the most primitive life."*[3]

The location of the periphery between East and West is one of the important geopolitical and cultural features that, through the capricious centuries, left traces in the identities – history and culture of both the Croatian and other (South) Slavic peoples.[4] In the specific geopolitical circumstances of the Cold War, the position of the Yugoslav state, to which Croatia was a federal unit, was used by its communist sovereign, Josip Broz Tito, in promotion of the bloc's non-alignment and so-called "bloc" third path. With disintegration of the Yugoslav state, Croatia becomes a border area again towards the unintegrated and proverbially unstable Balkan space. Today, after a long journey to Europe, it has finally become a member of the European Union, its space is once again a border area; zone of the overlapping of interests of EU and NATO and on the other hand forces of global influence of large states like Russia, China and Turkey.

Despite the complex historical and cultural heritage (polycentricity of Croatian history and culture), geopolitical and ideological changes, Croatia has persisted in its Western European orientation. At the time of the epochal collapse of communism in the late 1980s, pro-Western orientation in almost all social classes was clearly articulated in Croatia. In the process of promoting political pluralism in 1989/1990, and especially after the state's independence and the start of functioning of the Croatian state as a sovereign international legal entity, Croatia's main strategic goal was to enter the full membership of the Euro-Atlantic structures – the European Community (later the Union) and

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[2] The Second World War left behind a particularly traumatic heritage in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. However, the most relevant period for recent Croatian history is the period after the Second World War, i.e. the period of socialist Yugoslavia and its collapse and the establishment of an independent Croatian state at the beginning of the 1990s.

[3] Krleža, Miroslav: *Malograđanska historijska shema*: *Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji*. Zagreb: Zora, 1957, p. 100.

[4] Miloš Đurić, for example, it defines the definition of Slavic culture through the term "Slavic souls" which "groans in labor pains between East and West." According to Đurić, Slavs are a nation that *"escapes identification with the East or the West and that is why their mission is to synthesize these two cultural circles"*. Đurić, Miloš: *Pred slovenskim vidicima: Prilozi filosofiji slovenske kulture*. Beograd: Sveslovenska knjižara, 1928, pp. 41 – 43, 57. See Prpa, Branka: Traganja za identitetom: Beograd. In: *Republika*, 1999, nr. 218 – 219.

join the NATO pact. This path was neither easy nor short-lived. And it was not without controversies either:

> *"The dominant pro-European orientation of both political authorities and citizens, and a broad political consensus regarding the Croatian accession to the European Union were an essential prerequisite for the realization of the accession process, but not sufficient."*[5]

The EU required the achievement of concrete democratic values and standards and on the other hand didn't develope a clear and effective politics towards the participans in the process of dissolution of Yugoslav state. One of the consequence of the complex condition was delay of development of democracy and generally the failure of a successful transitions:

> *"The extended accession period did not accelerate democratization as much as it strengthened Euroskepticism and suspicion towards the EU. Thence stems the ambivalent attitude toward the Croatian accession, and the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership. A certain paradox is visible: during the period when Croatia did not have the necessary democratic standards, commitment to EU accession was relatively high. Conversely, in parallel with achieving the necessary standards, skepticism towards membership had grown, and was the highest just before entering the membership."*[6]

Croatia's European orientation and connections with European integration processes can be traced back to the last decade of Yugoslavia. Institutional ties between the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH) and the European Community were regulated by various instruments through the Yugoslav state, until the formal state independence of Croatia in January 1992. The institutional relations of the EC and Yugoslavia were already determined by the Cooperation Agreement of 1980 (entered into force on 1 April 1983). Under the Agreement, Yugoslavia was treated as *"a non-aligned, European, Mediterranean country and a member of Group 77"* and received *"double treatment"* by the European Community;

> *"The general positions on country policy, including the institutional framework for co-operation, were defined in the context of global Mediterranean policy, while the former Yugoslavia was treated as a Central European country by multilateral assistance programs (PHARE)."*

Such a double treatment, *"like no other European country"*, has favored Croatia as a Mediterranean and Central European country.[7]

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[5] Maldini, Pero – Pauković, Davor (eds.): *Croatia and the European Union – Changes and Development*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, p. 4.

[6] Ibidem.

[7] Samardija, Višnja: *Europska unija i Hrvatska – Putevi povezivanja i suradnje*. Zagreb: IRMO, 1994, p. 160. In addition to the Cooperation Agreement, in the same year (1980), an additional Agreement was signed between the European Coal and Steel Community. Protocols regulating the issue of trade arrangements between the EC and Yugoslavia were added to the renewal of the 1987 Agreement, and in 1991 a transport co-operation agreement was signed, which was important for the then Socialist Republic of Croatia (the second economic branch of Croatia immediately after industrial production), and before the influx from tourism, there was transit

In this context, one can speak of the continuity and different character of the relationship between Croatia and the EC, which represented a potential comparative advantage in the process of accession to European integrations (either within the Yugoslav convention or as an independent state).[8] Following the radical economic reforms of the last Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic, in 1989, which began Yugoslavia's recovery from the severe economic crisis, a federal initiative to change the status of Yugoslavia towards the European Community was launched. In 1990, Yugoslavia formally sought the status of an associate member of the EU; negotiations were opened on the inclusion of Yugoslavia in the Council of Europe followed by the initiative to conclude an agreement with Yugoslavia as an associate member of the European Community (a special resolution in June 1991 on the crisis in Yugoslavia articulated German Bundestag).[9] At the same time, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) opened the possibility of opening a free trade zone.[10] By the outbreak of war, all these processes were suspended.

Even before state independence, there was a distinct sense of inclination in the West in Croatia. After the evident collapse and finally disintegration of communism, a high level of awareness of the values of the liberal West came to the fore; in this context, the motive for joining European integrations appears. The inclination to the West was connected to broather historical and cultural Croatian heritage. The openess of Yugoslavia after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 also led to a strong influence of Western culture. Economic activities such as tourism and transit traffic also connected Croatia and the West. Croatia also had the strongest emigration in western countries. Furthermore, Croatsa dominated among Yugoslav citizens who went abroad for temporary word, especially to Western Germany.

The question of the (Western) European orientation of Croatia was often emphasized in Croatian intellectual circles. Until the intensification of interethnic conflicts – especially after Slobodan Milosevic came to power in 1987 with his policy of Greater Serbia – integration with the West was considered within the Yugoslav framework. Joining European integration was closely linked to the needs of economic and political reforms, including the introduction of an open market with clear indications of promoting pluralistic democracy. In this context, it is important to distinguish liberal values (the adoption of political, economic and social acquis) from institutional and / or geopolitical frameworks. Having on mind the multinational structure of the EC / EU community of peoples, it is sometimes compared to Austro-Hungarian and even Tito's Yugoslavia (Tito himself was interpreted as the "last Habsburg"). However, unlike in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Yugoslavia in which the social model was im-

traffic). However, with the outbreak of war, all these shifts lose their meaning. Thus, the EC-Yugoslavia Treaty on the so-called the third Financial Protocol for the five-year ECU 807 million aid period (June 1991) and withdrawn prior to the formal dissolution of the Yugoslav state.

[8] Ibidem.

[9] Ibidem and Ivanković, Nenad: *Bonn – druga hrvatska fronta*. Zagreb: Mladost, 1993, pp. 175 – 176.

[10] Samarđija, Višnja: *Europska unija i Hrvatska*, p. 163.

posed, the model of European integration was based on the sharing of common liberal values and "bottom-up" integration. The conceptual basis of European integration from its very beginnings was respect for the "*four fundamental freedoms: freedom of movement for persons, goods, services and capital (first six members, Rome Treaties 1957)*".[11] In this sense, European values and civilizational heritage must be distinguished from mere belonging to a "club". This important distinction was also relevant to Croatia's relationship with the EU. In the period leading up to the breakup of the Yugoslav state and the creation of nation states on its ruins, its relation to Europe was manifested by its relation to European values from the Yugoslav, and then after wars, national perspective. In the case of Slovenia and Croatia, in the early 1990s, the Euro-Atlantic orientation expressed a will to embrace the values of liberalism. It became an important political distinctive feature in relation to the "Serbian" bloc led by Slobodan Milosević.

One of the many examples of Western orientation was the public appearance of two prominent Croatian intellectuals in the influential weekly *Danas*; their public statement attracted the attention of Croatian political emigrant community (pronounced with anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist orientations). The most eminent immigrant journal for culture, the *Croatian Review* writes (HR) in 1988 on the reform propositions of "*two prominent Croatian economists, Marijan Korošić and Slavko Goldstein*".[12] As HR transmitted, Goldstein and Korošić advocated:

> *"an open economy with great opportunities for private individuals, various types of property, the release of exports and imports of all bonds, the suspension of work on the change of the Constitution, the establishment of a temporary government with special powers for a transitional period, the development of Republican pluralism in the economy and politics, the abolition of the Fund for Underdevelopment and the establishment of the Bank for Development, the departure from the poor Third World and the approaching of the European Community and abandoning the Alliance of Communists from the role of the 'ruling party' to become the leader in the development of multi-program / pluralist / socialist democracy".*[13]

The severe economic crisis that shook Yugoslavia and the intensification of international relations in the 1980s put into the question the monopolistic position of the Communist Party (the League of Communists of Yugoslavia). Self-government and the delegate system, which was considered the backbone of "*socialist democracy*", did not advance reform efforts, and more and more questions were raised about alternatives in the form of promoting a new type of pluralistic relations. On this track, in the late 1980s, various movements were activated. Thus, in an exhaustive study of the period,

[11] Stančić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*. Zagreb: Ljevak, 2005, pp. 44 and 55.

[12] For his book Yugoslavia in Crisis, Marijan Korosić received the prestigious Nin Prize in 1988, and Slavko Goldstein became the first elected president of the first registered political party in Croatia, the Croatian Social- Liberal Party of Croatia.

[13] The original text of Korošić and Goldstein was published in the weekly newspaper *Danas* on December 1, 1998 and transmitted and commented on in *Hrvatska revija*, Mart 1988. See Bing, Albert: Socialist Self-Management between Politics and Economy. In: *Acta Historiae*, a. 27, 2019, nr. 1, pp. 23 – 24.

Davor Pauković states that "*environmental initiatives and actions can rightly be considered as the first indications of the maturation of the post-totalitarian order in Croatia in the second half of the 1980s*" the environmental movement was also recognized as a "*political movement*" (Nikola Visković), and the promotion of green initiatives coincided with important aspects of EC policy.[14] The activity of the Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, founded in February 1989, was attended by many prominent intellectuals with the aim of affirming a market economy and democracy (President was a prominent economic expert Branko Horvat). However, despite numerous initiatives, members of the communist apparatus believed that "*self-governing democracy already includes non-partisan pluralism*" (Ivo Druzic) and that the emergence of party pluralism could lead to "*greater political tensions, party struggles, imputation, insinuations, manipulations, good promises, and multinational communities to ethnic frictions*" (Predrag Vranicki).[15] Certainly, broader cooperation with the EC- which is based on the foundations of a market economy and liberal democracy – would not have been possible without radical economic as well as political reforms. The efforts of Prime Minister Ante Marković, who began radical reforms with the help of world experts (Jeffry Sachs) in 1989, have been hampered by Slobodan Milosević's Greater Serbian nationalist policy, which has resulted in heightened national tensions and accelerated erosion of the institutions of the Yugoslav federation.

The very beginnings of political pluralism in Croatia were closely related to the European orientation. Back in August 1988, Slavko Goldstein publicly called for "*the adoption of European standards and the introduction of a multi-party system*".[16] Together with prominent intellectuals Vlado Gotovac, Božo Kovačević and others, Goldstein launched the Croatian Social Liberal Alliance (HSLS), which will become the first registered non-communist party. In the initial stages of its activities, the HSLS saw the solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia in the democratic reconstruction of the Yugoslav state; in doing so, HSLS made contacts with organizations that advocated liberal ideas and European orientation, such as the Society for Yugoslav-European Cooperation (organizing the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in Croatia). Multy-party system was legalized at the end of January 1990, followed by the parliamentary elections in the spring of the same year. HSLS became a political party that gradually left the Yugoslav framework, but has consistently remained focused on European liberal values. The electoral winner after the first democratic elections was the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), party which primarily positions Croatia's national interests, without giving up – like almost all emerging political parties – clear European orientations. Thanks to its good organization, affiliation with the Croatian expatriate community, the Catholic Church, but also with a strong foothold in communist structures in Croatia, the HDZ becomes

[14] Pauković, Davor: *Usred Oluje – Politička tranzicija u Hrvatskoj 1989/90*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2018, p. 55. As part of the earmarked funds granted by the EC to Yugoslavia environmental protection was concerned. See Samardija, Višnja: *Europska unija i Hrvatska*, p. 163.

[15] Pauković, Davor: *Usred Oluje – Politička tranzicija u Hrvatskoj 1989/90*, pp. 70 – 71.

[16] Ibidem, p. 75.

the leading force of the growing Croatian national movement.[17] HDZ, and especially its president – later President of the Republic of Croatia – Franjo Tuđman, will mark the turning points of recent Croatian history in the 1990s: the split with SFRY, international recognition of the Croatian state and winning the imposed war.

Despite the rapid erosion of federal institutions, the European orientation of Croats culminated after the 1990 multi-party elections. This is evidenced by a poll conducted in the Yugoslav republics at the initiative of the EC in 1991, just before the outbreak of war and the already evident disintegration of the Yugoslav state. The same survey was also conducted in three countries of Central Europe, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. According to the results of a survey conducted in Croatia, it appeared that Croatian citizens have a significantly higher level of knowledge and understanding of the EC at the time – including the benefits of the common market – than other citizens of Central European countries surveyed. On average, 53% of respondents considered themselves well or even very well informed about the EC's objectives and tasks, while these indicators were at a significantly lower level in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. 78% of the population had a positive attitude towards the goals and activities of the EC, and as much as 89% expressed a positive attitude towards closer cooperation, that is, direct involvement of Croatia in the European Community. During this period – the great turmoil in Yugoslavia – 73% of Croats thought that gaining full membership could be realized within five years.[18]

The enormous enthusiasm that the people of Croatia had for joining the community of European peoples was in line with the Croatian-Slovenian proposals for a confederal transformation of Yugoslavia, since both Slovenia and Croatia, unlike the Serbian bloc, clearly expressed a desire for closer cooperation with the EU. Referring to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, on 21 February 1991, the Croatian Parliament adopted a Resolution on the procedure for separation from the SFRY and possible association with the Federation of Sovereign Republics. In a referendum held on May 19, 1991, 94.17% (83.56% of the total electorate) voted for the option that legitimized state independence, with the possibility of a confederate rearrangement of Yugoslavia.[19] On the basis of the results of the referendum, on 25 June 1991, the Croatian Parliament adopted a constitutional decision on the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Croatia, while also adopting the *Declaration on the Proclamation of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia*. Following the intervention

[17] At the end of October 1989, as the strongest opposition party to the League of Communists of Croatia, the HDZ already had about 30,000 members by the end of October 1989, which was ten times more than the HSLS.

[18] Sirotić, Sonja: *Povezivanje s Europskom zajednicom – stavovi stanovništva*. Zagreb: IRMO, 1992, p. 94; Samarđija, Višnja: *Europska unija i Hrvatska*, pp. 157. – 158.

[19] The referendum questions were asked as follows: 1. Are you in favor of the Republic of Croatia, as a sovereign and independent state, which guarantees cultural autonomy and all civil rights to Serbs and members of other nationalities in Croatia, to form an alliance of sovereign states with other republics (according to the proposal of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia for the solution of the state crisis of the SFRY)? 2. Are you in favor of the Republic of Croatia remaining in Yugoslavia as a single federal state?

of the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) in Slovenia and the outbreak of conflicts in Croatia, diplomacy of the European Community became involved. After their intervention, a consensual decision on a moratorium of 3 months was reached. However, clashes continued. On the expiry of the moratorium on 8 October 1991, the Republic of Croatia broke off state-legal relations with the other republics of Yugoslavia and declared independence.

Immediately after the breakdown of institutional ties with Yugoslavia, Croatia proclaimed as a major strategic goal joining the Euro-Atlantic structures. The outbreak of war made these aspirations unrealistic:

> *"In times of armed conflicts, this seemed like a fantasy. It was not yet clear what would be the outcome and how will this area, including Croatia, would look like at all. The EC did not manage, did not know how to respond to this first armed conflict after World War II in its 'back yard'."*[20]

Nevertheless, Croatia had expectations that the internationalization of the Yugoslav crisis would attract the democratic West, given its clear commitment to joining Western integrations and organizations. The second reason for optimism can be seen in the already existing institutional structure of relations with the European Community and regional co-operation (e.g. Alps Adriatic Working Community) developed by Croatia already in the period of Yugoslavia. At the time of the formation of the Vysehrad Group in early 1991, Croatia had failed to join the association, whose common goal was to join the European Community and NATO.[21] According to some interpretations of Croatia's withdrawal, it was motivated by the desire for *"Croatia to enter the European Community without staying in a transitional waiting room."*[22]Similarly, the invitation of the Vysehrad Initiative for the accession of Croatia to CEFTA was rejected in Krakow in December 1992.

The reaction of the international community was not in line with Croatian expectations. After American state secretary *"James Baker's half-hearted efforts in Belgrade"*, in June 1991, the US *"made it clear it consider Yugoslavia as Europe's problem"*; *„Europe was happy to tackle the challenge"*.[23] This European resignation by the US appeared at a time of triumphal

[20] Staničić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, p. 95.

[21] The Vysehrad Group was formed on February 15, 1991 with the aim of developing regional economic, cultural, energy and military cooperation at the initiative of the charismatic Czechoslovak leader Vaclav Havel, Hungarian Prime Minister Jozsef Antall and Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

[22] According to the same source, Croatian President Tudjman's views differed substantially from "Havel's national, left-liberal rhetoric", and did not match "Antall's preference for sharp reform cuts in the economy." Vresnik, Viktor: Znamo li 30 godina nakon pada socijalizma kakvu Hrvatsku želimo? In: *Jutarnji list*, 19 October 2019. The model of peaceful separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia has shown that it is impossible to reconcile individual national interests based on the aspiration of an independent state and the common interest of joining the desirable wider integrations. Following the 1993. breakup, both sovereign continue to operate through the Višegrad Group (together with Poland and Hungary) with the aim of regional cooperation, accession to European integration and NATO.

validation of European unity; the twelve members of the European Community announced the formation of the European Union, directly aimed at establishing a common market (the largest in the world) and the planned development of institutions to conduct a common foreign policy and create joint security mechanisms. The hand-over of the problem to Europe occurred at the moment when the Yugoslav crisis grew into the first armed conflict on European soil since World War II. Full of enthusiasm Europe took up the challenge; moreover, this occasion "*presented the historic challenge that Europe needed to prove its singleness of purpose. Jacques Poos, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, declared: 'The age of Europe has dawned'.*"[24] While Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis announced more active engagement by the Europeans – EC "*would be briefing the Americans on its activities, but not consulting them*", Poos was even more unequivocal: "*If one problem could be solved by the Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it is not up to the Americans. It is not up to anyone else*".[25]

Despite the pompous announcement, the European "twelve" demonstrated no commitment to aligning the Yugoslav political realities with the principles they advocated in promoting European unity. "*The international community's reaction to the civil war*", as formulated by Alois Mock, *"was initially characterized by a mixture of opportunism, ignorance, wrong-headed assessments and aimlessness.* (…) *It seemed that many Western politicians would have preferred to deal with the old Yugoslavia, with a single, albeit left/fascist, Marxist party – but nonetheless one government – and not, suddenly, several states, with several governments and even more parties".*[26]

The key moves by the international community, led by the EC, generally constituted unsuccessful attempts to keep pace with the outbreak of war, which after the brief Slovenian episode, moved with full ferocity to Croatia. The *Brijuni Declaration* (July 1991) arranged a ceasefire (that was not observed) and a three-month moratorium on the independence proclaimed by Croatia and Slovenia. It also initiated the International Conference on Yugoslavia (September 1991) and drafted the so-called Vance Plan (December 1991), which was a basis for UN peacekeeping forces deployment in the territory of the former Yugoslavia; at the same time it showed Yugoslavia, proved to be half-hearted and belated solutions.[27] While Europe and the international community were setting down the postulates for human rights – as the foundations "*of peace and security which crucially contribute to the prevention of conflict*" – conflicts and violations of human rights were escalating in Yugoslavia. The unfolding

[23] Silber, Laura – Little, Allan: *Smrt Jugoslavije*. Opatija: Otokar Keršovani, 1996, p. 154.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] Almond, Mark: *Europe's Backyard War*. London: Mandarin Paperback, 1994, p. 32.
[26] Mook, Alois: *Dossier Balkan i Hrvatska*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada/Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1998, p. 14.
[27] Nikić, Gorazd (ed.): *Croatia Between Aggression and Peace*. Zagreb: AGM, 1994. See in Bing, Albert: Croatia's State Independence: Between Principle and Realpolitik. In: *Review of Croatian History*, a. 7, 2011, nr. 1, p. 219.

Yugoslav crisis and relativisation of principles by European moderators showed that a relatively unjust outcome was not an alternative to an even bloodier war, but rather its guarantor. As observed by Patrick Buchanan, "*For the Croats, the road to hell*" in 1991 was truly "*paved with good intentions*".[28]

Observations made by German diplomat Geert-Hinrich Ahrens indicate the extent to which Europe's options were actually limited:

> *"Conflict management in the internal problems of a third country was, at the end of the eighties, beyond the horizon of experience for the EC member-countries. Existing instruments – political contacts and economic assistance – were not suited for a crisis of such dimensions. Modern international concepts such as pre-conflict peace building, preventive deployment of foreign military forces, or a 'responsibility to protect,' had not yet been developed, and could not yet be the basis of the international intervention in Yugoslavia"*[29].

In addition, *"Yugoslavia was not the highest international priority. The impending disintegration of the Soviet Union, the first Iraq war, and developments in the EC and the newly reunited Germany commanded more attention than the `signs on the wall' in Yugoslavia. For all these reasons, it was not surprising that that the international community, including a majority of the EC member-states, did not wish to engage themselves in the Yugoslav quagmire. Some, ignoring predictions, preferred an ostrich policy, hoping that the crisis would go away by itself, and, in general, the political will to frame an effective policy was absent."*[30]

The indefinite posturing of the West, above all the US and EC, from which Croatia expected support and assistance due to a clear Euro-Atlantic orientation, will significantly contribute to the escalation of the war (in the second half of 1992 the war spread to BiH) and changed Croats' perceptions of the EC and the international community. One consequence was a loss of faith in "*European values*" and a democratic standards. Failure to adhere to the principles will pave the way for unprincipled realpolitik maneuvers, in which international moderators have participated alongside the "Balkan" ones.[31] The Croatian enthusiasm for Europe after the announcement of democratic change and then the disappointment which followed the West's indifference were lucidly illustrated by Stanko Lasić, a writer and member of the Croatian Council of the European Movement:

> *"The Croatian people went into the war with enormous confidence in Europe and in the rules of democracy. It saw Europe as a natural ally and thus believed that Europe would use the case of Croatia to show how it defended the right of peoples*

[28] Buchman, Patrick: The New A new indifferent order, U.S. taking a back seat. In: *Washington Times*, 25 October 1991

[29] Ahrens, Geert-Hinrich: *Diplomacy on the Edge-Containment of the Ethnic Conflict and the Minorities Working Group of the Conferences on Yugoslavia*. Washington DC / Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press / The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007, p. 487.

[30] Ibidem, p. 486.

[31] Bing, Albert: *Croatia's State Independence*, p. 219.

to self-determination, how it rushed to the aid of those attacked, how it condemned aggressors, how it analyzed the historical situation, how it sympathized with suffering".[32]

Instead of policy which was suppose to comply with its own principles, Lasić highlighted the hypocrisy in the statements of European leaders. He therefore noted the statement made by European Commission President Jacques Delors, who

"standing on his pedestal of authority and with false modesty, created this amalgam: 'History is tragic', 'destructive forces in it always await in ambush', 'and Croatia and Serbia are responsible, each in its own way'. (…) *'At the beginning of the crisis, I received, one by one, each of the presidents of the Yugoslav republics, and told them: Your independence? I agree. The right to self-determination? I agree. But, in line with the Helsinki Charter, are you prepared to respect the rights of your minorities, to refrain from changing borders by force, to democratize your administrations? The only response I heard was drivel'."*[33]

Lasić ironically, and caustically, commented on Delors' observations:

"A masterful amalgam. Everything is mixed together, nobody is guilty, all in the same basket. Instead of saying which president wanted to change borders by force, which president would not democratize his administration, who (in principle) does not respect minority rights, Jacques Delors behaved like an arrogant bureaucrat who knows that these presidents whom he 'summoned' and 'received one by one' could do nothing to him, so he twisted the facts as he pleased just to remove any blame from Europe".[34]

The international recognition of the Republic of Croatia in January 1992 raised new hopes for Croatia's accession to Western integrations. However, with the transfer of the war to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fall of 1992, Croatia's European path was again delayed, this time indefinitely. In the period 1992 – 1995 a war spread to BiH, and resulted with mass ethnic cleansig. Reactions from the international community were slow and delayed. As noted in 1994 by Canadian Louise Gentile, who worked in Banja Luka for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees,

"the terror continues, terror of attacks by armed men at night, rape and murder, children unable to sleep, huddling in fear (…) *To those who said to themselves after seeing Schindler's List, 'Never again': It is happening again. The so-called leaders of the western world have known what is happening here for the last year and the half. They receive play-by-play reports. They talk of prosecuting war criminals, but do nothing to stop the crimes. May God forgive them. May God forgive us all."*[35]

The ambivalent attitude of Croatia towards BiH was a problem that not

[32] Lasić, Stanko: *Three Essays on Europe*. Zagreb: The Croatian Council of the European Movement, 1992, p. 40.
[33] Ibidem, pp. 44 – 45.
[34] Ibidem, p. 45.
[35] Maas, Peter: *Love Thy Neighbor*: *A Story of War*. London: Papermac, 1996, p. 116.

only slowed Croatia's path to the EU, but stopped it altogether. Croatia was among the first to recognize BiH's state independence, receive hundreds of thousands of refugees and actively participate in their care. In his public speeches, President Tudjman emphasized "*how Croatia recognizes BiH within the former republican borders*"; however, many of his statements called that into question: "*Croatia recognizes an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, but if Serbia shows aspirations to some of its parts, then Croatia may claim other parts as well*."[36] Greater Serbian aggression was further compounded by the conflict of victims of that aggression – Bosniaks and BiH Croats; many members of the international community began to equalize Serbian and Croatian politics in BiH. Regardless of Tudjman's views (which also divided the Croatian public), the fact remains that the international community itself – led by the EC until 1994 and then the United States – contributed directly to such developments with its assessments and realpolitical compromises. In this context, it can be said that the events in the former Yugoslavia were an absolute negation of civilization's reach and European values. Croatia's military victory in 1995 ended the Greater Serbian aggression and created the preconditions for a peace agreement in Dayton at the end of the same year. Croatian cooperation was also a key contribution to the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region (1996 – 1998). Nevertheless, Croatia remained in a sort of international isolation until the death of the first Croatian president in December 1999. Of course, this stopped the process of joining the European integrations.

Such development has widened the gap between Croatia and the EC. The Community of European Nations was based on respect for diversity – (e.g. Milan Kundera saw Europe „*as a maximum of diversity in minimum space*") – as a fundamental heritage of European history and culture. The achievement of European cohesion stemmed from economic integration but also respect for common civilizational achievements such as human rights, inviolability of borders, etc. The principles of European integration were diametrically opposed to the events and policies that led to the breakup of the Yugoslav state. As Ivo Banac noted there was

> *"an underlying pattern that continues across the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, from the attack on Slovenia right the way through to the campaign in Kosovo and even its spill-over into Macedonia in 2001, namely that ethnic cleansing and the construction of nationally homogenous states were not the consequence of but rather the aim of war."*

Although „*this proposition might not have been obvious to all parties in the encounter at the beginning of the war*", and it certainly wasn't the same in different parts of Yugoslavia (as well as in various segments of Yugoslav society), it became their common stock in the course of the conflict; the concept of national homogeneity became the predominant political pattern:

> *"The leaders of the Serb, Croat, Bosniac, Kosovar Albanian and other national communities, with variations evidently believed that national homogeniety,*

[36] Staničić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, p. 98.

that is, statehood without minorities, constitued political stability and offered the only genuine chance for peace."[37]

In this context, the question of responsibility for the dire consequences of the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia *"along the national seams"* was raised. As observed by Michael Ignatieff the first politician to begin exploiting nationalist rhetoric anywhere in Eastern Europe was Slobodan Milošević.[38] His so-called *"anti-bureaucratic revolution"* and *"homogenization of the Serbian nation"* sparked rebellion of Croatian Serbs who became the fifth column of Greater Serbia aspirations. The ultimate consequence of Milošević's demagogic attempt to reconcile *"the communist notion of unity with national homogenisation"* ended – to paraphrase Philip Gourevitch – in occurrence of *"genocide as an exercise in building community."*[39]

The circumstances of the breakup of Yugoslavia led the international community to set up the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on May 25, 1993. Croats from BiH and Croatia also found themselves on the indictment bench, prompting violent reactions in Croatia: *"Many Croatian citizens saw the prosecution of war crimes as an external attempt to undermine the country's sovereignty and challenge the established national identity;"* Among the politicians there was a widespread believe that ICTY *"would primarily punish 'the aggressor'* (Serbia) *and confirm Croatia's status as victim of Greater Serbia policy. Tuđman and his associates thought that the Tribunal would not deal with 'individual' violations of international law committed in a defensive war."*[40] The ICTY did not meet these expectations and insufficient cooperation with the Tribunal became the causes of international isolation in the late 1990s. EU representatives maintained that full compliance with the ICTY would serve *"as a proof of attainment of democratic standards"*. Furtheremore, *"sufficient cooperation with The Hague Tribunal would thus signal Croatia's readiness for the process of EU membership negotiations."*[41] Practically, the isolation lasted until the death of Croatian president (Decemeber 1999). When new goverment changed the official stance towards the ICTY in 2000 the isolation came to an end and enabled further steps to EU and NATO integration.

After the 2000 parliamentary elections, 6 coalition parties took over the government, creating the preconditions for a new policy towards the EU. In the spring of 2000, the project *"Croatia in the 21st Century"* began, as the part of the strategy of Croatia's accession to the EU . It was considered as a priority issue. A number of prominent experts participated in the development of the strategy in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of European Integration. One of the priority objectives of the Strategy was to "achieve readiness for full EU membership by 2006 and enter full membership no later than 2008 – 2010. After two years, the strategy was neither rejected nor accepted. It was evaluated *"as*

[37] Banac, Ivo: The Politics of National Homogeneity. In: *War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation*. Ed.: Brad K. Blitz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 30.
[38] Ignatieff, Michael: *Blood and Belonging*. London: 1994., p. 75.
[39] Svendsen, Lars: *Filozofija zla*. Zagreb: Tim press, 2011, p. 121.
[40] Maldini, Pero – Pauković, Davor (eds.): *Croatia and the European Union*, p. 43.
[41] Ibidem.

good analytical material", but the President of the Croatian Government's Coordination for Internal and Foreign Policy concluded that it was an unnecessary document because the alleged strategic steps and objectives proposed had already been presented in several documents, so it was not needed to bring another one.[42] The reason for such confusion can be sought in the inability of the Croatian state bureaucracy, which neglected EU accession strategy in four years period. Nevertheless, at the end of 2002, the Croatian Parliament adopted by consensus a resolution on the need to join the EU.

At the time of Croatia's first steps in implementing the EU accession process, major changes were taking place within the Union itself. Thus, a resolution of the European Parliament of 5 September 2001 established a formal framework for the formation of ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy) military and civilian structures, which confirmed the previously expressed initiative to form a European Security Force (approximately 60,000 troops). At a meeting of European leaders in Laeken the same year, a draft of the new EU Constitution – the "*Convention for the Future of Europe*" – was created to strengthen the political and international sovereignty of the Union; *The EU Constitution* was signed by the 25 Member States in October 2004. Following the "abolition" of borders by the *Schengen Treaty* (1985) and the introduction of the common European currency in early 2002, the EU has taken an important step towards affirming international economic and monetary unity political entity.[43] With the accession of ten new members on May 1, 2004, the "*milestone phase of the EU's development as international integration*" began; for the first time in European integration, the border of ideological and civilizational models, as well as the division into the West and the East, was crossed. Subsequent conclusions from the EU-NATO leaders meeting revealed that it was "*more about the political than an economic project aimed at establishing a long-term zone of stability and security in Europe*". In addition, the criteria for admission of new members were further harmonized.[44]

In short, the EU was in a dynamic process of structural, administrative and institutional change, which certainly influenced the process of its "*eastward expansion*".[45]

In doing so, there was a gap in Croatian preparations in relation to changes within the Union itself. For example, at the moment when the Strategy was launched, Croatia has not yet signed the EU *Stabilization and Association Agreement* (it was signed on 19 October 2001), which was an important prerequisite for further steps in accession.[46] EU integration progress has had to be monitored and coordinated in Croatia. Awareness of the challenges of adapting all segments of Croatian society to EU criteria and standards was not really clearly presented to the Croatian public. A major obstacle was the country's unpreparedness

[42] Staničić, Mladen: Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju, p. 213.
[43] Ibidem, pp. 66 – 69.
[44] Ibidem, p. 180.
[45] The European Council initially set the conditions for a new EU membership in June 1993 with the so-called Copenhagen criteria.
[46] *The Stabilization and Association Agreement* established the initial framework for Croatia's EU accession process. The three most important parts were related to the economy, legislative and institutional adjustment.

for judicial reforms and economic adjustments that required *"a whole new and much more professional and rational approach to business."*[47] The official application for Croatia's accession to the European Union was submitted on 21 February 2003.

In July 2003, Croatia received a questionnaire with 4560 questions based on the draft of the European Commission's opinion. It was answered by the Croatian side in October of the same year. Following a successful evaluation, Croatia was granted candidate status in June 2004. The start of negotiations on full EU membership was scheduled for March 2005. Negotiations were delayed due to the negative report about Croatia's cooperation with the ICTY. The reason was the indictment against Croatian General Ante Gotovina who flew toward the Croatian authorities involvement in Gotovina's escape EU postponed the start of accession negotiations with Croatia. The Croatian public predominantly believed that any part of the indictment against Gotovina "*represented an attempt to criminalize the Croatian Homeland War. Thus, Gotovina became a symbol of what numerous Croatians perceived as unjust treatment by The Hague Tribunal*."[48] After the transfer of Gotovina to The Hague, the ICTY ceased to be the main topic regarding Croatia's EU accession but the public opinion presented more scepticism toward the EU. The troublesome relation of Croatia with the ICTY

> *"has highlighted how unresolved statehood and nationhood issues can affect democratic consolidation and cause democratic defects. In addition, the problems with acceptance of ICTY indictments revealed issues with the full acceptance of rule of law and thus pointed to the poor functioning of the third partial regime, i.e. the civic rights regime."*[49]

The beginning of the formal process of Croatia's accession to the EU has raised many problems. The specifics of the Croatian transition, first of all the war circumstances in the first half of the 1990s, and then the isolation of Croatia until the end of the decade, disturbed "*many civilization criteria in its internal relations*," as well as relations with the international community. Problems were expressed in all social segments. One of the biggest problem was the "*incredible and highly corrupt justice system*"; according to a poll by Transparency International, conducted in November 2004, as many as 38% examinee believed "*the Croatian justice system is the most corrupt of all other Croatian institutions*".[50] The inefficient economy ravaged by the war and transition problems exhibited many weaknesses. Croatia had excellent economic experts who actively participated in the development of transition economic models in the early 1990s, however, the decision to privatize social ownership was made by the Croatian political leadership. President Tudjman himself "*saw swift privatization as a means of Westernizing and Europeanizing Croatia and clearing the path for full independence and international recognition*." The managerial elite consisted of old communist technocrats and new elites closely related to government,

[47] Staničić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, p. 72. These two aspects will remain a major problem for Croatia after its formal accession to the EU.
[48] Maldini, Pero – Pauković, Davor (eds.): *Croatia and the European Union*, p. 44.
[49] Ibidem, p. 46.
[50] Staničić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, p. 249.

"either through party membership or through informal networks of kinship and regional or local origin. The distribution of wealth and power and the allocation of key posts and functions according to patrimonial, paternalistic and clientelistic patterns turned Croatia's transitional economy into crony capitalism."[51]

Due to such situation the 2005–2009 European Commission progress reports objected that "*further privatization was progressing too slowly*", partially due to a "*large number of lawsuits against the Croatian Privatization Fund*" and that was considered as "*a sign of bad preparation for the EU common market*". The problems of "*national protectivism and government control*" was also perceived as the cause of poor compliance to European market standards.[52] Added to this is a "*mental set that has hardly adapted to the basic elements of liberalism*".[53] All these complex social problems will remain present in Croatian society even after formal accession to the EU.

Despite expectations, Croatia's path to the EU has taken another decade (more than twenty years after state independence). The European Parliament gave its consent to the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union only on 9 December 2011. The process of joining the desirable community of European countries has proved to be extremely complex and painstaking and has provoked very conflicting views of citizens on Croatia's European perspectives. In one poll conducted in 2011, 58 percent of citizens voted in favor of Croatia's EU accession, and 31 percent opposed it.[54] Studies of the perceptions of the pros and cons of Croatia's EU accession have also shown polarization. Eurosceptic citizens believed that Croatia's accession to the EU "*will lead to loss of hers long-awaited sovereignty, that is, it will be completely lost among all these developed countries*." According to these considerations, Croatia "*should first regulate itself in order to become a member of a large European market and society*." Similarly, many felt that "*Croatia is not qualified as a state in which every individual can be effectively and fairly tried*" and that "*there is no European worldview and political culture that entails responsibility*" (the argument was that the ruling HDZ government does not know which chapters had being negotiated).[55] Other arguments related to an inefficient economy (high rate of unemployment), the view that education in Croatia "*lacks the capacity to produce competent professionals at global levels and that there is insufficient investment in research and development*". This was followed by allegations that Croatia is not prone to invasive problem-solving and dialogue with civil society, and that Croatians have "*a very low level of political culture and would not be able to cope with the EU's challenges*". Therefore, if Croatia joins the EU, it will remain a country of unequal opportunities in which corruption and bad rule contribute to the bitterness of a nation that no longer knows what to think, to whom it should trust,

[51] Maldini, Pero – Pauković, Davor (eds.): *Croatia and the European Union*, pp. 39 – 40.
[52] Ibidem.
[53] Staničić, Mladen: *Dugo putovanje Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, pp. 202 – 204.
[54] Opinion polling was regularly carried out by three different agencies; since May 2011, percentages supporting EU membership ranged between 55% and 63%.
[55] Marelja, Magdalena: *Dobre i loše strane ulaska Hrvatske u Europsku uniju*, http://www.unidu.hr/novost.php?idvijest=1757. Internet access May 13, 2019.

and will eventually turn into a subjective type of political culture, where people are aware of the situation in the country but does nothing. "*Negative experiences of the EU's relations with weaker members were cited by the current case of Greek `debt bondage'.*" The example of Iceland as a non-EU country was highlighted, as a sovereign state which opposed the dictates of powerful Union members such as UK in time of crises. It is interesting that Euroscepticism was represented by many members of civil society organizations as well as radical national groups – otherwise opposed political views.[56]

The benefits of Croatia's accession to the EU were seen in entering a natural geo-political framework that will strengthen democratic processes in Croatia, provide a security zone devoid of Balkan uncertainty and eliminate the negative effects of transition. Joining the single European market with free flow of capital, technology and labor force was expected to halt the relative lag of Croatia. It was somewhat bizarre to think that with "*entry into the common European labor market, Croatian workers will be able to compete in a market where 30 million jobs are created*", since after the accession to the EU there was a mass exodus of working-age population from Croatia with unprecedented demographic, economic and social consequences. Optimists also emphasized that by joining the Union, Croatia will become more attractive to foreign investors and through its interaction with the developed Europe, will realize its potential:

> *"Although Croatia is one of the relatively poorer EU countries, the resources it has at its disposal such as people, space, the Adriatic Sea, geopolitical position and various natural resources are good grounds for creating wealth for Croatian citizens. Croatia is one of the few countries with sea and plains, but also hills and mountains in one place. But to achieve this, capital, modern technology and a reasonable organization of Croatian society are needed, all that Croatia lacks and is abundant in the EU."*

Support for Croatia's EU accession was expressed by the then leaders of Croatia, President Ivo Josipović, Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor and many other leaders.[57]

The referendum on Croatia's accession to the European Union was held on January 22, 2012. The turnout for the referendum was relatively weak; only 43.51 percent of the total registered electorate came out to declare Croatia's European fate. Despite the support of the majority of citizens to Croatia's EU accession (66.67 percent) even 33.33 percent was against. When these figures are compared with the results of the 1991 referendum on independence, marked by the Europhilia of Croats, it is clear that enthusiasm for European integration has experienced significant erosion. In the spring of 2012, the Croatian Parliament ratified the Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, and the entry into the force of the Treaty took place on 1 July 2013. This act presented a new period of Croatian history.

In all former communist states, the defeat of communism created a natural tendency to promote liberal values, both politically and economically. At the time

[56] Ibidem.
[57] Ibidem.

of the collapse of communism, Croatia was one of the former socialist entities with the best prospects for a successful transition and accession to the European Community. However, the imposed war halted this process and delayed that goal for more than two decades. The war that took place on the soil of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was the last and only war in Europe after World War II, and the disintegration of the Yugoslav state was a process inverse to European integration. The tragedy was manifested in the complete defeat of European values. The international community, led by Europe, emphasized international conventions and principles without a principled determination to enforce it on the actors of the Yugoslav Rashomon. Due to the lack of mechanisms, lack of consensus and lack of political will, none of the significant international actors or associations was prepared to take effective action against those participants in the Balkan drama who violated civilization values. The consequence was the development of Euroscepticism among Croats. All this gave rise to doubts about Croatia's accession to the EU. Due to problems with the international community, Croatia found itself in a kind of isolation in the second half of the 1990s, which practically stopped the way to the desired integrations. In the background of war, state-building and post-war-reconstruction, problematic privatization of former socially owned property took place, which over the decades resulted in the continued plunder and devastation of national resources. The general emergence of clientelism, corruption, nepotism and ineffective judiciary have slowed the development of democratic institutions. This was reflected in a slow adoption of democratic and economic standards, which were a prerequisite for an effective approach to European integration. All these circumstances and factors led to a long Croatian path to the European Union.

Aleksandar Jakir*

The Challenge of Dealing with a Difficult Past in Croatia

Výzva na riešenie zložitelj minulosti v Chorvátsku / Izazov bavljenja problematičnom prošlošću u Hrvatskoj

Konkurirajuće interpretacije tzv. „bolnih" ili „osjetljivih" tema suvremene hrvatske povijesti ne izazivaju samo rasprave u historiografiji nego i u javnosti u Hrvatskoj, a nerijetko i političke prijepore. Ako pogledamo javne rasprave koje se vode u Hrvatskoj o različitim povijesnim temama koje se odnose na povijest 20. stoljeća, mogli bismo čak govoriti o ratovima sjećanja koji se vode u javnom prostoru. Zasigurno ne postoji manjak tekstova i izjava u javnom prostoru u Hrvatskoj o tome što se smatra „ispravnom" interpretacijom različitih aspekata povijesti 20. stoljeća, naročito kad se radi o takozvanim „osjetljivim pitanjima" kao što je, primjerice, masovno nasilje počinjeno od pobjedničkih komunista 1945. godine. Suprotstavljene interpretacije ovakvih tema suvremene hrvatske povijesti ne pokreću samo rasprave među povjesničarima nego čak u većoj mjeri izazivaju javne rasprave u Hrvatskoj, s tim da se rasprave oko različitih interpretacija prošlosti često pretvaraju u neku vrstu nadmetanja na političkom bojištu.

Ključne riječi: Drugi svjetski rat, kontroverze, „teška" ili „problematična" prošlost, kolektivno pamćenje, Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, klasni neprijatelji, „kriva" strana, ideologizacija

A discussion about what notions of the past were, and how the past was presented and interpreted during the time of communism, seems to be helpful in trying to understand why the topic of mass violence committed by the victorious communists in 1945 is still so fiercly debated in Croatia. How the regime in power after WW II dealt with the past, during more or less the entire time of existence of the socialist state and its ideology, and how these interpetations of the past had been passed on to new generations, still seems an important element for understanding these debates in Croatian society today. It could be said that the topic how a society is dealing with *dificult issues* of *traumatic historical experiences* is of paramount importance for a better understanding also of the historical processes that led to the collapse of socialist ideology and hence to the establishment of a democratic Croatian state in 1990. However, the aim of this essay is merely to make some brief remarks concerning the challanges of dealing with a difficult past in Croatia by addressing the debates

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in Croatian public and historiography connected with the traumatic historical legacy concerning the mass violence that occured after the end of WW II.[1]

Generally, the controversies on remembering and forgetting certain aspects of the past is, of course, not only in Croatia a most debated subject. It seems safe to say that competing narratives and interpretations, as the controversies show, mark a deep rift in Croatian society. In that sense we definitely can speak of a „difficult" or „problematic" past. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argued quite a long time ago in his work on collective memory that all memory is socially constructed. There can be little doubt that both institutionalized memory – the interpretations of the past constructed by political elites, their supporters, and their opponents – and individual memory are subject to the needs of the present. Every observer of the political debates in Croatia on historical topics will easily come to the conclusion of how deep the divisions in Croatian society are, which interwine the traumatic cultural memories, especially of the wars fought during the 20th century.

Dealing with the past during the times of state socialism meant that there were certain official interpretations expected by a political regime that for several decades had the power to shape the politics of remembrance and memory in society. The role of the construction of the past in legitimizing socialism surely should not be underestimated. If we take into account that the revolutionary origins of socialist Yugoslavia in 1945 were directly connected with a policy of mass violence that included also ethnic purification,[2]

[1] Here I will use some arguments partly also presented in the following publications of mine, where also further bibliographical reference can be found: Jakir, Aleksandar: Memories in Conflict: Remembering the Partisans, the Second World War and Bleiburg in Croatia. In: *Balkan Memories*: *Media Constructions of National and Transnational History*. Ed.: Tanja Zimmermann: Bielefeld: transcript, 2012, pp. 187 – 205 and Idem – Vulić, Paulinka: Recepcija Bleiburga u hrvatskoj javnosti kao tema povijesnog istraživanja [The Reception of Bleiburg in the Croatian public as research topic]. In. *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu*, nr. 6/7, 2015, pp. 195 – 206.

[2] The question of migration of population, in the Yugoslav case mostly the expulsion of ethnic Germans and Italians, pose special problems when we try to come to a historic assessment. Of course, this can only be properly understood when put in a broader context of post WW II developments. At the end of the Second World War, Central and Eastern Europe in general were marked by the process of massive population migration. As is well known, at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the Allies confirmed the plan they had coordinated already during the war and which envisaged a post-war Europe formed on the basis, wherever possible, "ethnically homogenous countries". Surely the modern development of nation states contributed to the establishment of this idea, as Michael Mann in his study "The dark side of democracy" (2005) argued. In the first place it was the fate of the so-called Volksdeutsche, the ethnic Germans, that was sealed, as they lost their homes where they had lived for centuries. It has been calculated that more than 12 million German-speaking civilians in Europe were driven from their homes in the wake of WW II. All countries of Central and Eastern Europe saw more or less forced migrations in the form of expulsion, deportation, population exchange, options etc., as minorities in principle were considered as a source of instability, and after the Third Reich especially an existing German minority. In the case in Yugoslavia, although the Allies had never officially sanctioned deportations, the expulsions of Germans was accomplished with and accompanied by great violence. During the time of socialism an official policy of silence existed over the fact that half a million former citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had disappeared from the territory of the successor state.

we have to ask ourselves how this was portrayed in official accounts of the past? It seems that the one-sided official interpretations of the past during socialist times layed the basis for the deep rift within Croatian society, and that even thirty years after the end of communism a part of the Croatian society is still not willing to confront itself with the dimensions of mass violence connected with the rise to power of the Communist party of Yugoslavia (as there sadly are also other parts of society who are not willing to accept the dimensions of mass crimes committed by the Ustasha during WWII and the Independent State of Croatia, a puppet sate of the Axis Powers).

For the purpose of this essay I would like to concentrate on the fact that the aspect of violence connected with the establishment of Communist rule after 1945 is often neglected in historical accounts of Yugoslav socialism. There can be little doubt that the Yugoslav communists after their victory in 1945 introduced a system with key totalitarian features as one-party system, mass extra-judicial executions, control of mass media with the propagation of the official communist ideology, establishment of a „political armed force" subordinate to the Communist Party etc. In my point of view the fact of mass violence during communist revolution (that also included ethnic violence[3]), using the famous title of Joseph Conrad´s novel, we could call the *Heart of Darkness* of Yugoslav socialism. A system that for a long time, after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, to the outside world was presented as the most liberal and free type of socialism never confronted itself with the mass crimes that were committed with the aim to come to power and to preserve it. It was not talked about the fact that Socialist Revolution in Yugoslavia implied and sought fatalities in great numbers. How radical the efforts were to establish socialism in Yugoslavia becomes clear when we look at the number of „enemies" and „traitors" killed at the end of the war, and after the war had ended. Many of those who were identified by the Communist Party as actual or potential enemies, and as an obstacle to establish the new regime, were killed without any trial in the spring of 1945.

One of the best experts on this subject, the historian Vladimir Geiger from Zagreb, who has been dealing with these questions for decades points to the fact (after analyzing a great range of accessible sources as well as the existing scientific literature, and taking into account various methodological calculation methods), that the number of victims in the immediate post-war period – and *this number does not (!) include* war casualties – amounts to „at least" 70,000 to 80,000 dead, including the number of „around 50,000 to 55,000" Croatians killed.[4] Michael Portmann in his works

[3] Shortly after 1945 the Germans, mostly from Vojvodina and Slavonia, numbering over one-half million, as well as Italian so-called "optants" had to leave through forcible deportation and flight.

[4] See Geiger, Vladimir: *Brojčani pokazatelji o ljudskim gubicima Hrvatske u Drugom svjetskom ratu i poraću. Represija i zločini komunističkog režima u Hrvatskoj*: *Zbornik radova*. Ed.: Romana Horvat. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2012, pp. 51 – 90, here 77 with reference on Grahek Ravančić, Martina: Razmišljanje o broju pogubljenih i stradalih na Bleiburgu i Križnom putu. In: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, a. 40, 2008, nr. 3, pp. 851 – 868 and from the same author.: Eadem: Bleiburg i Križni put 1945: Historiografija, publicistika i memoarska literature. In: Ibidem, pp. 317 – 333 and Eadem: *Bleiburg i Križni put*. Zagreb: Hrvatski insitut za povjest, 2009; also Geiger, Vladimir: *Josip Broz Tito i ratni zločini*: *Bleiburg – Folksdojčeri*. Zagreb: Hrvatski insitut za Povjest, 2013.

estimates the number of killed as 80,000.[5] There can be no reasonable doubt that massive violence and terror was used by the victorious partisans in 1945 against real or percieved enemies.[6] Proof for that claim can be easily found in published editions of documents and recent monographs that are also based on a great number of sources.[7] It surely can be said that without violence and terror the Communist Party would have hardly been able to seize power in 1945.

This fact was neither mentioned nor discussed in official accounts of the past during socialist times. For decades it was considered a taboo topic within Yugoslavia to discuss what the establishment of communist authority in Croatia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia in 1945 really meant. Hence the waves of arrests and liquidations, and how opponents or assumed opponents of communist authority were removed, massivly and mercilessly, for long decades were no topic of substantial research. During and after WWII communists excessively used accusations of collaboration with the foreign powers that occupied Yugoslavia during 1941-45 against their real or perceived enemies. Also, so-called *class enemies*, as well as other ideological and political enemies, were eliminated under accusations that there were collaborators of the Axis powers during WW II. In the eyes of the new regime enemies and perceived enemies had to be removed without mercy. The goal of this strategy was to silence, marginalize, and demobilize potential challengers and their supporters in order to create as much political homogeneity as possible. It seems reasonable to assume that the role that violence played in the destruction of bonds of shared community was enormous. In all these processes we have to be aware of the crucial implications that the hegemonic role of the communist party in politics and in the process of shaping the society had. The political will of the victors was extraordinarily

[5] Portmann, Michael: *Kommunistische Abrechnung mit Kriegsverbrechern, Kollaborateuren, „Volksfeinden" und „Verrätern" in Jugoslawien während des Zweiten Weltkriegs und unmittelbar danach (Magisterarbeit).* Wien: Grin Verlag, 2002 and Idem: *Die kommunistische Revolution in der Vojvodina 1944 – 1952*: *Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Kultur*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008.

[6] See Hrvatski državni arhiv (ed): *Zapisnici Politbiroa Centralnoga komiteta Komunističke partije Hrvatske 1945 – 1952., Svezak 1 1945 – 1948*, priredila Branislava Vojnović. Zagreb 2005; Hrvatski državni arhiv (ed.): *Zapisnici Politbiroa Centralnoga komiteta Komunističke partije Hrvatske 1945 – 1952., Svezak 2 1949 – 1952*, priredila Branislava Vojnović. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006; Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje (ed.): *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944. – 1946. Dokumenti*, knjiga 4 Dalmacija. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2011; Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje (ed): *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944. – 1946. Dokumenti* (drugo izdanje). Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2005; Matković, Blanka and Štimac, Stjepan (eds.): *Vrgorska krajina, Makarsko primorje i neretvanski kraj u dokumentima Ozne i Udbe i Narodne milicije (1944. – 1965.)*: *Likvidacije i progoni*. Zagreb: Hrvatska družba povjesničara "Dr. Rudolf Horvat", 2018 and Matković, Blanka (ed..): *Split i srednja Dalmacija u dokumentima OZN-e i UDB-e (1944. – 1962). Likvidacije i zarobljenički logori*. Trilj: Hrvatska družba povjesničara "Dr. Rudolf Horvat" 2017.

[7] Starič, Jera Vodušek: *Kako su komunisti osvojili vlast 1944. – 1946*. Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 2006; *Represija i zločini komunističkog režima u Hrvatskoj*: *Zbornik radova*. Eds.: Romana Horvat; Zorislav Lukić; Luka Vukušić i Vesna Zednik. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2012 and Matkovich, Blanka: *Croatia and Slovenia at the End and After the Second World War (1944 – 1945)*: *Mass Crimes and Human Rights Violations Committed by the Communist Regime*. Irvine [CA]: Brown Walker Press, 2017.

powerful in the immediate aftermath of 1945. That also meant that the relations between the new regime and the religious communities in the first years after WW II were extremely bad, and that the regime often used repressive means and violence, as sources and literature on the topic indicate. In Croatia the Catholic church was by far the most important anti-communist institution, and the regime treated it as ideological adversary. [8] Some authors even spoke of the „war against organised religion" in the first years of Tito's Yugoslavia.[9] Jozo Tomasevich listed 354 killed catholic prieest during the war and 31 that were killed after the end of the war, in total 385 members of the catholic clergy that lost their lives.[10] On the other hand there were also catholic priests who joined the anti-fascist struggle during the war under leadership of the Communist, with 46 priests that lost their lives as allies of the partisan movement.[11]

All in all we can say that the official Yugoslav figures never came close to the real extent of the violence in the aftermath of WWII. Officially it was only admitted that the martial courts in Yugoslavia pronounced 5,484 death sentences during the course of 1945, of which 4,864 were handed down to civilians (even these figures could be considered as an indicator of how violent the new regime came to power) . However, in reality these numbers were much much higher. Well-founded figures for the number of those who lost their lives in Yugoslavia's territory at the hands of the communist led army and the communist authorities during the Second World War and post-war years clearly indicate how massive this violence was. The establishment of communist rule in Yugoslavia meant

[8] See Akmadža, Miroslav: *Crkva i država*: *Dopisivanje i razgovori između predstavnika Katoličke crkve i komunističke državne vlasti u Jugoslaviji*, vol. 1: *1945 – 1952*; vol. 2: *1953 – 1960*; vol. 3: *1961 – 1963*. Zagreb – Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008 – 2012. Idem: Katolička crkva u Hrvatskoj i komunistički režim 1945. – 1966. Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 2004; Idem: *Oduzimanje imovine Katoličkoj crkvi i crkveno-državni odnosi od 1945. do 1966. godine*: *Primjer Zagrebačke nadbiskupije*. Zagreb: Društvo za povjesnicu Zagrebačke nadbiskupije „Tkalčić", 2003; Idem: *Stradanja svećenika Đakovačke i Srijemske biskupije 1944. – 1960*. Slavonski Brod – Đakovo: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2012; Idem: Položaj Katoličke crkve u Hercegovini u prvim godinama komunističke vladavine. In: *Hum i Hercegovina kroz povijest*: *Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog u Mostaru 5. i 6. studenoga 2009*., knj. II. Ed.: Ivica Lučić. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2011, str. 491 – 508; Stella, Alexander: *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Karaula, Marijan: *Žrtve i mučenici stradanja bosanskih franjevaca u Drugom svjeskom ratu i komunizmu*. Sarajevo: Svjetlo riječi, 1999; Kožul, Stjepan: *Stradanja u zagrebačkoj nadbiskupiji za vrijeme Drugoga svjetskoga rata i poraća*. Zagreb: Društvo za povjesnicu, 2004 and Krišto, Jure: *Katolička crkva u totalitarizmu 1945 – 1990*.: *Razmatranja o Crkvi u Hrvatskoj pod komunizmom*. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 1997.

[9] Ramet, Sabrina P.: *Die drei Jugoslawien*: *Eine Geschichte der Staatsbildungen und ihrer Probleme*. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011, p. 277.

[10] Tomasevich, Jozo: *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941 – 1945*: *Occupation and Collaboration*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 572. See also Akmadža, Miroslav: Primjena represivnog sustava prema Katoličkoj crkvi. In: *Komisija Hrvatske biskupske konferencije i Biskupske konferencije Bosne i Hercegovina za hrvatski martirologij*: Hrvatski mučenici i žrtve iz vremena komunističke vladavine: *Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog u Zagrebu 24. i 25. travnja 2012. godine*. Ed.: Mile Bogović. Zagreb: Glas Koncila, 2013, pp. 85 – 106.

[11] Petešić, Ciril: *Katoličko svećenstvo u NOB 1941 – 1945*. Zagreb: Vjesnikova Press agencija, 1982, pp. 274 – 276 and Matijević, Margareta: *Između partizana i „pristojnosti"*: *Život i doba Svetozara Rittiga (1873. – 1961.)*. Zagreb: Plejada-Hrvatski institut za povijest Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, 2019.

persecution of hundreds of thousands of real or imagined war criminals, collaborators, and „people's enemies", and millions of people (mostly civilians) were expelled or were forced to leave their homes by the new authorities. This collective experience of mass violence was long kept under the surface but never ceased to exist in the memories of those who survived, and were transmitted to their family members and next generations through unofficial channels as long as the monopoly of official interpretation within the socialist state existed. Even nowadays, although the extremely high human losses both among combatants and among civilians during and after WW II are a much debated topic, up to the present day no consensus about even some basic facts seems is in sight in Croatia, not within historiography not in society. There is no consensus even about plain facts concerning numbers of fatalities, casualties and victims of war and revolution, not to speak about largely accepted historical narratives. What we have are competing narratives of resentment and blame, as Sabrina Ramet has once put it. Unfortunately, to the present day numbers of victims are intentionally exaggerated or diminished out of political reasons. Also, the origin of the victims and their structure still is often suppressed and obscured, and very different numbers are used and misused in political and ideological debates. Discussions in Croatia today still often revolve around the existence or non-existence of guilt and responsibility. A consensus over this has not yet been achieved neither by historians, nor in public. If we want to understand the full legacy of the communist system we can not turn away from the fact that during the existence of this system *never* any responsibility for the perpetators were sought. Historiography during the socialist period generally „resolved" problems of guilt and responsibility for those who were victimized by the mass killings in 1945 in such a way that it did not occupy itself with them, and there was even an opinion that all those condemned to death or who were killed without trial deserved such a fate. On the other hand, a revisionist historiography generally interpreted the crimes that were committed very superficially and schematically as hatred for everything Croatian, or as hatred for the church when dealing with crimes towards the clergy. It sure lacked an analysis of the broader Croatian, Yugoslavian context. And so Croatian historical science and the public find themselves in the position that not even today have they achieved consensus regarding the problem of guilt and responsibility, and the destiny of hundreds of thousands of people who fell victim in the conflict with the „people's enemy", with or without court convictions.

Like the number of victims after 1945, also the question of human losses in the Second World War in general became a first-class political issue, and has remained so to this day. The problem is not merely a lack of original archival materials, i.e. a lack of sources and reliable indicators, but obviously also the lacking „good will" to properly examine specific issues.[12] In this short statement I can not

[12] It seems that still the most systematic statistical calculations of human losses in Yugoslavia during the Second World War are those conducted by Bogoljub Kočović and Vladimir Žerjavić at the end of the 1980s. Kočović's estimate of the actual losses for Yugoslavia is 1,014,000 and 1,985,000 in demographic losses, while Žerjavić's estimate of actual losses for Yugoslavia are 1,027,000 and 2,022,000 in demographic losses.

dwell upon numbers, but I would like to point to the fact that various studies on mass killings, post-war population migration, forced migration have so far yielded fundamental findings mostly by using comparative and transnational methodological approaches that enabled them to surpass the limits of national historiographies. It seems to me that such an approach could also help us to understand better the developments in former communist countries in general, as well as in the Croatian case. Such a comparative and transnational approach to issues related to communist conquest and the features of these systems would, in my view, be useful to come to a better understanding of many issues of contemporary history in the former socialist countries, and of course also in the Croatian case. Finally, I would like to return once again to the phenomenon of a different conception of "historical truth" about World War II and the emergence in Croatian public discourse. Some of the problems we face are surely connected with different traumatic cultural memories. How these events are remembered remains a political battlefield because the "official" historical narrative during the rule of Communist Party was the only one accepted in public as long as the Communist Party ruled, and afterwords a counter-narrative was accepted from large parts of society that completely tried to challenge the formarly official narrative. Also we have to take into account that Partisan victory in World War II formed the basic myth of socialist Yugoslavia and served as a doubly differentiating characteristic in relation to both Western countries and the socialist countries of the former Soviet bloc. In the decades after World War II, the socialist regime appealed to the achievements of the so-called National Liberation Struggle with which the communist party in power legitimised its role in society. In short, during the period of socialist Yugoslavia, the partisan struggle was uncritically glorified. Nevertheless it could be argued that there was a lack of shared historical narratives within society. The historical narratives were different – because of different memories. There can be no doubt that the official version of the memory of World War II in socialist Yugoslavia did not reflect plurality, nor did it attempt to integrate dissenting views. It promoted the memories that endorsed the regime and its ideology, and repressed other narratives. In present day Croatia questions connected with the partisan movement and World War II trigger competing narratives of the past, and obviously until today different narratives exist parallely. However, the task of todays historians, in Croatia as well as anywhere else, should be to promote and conduct methodical research and scholarship that will help in dealing with „difficult heritages" by contextualizing controversial events and interpretations.

The (non)confrontation with the mass violence immediately after the war created very different forms of historical memory, which often depend on individual biographical and family experiences. The discourse of opposing "historical truths" remains a political battleground in Croatia because the former "official" historical narrative during the Communist Party's reign, then the only one with the right to vote in public, left its deep mark in a section of society, even though other parts of society completely disputed that version of history, which until 1990 was the "official" and the public „truth". In many families conflicting interpretations were transmitted, creating a completely contrary historical memory from that of the "official" one. Again,

we must bear in mind that the victory of the partisans in World War II formed the basic myth of socialist Yugoslavia. Socialist Yugoslavia was proud of its indigenous victorious partisan movement, which liberated the country itself from occupiers and domestic traitors, as the official version of history read. In the decades following the Second World War, the socialist regime repeatedly invoked the achievements of the National Liberation Struggle, led by Tito and the Communist Party, thereby legitimizing the Communist Party's leading role in society. Accordingly, during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia, the partisan struggle was uncritically celebrated in the public space, and the darkest stains on the glittering victory could not be talked about for a long time, until the end of socialism came and some of the painful topics were raised. However, due to different memories, at least in one part of society, historical memory and interpretation of history within Croatian society differed significantly from the official version of history, at least for those whose ancestors found themselves on the "wrong" side at the end of the war. Certainly the official version of the remembrance of World War II in socialist Yugoslavia did not reflect any plurality, nor did it even attempt to integrate different views and historical experiences. Only the memories and interpretations of events that supported the regime and its ideology were promoted, other narratives suppressed. After the end of socialism, many issues related to the partisan movement and the Second World War began to be discussed completely differently in public, and a tendency to re-evaluate many of the past "historical truths" in a large part of the public is evident, and it is evident that different narratives, which are mutually exclusive, persist in Croatian society to this day. However, the task of today's historians, in Croatia as elsewhere, should be to conduct methodologically-based and grounded research whose results will serve as the basis and impetus for confronting society with this "*grave historical legacy*", which is unlikely to be possible without wider contextualisation of the "painful" or "sensitive" topics on which Croatian society is divided today. The hope remains that new research by a new generation of historians will succeed in fostering dialogue in society, which seems the only right way to at least mitigate today's divisions around interpretations of so-called "sensitive" issues in society and to create the necessary prerequisites for openly exchanging arguments and views on controversial issues of contemporary Croatian history. However, as stated in the *Dialogue Document*,[13] the issue of human rights violations cannot and should not be relativized in today's Croatian society, and a clear condemnation of human rights violations involving the mass victims of all undemocratic regimes, condemnation of such practices and legal norms and illegal acts that made it possible should be accepted by everybody. There is no such political objective as to justify mass human casualties and systematic violations of fundamental human rights.

Socially coping with the consequences of the rule of non-democratic regimes will certainly not be possible without

[13] See *Dialogue Document* provided by the *Council for Dealing with the Consequences of Undemocratic Regimes* that aimed to deliver comprehensive recommendations *for political decision-making and law-framing in an attempt to face the* difficult past and socially contested symbolic expressions Dialogue document in English.

systematic research and identification of facts about the nature and consequences of these regimes. Conflicts and divisions in Croatian society cannot be understood without contextualization, which places them in the political, worldview, cultural, religious and other antagonisms that have marked European and world history in the 20th century. A traumatic historical legacy and exclusive and mutually conflicting collective memories have led to conflicting and irreconcilable differences in the understanding of that history.

The undemocratic character of government throughout the 20th century in Croatia has had significant repercussions for the entire society, one of them being the creation of ideologized narratives that are still recognizable in a section of society, depending on the individual and family biographies that affect such political and world views. A scientifically grounded way of dealing with the past and contextualizing the facts found in the sources can make an important contribution to overcome ideologization. Therefore, full availability of archival material, as one of the main preconditions for scientific research, is also necessary.

Condemnation of all crimes, departure from all undemocratic regimes, and acceptance of multiperspectivity and the fact that plural memories exist must go hand in hand with a commitment to a social consensus based on the acceptance of constitutional values. In doing so, any attribution of collective guilt of any category should be avoided. Crime is always individual. Without a multi-perspective and pluralistic approach to the most controversial issues of our past, I believe that we will not be able to reach a deeper understanding or reconciliation of mutual respect and the long-term necessary, democratically mediated cohesion of Croatian democratic society.