

DEFENDER OF CZECHOSLOVAK UNITY. A PROBE INTO THE POLITICS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL SOCIALISTS IN SLOVAKIA BETWEEN 1918 AND 1938

Pavel Marek

Doctor of Philosophy and Pedagogy; Professor; Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Email: pavel.marek@upol.cz

Scopus Author ID: 35178301400

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7578-0783>

Until 1989, the reformist current of the National Socialists was one of the backbone elements of the Czech/Czechoslovak party-political system. The political party of the Czech National Socialists was formed in the 1890s and during the years of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938) under the name Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (CSNP) was a regular part of government coalitions. The historiographical description of their activities and their contribution to solving the political, economic, social, and cultural problems of state formation corresponds to this fact. An exception in this context is the history of the party in Slovakia between 1918 and 1938, a period when the party leaders decided to extend the organization's reach to the entire territory of the newly formed state. Apart from partial mentions, we have only a few short historical studies, which are inaccurate in their findings and give only the most basic outline of the Party's policy in this territory. Therefore, the present study is one of the new probes into the Party's activities in Slovakia, aiming to reduce the historiographical debt. Given the limited scope, this article analyses the party's profile in Slovakia intending to evoke its Czechoslovakist programme, the programme of Czechoslovak national and state unity, which was not accepted with understanding in the conservative and especially nationalist and autonomist-oriented Slovak environment or was fundamentally rejected. In the field of political practice, the party projected the concept of unity into the issue of the search for the optimal administrative system of the Czechoslovak Republic. It was opposed not only to the vision of an autonomous Slovakia within Czechoslovakia, which she correctly perceived as the first step in the process leading to the state-law separation of Czechs and Slovaks, but also the provincial system. The ideal, fulfilling the idea of self-government, autonomy, and independence, was the county system. As a probe into the aforementioned topic, this study also analyses the relationship of the National Socialists in Slovakia to Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which had the most significant electoral support of the population and differed with them programmatically and politically on the issues addressed in our study. It was their primary political opponent.

Keywords: political parties, national socialists, Slovakia, Czechoslovakism, autonomy.

Formulation of the issue. Until 1989, the National Socialist (socialist) political current was one of the backbone organisations of the Czech party-political system. Its origins date back to the 1890s, when, as part of the process of political differentiation in Czech society, the Party of Czechoslovak National Workers in Bohemia was founded in 1897, followed a year later by the Party of Moravian National Workers in Moravia. After the merger of the two organisations in 1898, the name of the National Social Party in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Upper and Lower Austria was shortened to the Czech National Social Party in 1902. The founders of the party did incorporate the term “workers” into its name to demonstrate both its programme focus and its membership base, but in both cases it was more an act of defining oneself against the internationally oriented Social Democrats than a reality. From the beginning it was more of a political party representing the lower middle classes and building on Czech nationalism. At the same time, it strongly emphasized the idea of building Czech socialism, the economic basis of which was a fundamental reform of the capitalist production system. The aim of the party was to strive to build a society that would enable the “little Czech man” to live a dignified life in a nationally, socially, culturally developed and just society. At the turn of the war and peace, the experience of the apocalypse led the party leaders to play with the Social Democrats with the intention of

forming a united, strong socialist party that would accelerate the achievement of the party's goals. Reflections in this direction were reflected in the adoption of a new party name. It entered the post-war era as the Czech/Czechoslovak Socialist Party. The radicalization of its behaviour at that time was caused not only by the atmosphere of the time, but also by a merger with the Czech anarchists-communists. After the post-war revolutionary wave subsided, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (the name it bore since 1926) became one of the pillars of the democratic political system of the first Czechoslovak Republic. It was represented in the Five, had a large cadre of MPs and senators in parliament, and its ministers participated in most of the government coalitions of the first Czechoslovak Republic. Its political profile has been shaped by a number of prominent personalities. To name a few, let us mention Václav Klofáč (1868 – 1942), Jiří Stříbrný (1880 – 1955), Edvard Beneš (1884 – 1948), Jaroslav Stránský (1884 – 1973), Jaroslav Šalda (1880 – 1965), Alois Tučný (1881 – 1940), Emil Franke (1880 – 1939), Fráňa Zemínová (1882 – 1962), Františka Plamínková (1875 – 1942), František Krejčí (1858 – 1934), etc. After the episode of the Second Republic, when the party disappeared and its members dispersed between the National Labour Party and the National Unity Party, and the activities of some personalities from E. Beneš in exile in London, the National Socialists restored

the party in 1945. In the post-war reduced party-political system of 1945 – 1948, the CSNP took the position of the second strongest political party in the country and assumed the role of a strong opponent of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Although it was able to rely on the activities of other capable politicians such as Petr Zenkl (1884 – 1975), Joža David (1884 – 1968), Hubert Ripka (1895 – 1958), Prokop Drtina (1900 – 1980), Vladimír Krajina (1905 – 1993), Julius Firt (1897 – 1979), Milada Horáková (1901 – 1950), Ivan Herben (1900 – 1968), František Klátal (1905 – 1972), etc., it was unable to prevent the political putsch in February 1948. Under the new leadership headed by Emanuel Šlechta (1895 – 1960) and Alois Neumann (1901 – 1977), the renamed Czechoslovak Socialist Party became a shadow organization, a satellite of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which more or less willingly helped to establish a totalitarian political system in the country and to build so-called socialism. In this situation, the subsequent fate of the National Socialists after the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989 is not surprising. Their program, dressed in the garb of discredited socialism, was unable to reach a larger number of voters and the party could not be saved by its modifications and changes, nor by numerous reorganizations, mergers with other marginal political entities, let alone the search for an optimal name (Liberal National Social Party, Free Democrats – Liberal National Social Party, Czech National Social Party). Today, they are a political party standing on the side-lines and trying in vain to return to the political scene in elections.

An integral part of the rich history of this party, active in the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia), is its attempt to establish national socialism in Slovakia (and also in Carpathian Ruthenia). It occurred during the existence of the First Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1938. Unfortunately, this episode is still little explored. Both Slovak and Czech history more or less ignores the topic. The reason for this is certainly the absence of a larger number of archival sources as a starting point for historical research, but also the fact that the independent entries of the Slovak party organization into the political events in the country were limited due to its marginality. On the other hand, the Slovak faction formed an integral part of the CSNP and its policy towards Slovakia is important in the reflection of Czech-Slovak relations in the interwar period. Therefore, we believe that it is desirable for historians to try to capture at least the basic features of the activities of the Slovak part of the party and to be able to explain the reasons for its marginal position. This effort corresponds to the search for the party's place within the Slovak party system and is a partial contribution to the history of political parties as well as the interwar political system.

Study objectives. The objectives of our study are only partial. In one paper, limited by the extra scope of a journal study, we cannot erase the entire historiographical debt. The article analyses some selected features of the party's political performance in Slovakia. It wants to capture in particular those positions that were opposed by political rivals, did not enjoy consensus, or caused controversy. It addresses three main thematic areas. The party as a defender of Czechoslovak unity. The party as an

opponent of the concept of Slovak autonomy. Party as a critic of the policy of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party.

Analysis of sources and literature. The origin of our study is motivated by the fact that the historiographical treatment of the chosen topic is still rather scarce. Therefore, this part of the study is logically brief. A few references to the activities of the CSNP in Slovakia can be found in the studies of the Czech, Marxist-oriented historian Josef Harna (1939 – 2015) [Harna, 1978, 1979], who researched the history of the party in the Czech lands during the years of the first Czechoslovak Republic. Actually, the only author who has written relatively comprehensive scholarly studies on the history of the party in Slovakia is the Slovak historian Lubica Kázmerová (born 1955). A synthesis of her knowledge of the party in Slovakia was prepared for Lipták's handbook on the history of political parties in Slovakia between 1860 and 1989 [Kázmerová, 1992]. Three of the author's papers on the internal organization of the party, their attitudes towards the problems of state administration and party politics are published in the proceedings of scientific conferences held in the Czech Republic and Slovakia [Kázmerová, 1991, 1993, 1999]. Her last contribution is a medallion of the party leader Igor Hrušovský [Kázmerová, 2003].

There are two reasons for the lack of interest of Czech and Slovak historiography in the history of the CSNP in Slovakia. The first is the scarcity, wide dispersion and low narrative value of the surviving archival sources. Although the CSNP archive is exceptional in the context of the preservation of documents relating to the activities of political parties in the Czech-Slovak space, as it offers historians a large number of documents to study, its state of processing even after the transition to state archival care is not yet satisfactory, and the few materials relating to Slovakia are almost literally "lost" in it. In addition, the leadership of the provincial party organization in Slovakia had little power in conditions of considerable centralization of management, so the documents from their activities allow us to reconstruct more or less only the administrative workings of the party, while they contribute little to clarifying fundamental problems and issues. The second reason for the "historiographical vacuum" is the marginal position and importance of the party's activities in Slovakia.

Our study is based mainly on the use of archival materials from the party history collections stored in the National Archives in Prague and the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava. We have drawn further insights from the hitherto completely unused stenographic protocols of the sessions of the Chamber of Deputies of the National Assembly of Czechoslovakia (cited by SČDPK). An important source of information for us were printed sources in the form of contemporary party prints and brochures, although their quantity was not large given the financial condition of the party at the time. We also relied on the knowledge obtained by excerpting all party periodicals published in Slovakia: *Horáša!* (1920), *Národní socialista* (1933 – 1935), *Pohronský hlásník* (1926 – 1939), *Slovenské slovo* (1921 – 1929), *Slovenský robotník* (1919), *Slovenský socialista* (1920) and *Stráž východu* (1927 – 1929).

Research results.

1. The Party as a Defender of Czechoslovak Unity

The most distinctive feature characterizing the CSNP policy in Slovakia was the presentation, advocacy and defence of the idea of the unity of Czechoslovakia as a democratic nation state creating suitable conditions for the political, economic, social and cultural rise of the Czechoslovak nation. The party's programme documents worked with an artificial and politically constructed concept of the existence of a Czechoslovak nation composed of two ethnic branches, Czech and Slovak, speaking essentially the same language. This idea of so-called Czechoslovakism was based on historical argumentation, which sought out certain facts and events from the history of both nations and presented them as evidence of the truth of the union of the two nations in history. They claimed that their fate had been adversely affected in the past by factors of a state-law nature that had pushed Czechoslovak unity into the background. The current collapse of the Habsburg Empire created an opportunity to restore integrity. They interpreted the idea of national unity as the best way to defend national independence and to ensure the freedom of the people. They had an idea of a long-term process of convergence of the two ethnic branches maintaining their individualities, during which the natural differences between Czechs and Slovaks would be overcome. They imagined that the final result of this divergence would be the emergence of a new, qualitatively higher synthesis in the future. The party's programme documents repeatedly emphasized the hypothesis of the close connection between the phenomena of the future of the Slovak nation and Czechoslovak unity.

The Slovak interpreter of Czechoslovakism and ideological leader of the party Igor Hrušovský (1879 – 1937) explained the concept on the floor of the National Assembly in the following words: "The conviction of the unity of the Czechoslovak nation is as old as our national aspirations and our national consciousness" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 151, June 22, 1922]. "By proclaiming the Czechoslovak ideal, we are only following in the footsteps of our fathers, the saviours of the national consciousness of the Slovak people" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 231, November 26, 1923]. He did not justify the idea of unity only by arguments using some facts from the history of the two nations [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 92, June 30, 1927] and their mutual relations, but he considered equally important the positions formulated by Slovak politicians in the days of the constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic. He told domestic and foreign opponents of this construct in 1925: "The denial of the unity of the Czechoslovak nation must be rejected in the strongest possible terms, because it is in direct contradiction with 28 October 1918, with the Declaration of Martin of 30 October 1918 and with the introductory formula of our constitutional charter. For us only these declarations are binding, and we despise all the sharp practices who oppose their spirit" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 168, November 16, 1922]. The party, through Hrušovský, rejected the interpretation of the mere existence of a political Czechoslovak nation. "This is untrue. In the [Martins] Declaration, on the contrary, national and cultural-political unity is emphasized. It is

emphasized here not only in state-law terms, but also in ethnographic terms, resting on the ethnical unity of the two branches of the nation" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 296, October 31, 1924].

The conviction that the Czechs and Slovaks form one common nation led Hrušovský to reject the thesis of the "peculiarity" of the Slovak nation: "If we reject with all determination the distinctiveness of the Slovak nation, we do so as loyal sons of our family, because we do not do so only because of the unforgettable moment on 30 October 1918 in Turč. St. Martin, all Slovak patriots, in the depths of their souls shaken by the rising sun of freedom, unanimously and not ambiguously declared Czechoslovak national unity, and we do this not only because this unity formed our political creed for many and many of us before the war, but simply because we are deeply convinced that Czechs and Slovaks are one nation, a united nation" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 92, June 30, 1927]. On the other hand, he felt himself to be a member of its Slovak branch and, as a true patriot, he did not hide his conviction that the merger would benefit both parts of the Czechoslovak nation as well as the state in which they lived. He felt that the existence of the new republic was threatened by an external enemy seeking to revise the post-war world order, and also by the irredentist movement active in the countries neighbouring Slovakia to the south and north. In the debate on the Prime Minister's Statement on 9 November 1932, he said: "I love my Slovak people as I did before, so I love them now always and always and unchanged, I am convinced from the depths of my soul that their future, their progress, their well-being lies only in close cooperation with the Czech people. Only the united Czechoslovak state and its democratic and republican system rests and secures it from disasters. Therefore, I cannot but work for the permanent and indissoluble unification to become a deed, so that all the walls and obstacles to this merger will be removed, so that the united Czech and Slovak element will flow in a wide stream throughout the whole territory of our republic. Let the Czech and the Slovak be at home on all the land that is called Czechoslovakia, in this is our future, in this are all our hopes" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 215, November 9, 1932].

An integral part of the concept of Czechoslovak unity as conceived by the CSNP in Slovakia was the expression of the Slovaks' warm relationship to the Czech branch of the nation and to the role of the Czechs in Slovakia both in the past and in the present. The party evaluated their activities in Slovakia in the interwar period positively and defended them against critical voices coming mainly from the rows of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. Its opinions were not uncritical. In addition to the benefits, it also saw the mistakes and blunders committed by both individuals and the state administration controlled from Prague. The criticisms, however, could not cover up and devalue the words about the great contribution of the Czechs to the development of Slovakia. In 1921 Hrušovský evaluated their contribution to the formation of the modern Slovak nation. In a speech delivered in the Chamber of Deputies on 20 October, he said: "I am convinced [...] that our liberation by Czech and only Czech help came right in time. Two or three more generations under Hungarian

rule and the old Tisza's phrase²³ that 'there is no Slovak nation' would become true. We were losing village after village on the national frontier, we had already Hungarianized towns, and the cancer of Hungarianization was spreading among the rural people. The Slovak people were already despairing, Slovak political life was dominated by a disastrous theory and appeared in a dead passivity. And then, in the most difficult moments of despair [...] a selfless awakening came to us from the Czech side [...]. Yes, long before the building of the Czechoslovak state, Czech love kept us alive as a nation, kept us from the kind of decline into which our brothers the Carpathian Russians have fallen" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 88, October 20, 1921].

For Hrušovský and his party, the "Slovak question" did not exist. He did not see the country as a national problem, but only as an organizational problem [Krajčovičová, 1993a, pp. 155–160].

The fact is that the efforts of the National Socialists (as well as other Czech political parties seeking to extend their reach to the east of the country) to promote the idea of Czechoslovak unity (Czechoslovakism) did not find a favourable response in Slovakia. It alluded to the process of formation of the modern Slovak nation, when autonomistically oriented Slovaks pursued Slovak national interests without taking into account the status, interests and needs of the Czechoslovak Republic. In reality, this fact was reflected in the relatively small electoral gains of the CSNP in Slovakia, unlike in the Czech lands, whether we are referring to parliamentary, provincial, county, district or municipal elections. Its membership in Slovakia was small and stagnated. There was a permanent political tension between the CSNP in Slovakia and other political parties with the programme of autonomism, especially Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, often growing into hostility and excesses.

2. The Party as an Opponent of the Concept of Slovak Autonomy

With its unambiguous orientation towards the concept of Czechoslovak unity, the CSNP policy came into sharp conflict with the alternative concept of Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic [Podolec, p. 51; Ferenčuhová, pp. 275–278; Kramer, pp. 62–67; Materna; Loubal, 1930, pp. 34–42], which was backed by, among others, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, the Slovak National Party and political parties of the Hungarian minority. This problem became one of the main factors limiting or defining the negative attitude of the National Socialists towards Hlinka's People's Party, which is evident throughout the entire duration of the First Republic. Igor Hrušovský perceived the introduction of the land system as a crime committed against Czechoslovakia: "We are faced with the fact that by incredible recklessness, by an amazing gamble with the future of this state, we are going into an experiment which, as I want to prove in my speech, must lead to a further unravelling of the unity of the Czechoslovak nation and which therefore history will without any doubt mark in its time as the

gravest crime that has been committed against the Czechoslovak state" [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 92, June 30, 1927]. If we disregard the expressive terms expressing the National Socialists' views on the proposals for Slovak autonomy, such as "crazy ideas without reality", "gambling without a chance of being sustained", "an expression of uncontrolled Slovak nationalism", "local patriotism not unlike chauvinism", their real objections can be summed up in a few equally valid theses formulated mainly in connection with the efforts to introduce a provincial system.

1. The demand for the autonomy of Slovakia is directed against the concept of Czechoslovak unity, a unified state and one Czechoslovak nation [Spontánne prejavu proti zamýšlenému oktroju centralizmu (Spontaneous speeches against the intended octroi centralism), *Slovenské slovo*, 1927, v. 7, no. 5, February 4, pp. 1–2; no. 6, February 11, pp. 1–2], on the basis of which the Czechoslovak Republic was founded. It contradicts the legacy of October 28 and 30, 1918. It denies the programme of unity contained in the Martin Declaration and the carriers of the idea of autonomy consistently misinterpret this document. The concept of autonomy prevents Czechs from being at home in Slovakia and Slovaks from being in Czech lands. The vision of autonomy is not compatible with the CSNS programme.

2. The project of autonomy is not necessary [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 88, October 20, 1921], there are no reasons for its implementation, especially at a time when the idea of unification is growing in the world. Today there are only two ways: unification or complete independence. There is no third alternative. Autonomy is a programme of separation of Slovakia from Czechoslovakia. In the initial phase, it will manifest itself in the desire for federalization of the state and will result in a dualism not unlike the Austro-Hungarian one. At the end of this whole process there will be a state division of the republic [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 168, October 23, 1928]. Is the idea of independence even realistic? In a short time, Slovakia would come under Hungarian domination again.

3. The plan for autonomy in Slovakia is behind the introduction of a provincial administrative system as an important step in the implementation of the idea of separation. For the first time in its history, Slovakia will become a historical entity. The ethnographic Slovaks will be divided and will lose their ties to their Hungarian and Moravian brothers [Na obranu jednoty československé, celistvosti státu (In Defence of Czechoslovak Unity, the Integrity of the State), *České slovo*, 1927, v. 19, June 4, p. 1]. The ideal fulfilment of the idea of decentralization and independent administration of Slovakia is the introduction of the county system.

4. The outline of autonomy is an idea that originated in Pest. Its realization is a step towards the surrender of Slovakia to the Hungarians, an act aimed at the revision of the Versailles system and the restoration of Greater Hungary [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 168, October 23, 1928]. Autonomy is not self-government, but the throwing of the Slovak proletariat into the hands of the bloody Horthy groups. It is water for the mill of all enemies of Czechoslovakia as a successor and democratic nation-state. Every Slovak has to decide –

²³ Kálmán Tisza (1830 – 1902), prime minister of the government of the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen between 1875 and 1890, one of the leading promoters of the policy of Hungarianization towards Slovaks and Croats in Hungary.

either for the clerical camp soaked in Hungarianism, or for the national Slovak direction of progress, light and truth.

5. The wish for autonomy is aimed at fulfilling the desire of Hlinka's People's Party for full control of life in Slovakia, opening up the possibility for it to implement its clerical programme and stop progress [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 149, June 27, 1928].

6. The vision of Slovak autonomy is controversial and unrealistic not only in political terms, but especially in economic terms. It would be a gamble because Slovakia is not economically self-sufficient. Building its own administrative apparatus, which lacks enough educated people to ensure its functionality, would place an enormous financial burden on it, requiring the introduction of new high taxes and levies [Je možná autonómia? (Is autonomy possible?), *Slovenské slovo*, 1923, v. 3, no. 48, 14 December, pp. 2–3; Slovenští autonomisté (Slovak Autonomists), *Stráž východu*, 2, 1928, v. 2, no. 8, 22 February, p. 2].

7. The demand for autonomy moves Slovaks away from “far and wide horizons” and favours “local patriotism”, freeing the horizons for Slovak provincialism, narrow-mindedness and selfish particularism [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 162, October 27, 1922].

In the mid-1920s, the CSNP, as an opponent of the concept of Slovak autonomy, critically opposed the intention to solve the problem of the lack of a unified state administration in Czechoslovakia [Krajčovičová, 1992, pp. 47–55; Liepscher, 1966, pp. 143–211] through the provincial establishment. It strongly opposed the adoption of the draft law No. 125/1927 on the Organization of Political Administration in the Chamber of Deputies [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 92, June 30, 1927; no. 149, June 27, 1928; Schelle, 1991, pp. 5–36] and in the course of 1927, mostly together with the Social Democracy Party, the National Labour Party and the Czechoslovak Legionary Community, organized a number of public protest gatherings (e.g., Košice, Nitra, Bratislava, Zvolen, etc.). The adopted resolutions and subsequently the party press evaluated the adoption of the law as a defeat of the idea of Czechoslovak national unification when the concept of the Czechoslovak state and the Czechoslovak nation became the same lie as the concept of Austria-Hungary and the idea of the Hungarian nation. The responsibility for its allegedly undemocratic enforcement (octroi) was transferred to the head of the “Hodžov-Hlinka coalition” [Gajdoš, L.: Prišiel Hlinka z Ružomberka...(Hlinka came from Ružomberok...) *Slovenské slovo*, 7, 1927, v. 7, no. 4, 28 January, p. 1], which by law compensated the People's Party for not accepting the demand for autonomy [”Čo máte vo svojom štáte najslavanskejšie, rušite!“ (What you have in your state is most Slavic, you are abolishing!), *Guard of the East*, 1928, v. 2, no. 28, 13 July, p. 1] and at the same time denounced the socialists and the ideas on which the Czechoslovak Republic itself is based. It described the adoption of the law as a leap in the dark, a fateful step creating a basis for the development of Slovak separatism and a revolt against the constitution.

In the reality of political life, however, the CSNP dealt with the introduction of the land system quite realistically. It took note of it, was interested in the widest possible

representation in the provincial bodies and declared its determination to continue working on the reform of the administrative system in the direction of its optimization, or a return to the county system, or such an administrative system that “will correspond to the unified concept of the Czechoslovak state” [Akútne otázky Slovenska (Urgent questions on Slovakia), *Slovenské slovo*, 1926, v. 6, no. 8, February 26, pp. 1–2]. It was bothered by the small competence of the provincial committee [Šuchová, pp. 487–509] and the fact that the provincial administration was in the hands of Hlinka's People's Party. The target of her attacks was especially the exponent of the people, the provincial president (between 1928 and 1930) JUDr. Ján Drobný (1881 – 1948). It sought his removal from office, publicly called for it, and also interpellated in Parliament on this matter [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 168, October 23, 1928; no. 180, December 19, 1928; no. 90, December 4, 1930].

The CSNP claimed that the ideal of state administration in Slovakia was the county system, which supposedly included autonomy on the widest scale [Je možná autonómia? (Is Autonomy Possible?), *Slovenské slovo*, 1923, v. 3, no. 48, 14 December, pp. 2–3]. Immediately after the Act on the introduction of county and district authorities No. 126 of 29 February 1920 [Liepscher, pp. 81–142; Schelle, pp. 159–188; Krajčovičová, 2001, pp. 16–18] came into force at the beginning of 1923, it hesitated for a while what position to take on it. However, this groping, manifested in criticism of the mostly formal circumstances accompanying its launch, was quickly overcome within a few weeks. Since then, it has referred to counties as an instrument of modern state administration, functioning and proven in developed Western countries, which breaks down centralism and bureaucracy. The county governments were seen as “the culmination of self-government in Slovakia, they are the realization of the autonomist aspirations of the Slovak nation, leaving it to manage the administration of Slovakia by itself without foreign interference” [Slovenskému pracujúcemu ľudu! (To the Slovak working people!), *Slovenské slovo*, 1923, v. 3, no. 37, 28 September, p. 1]. It strongly advocated the extension of the counties to the Czech lands as well, seeing the county administration as a historically outdated system. On the other hand, it was determined to tolerate a dual system within the state if the politicians in the Czech lands did not accept the counties [Němec, J. K otázke štátnej správy na Slovensku (On the Question of State Administration in Slovakia), *Slovenské slovo*, 7, 1927, v. 7, no. 3, Jan. 21, p. 3]. A great impetus for the intensification of these efforts was the parliamentary elections of 1925, which they assessed as an unexpected defeat caused, among other things, by the fact that the agrarians and social democrats had neglected and ignored Slovak national interests and saw the remedy in the establishment of a “proper administration” that would highlight the position of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia [Akútne otázky Slovenska (Urgent questions on Slovakia), *Slovenské slovo*, 1926, v. 6, no. 8, February 26, pp. 1–2]. They had high hopes for the activation of the section of the law on the creation of a union of Slovak counties [Krajčovičová, 1993b, pp. 379–393], headed by the office of the chief county governor, which would replace not only the Ministry with full powers for the administration

of Slovakia, but also the Slovak exposition offices of individual ministries, which would become departments of the county office. One of the great advantages of the county administrative system compared to the provincial system was that counties would be closer to the people and would be better suited to building regions from an economic and cultural point of view.

The CSNP belonged to the few political entities that vehemently opposed the abolition of the counties and the introduction of the provincial administration, but their forces were not enough to reverse the interests of the ruling “coalition of lords”, especially its efforts to align itself with Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party.

3. The Party as a Critic of the Policy of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party

In 1934, Igor Hrušovský, MP and chairman of the CSNP Provincial Executive Committee in Slovakia, declared: “We can agree with the speakers of the Slovak National Party and the Slovak People’s Party on many things. [...] The things on which we can agree are demands of a more or less self-governing, local nature, e.g., decentralization of authorities, many personnel issues. We would be poor representatives of our people if we did not insist that the economic interests of the county from which we are elected be given due respect. But there are some things that we cannot agree on, and again, we will never agree with the relevant masters and politicians. Here it is primarily a question of the understanding of the Czechoslovak state-law relationship both in the Slovak National Party and the Slovak People’s Party” [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 347, November 8, 1934].

The programme of Slovak autonomy as an alternative to the vision of a unified and democratic Czechoslovak state created a literally unbreachable barrier between the CSNP and Hlinka’s Party, which was reinforced by their different attitudes towards religious issues. The National Socialists regarded the people as their greatest political opponent and rival. As early as 1920, the popular parties declared a “ruthless struggle” [Los, R. O.: Volebná predohra na Slovensku (Election Prologue in Slovakia), *Hor’sa!*, 1920, v. 2, no. 6, 12 February, p. 1; Ludácka žurnalistika (People’s Journalism), *Slovenské slovo*, 1922, v. 8, no. 12, July 28, p. 2; Zbytočná hrozba (Unnecessary Threat), *Slovenské slovo*, 2, 1922, v. 2, no. 15, 20 August, p. 1] and they remained faithful to this slogan until 1938, when, paradoxically, they merged with them under a changed political constellation. In their eyes, Hlinka’s Party represented a political formation that threatened the future of Slovakia.

An analysis of the parliamentary and public press speeches of the CSNP makes it possible to summarize the main complaints, reprimands and reproaches addressed by the National Socialists to Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party. As in the case of a similar attempt concerning the concept of autonomy, the list is a mixture of arguments of uneven relevance, and quite understandably some of them are repeated. They signal the collision of two fundamentally different programmatic-political visions. The National Socialists saw the largest and most influential Slovak political party of the interwar period as follows:

1. Hlinka’s Party is the embodiment of the forces that negate everything that comes to Slovakia from the Czech lands. Every issue of its press organ, *Slovák*, contains articles inciting national hatred against the Czechs, defaming and ridiculing them. All disputable and controversial issues concerning Slovakia, which cannot be immediately resolved, are blamed on the Czechs or on the state’s unfriendly policy towards Slovakia. The party is behind a campaign whose slogan, “The Czechs are taking our bread”, is not only untrue, sowing hatred and anger, but is disrupting the consolidation of the republic, causing tensions and conflicts. The presence of experts of Czech nationality in the country is necessary and in the vital interest of Slovaks. The People’s Party rejects the concept of Czechoslovakism [Arpáš, Hanula, pp. 182–201] and denial of the idea of Czechoslovak unity led her into the ranks of anti-state opposition elements. Its destructive posturing makes it difficult to discuss controversial issues and, if there is an opportunity for an exchange of views, it lacks elements of constructiveness due to the fact that the party spokespersons do not hesitate to manipulate the facts, adapt them (lie) and misinterpret (falsify) documents. Hlinka’s followers even call on the population not to pay taxes. Similarly, it is a lie to speak of the Czechs as the enemies of religion. Certainly, among the hundreds of thousands who have come to Slovakia, there are a few unbelievers, intolerant and tactless people with character defects. But should the Slovaks be afraid of them? How the Slovak priests have educated the people when they are afraid of a handful of opponents. Instead of attacking, wouldn’t it be better to look within our own ranks and see Slovak piety in its true light? [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 151, June 22, 1922; no. 162, October 27, 1922; *Bludné cesty za pravdou* (Vicious paths to the truth), *Slovenské slovo*, 6, 1926, vol. 6, no. 53, 31 December, p. 1].

2. Hlinka’s People’s Party is the vehicle of unbridled Slovak nationalism, which produced the crazy idea of the country’s autonomy. Instead of a unified national community, it wants the existence of two states in one. Autonomy is the way to the secession of Slovaks from Czechoslovakia. Hlinka’s party is imposing its concept on all Slovaks, it has taken the Slovak National Party in tow, and presents itself as the spokesperson for the entire nation, but this is contrary to reality. Only a minority of about 20% of the population accepted its vision, so it has no right to speak for all. The moral claim to the role of interpreter of the interests of the Slovak people cannot be considered at all in its case [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 231, November 26, 1923; no. 215, November 9, 1932; *Autonómia* (Autonomy), *Slovenské slovo*, 1922, v. 2, no. 26, November 4, pp. 1–2].

3. Hlinka’s Party opened its arms to all the Magyars, irredentists, party “travellers” dressing up in political coats, nationally unreliable people subverting the republic. In its ranks there are people proclaiming the unity of Hungarians and Slovaks and spreading the idea of Slovakia as war booty and a Czech colony. “We know that today the People’s Party is the laughing jumble of the nation.” This reality is also reflected in its politics: two-faced, pharisaical, demagogic, unprogressive, full of insults and attacks, destabilizing, anti-Semitic, terrorizing Slovakia. Everything gives the impression that Hlinka’s

Party is controlled from Hungary and that Slovakia is also leading from there. It is completely inaccessible to any criticism and labels the bearers of other opinions as traitors to the Slovak nation [SČDPK, meeting of the Chamber of Deputies no. 162, October 27, 1922; no. 51, November 23, 1926; no. 168, October 23, 1928; no. 90, December 4, 1930; Juriga a spol. (Juriga et al.), *Slovenské slovo*, 2, 1922, v. 2, no. 5, June 2, p. 1; Prague and Ružomberok (translated into A), *Stráž východu*, 1928, v. 2, no. 1, January 6, p. 1].

4. Hlinka's Party is a shining example of Slovak clericalism abusing religion to advance its political interests, especially to gain power and control Slovakia. Its policy, conceived and directed by priests [Kováč, p. 88; Osyková, p. 143] and proclaimed from the pulpits of churches, does not follow the interests of the people, but of the Catholic clergy, landlords, rich men and capitalists [Ludová strana v Prahe a na Slovensku (The People's Party in Prague and Slovakia), *Stráž východu*, 1928, v. 2, no. 31, August 3, p. 1]. That is why he hinders the implementation of the land reform in Slovakia in favour of poor farmers and wants to prevent at all costs the seizure and division of church land property [Krajčovičová, 1991, pp. 75–83; Od autonómie k cirkevným statkom (From autonomy to ecclesiastical estates), *Slovenské slovo*, 1926, v. 6, no. 45, 5. 11., p. 1]. Its aim is to preserve the existing influence of the Catholic Church on education and the upbringing of the younger generation; it advocates the existence of church schools, the teaching of religion at all levels of school, and rejects school reforms that will bring about the cultural rise of the Slovaks. "As long as the Church, as long as Rome dictates to us, as long as the laws of Rome are more applicable to us than our laws, there will be no prospects for a better and more progressive future" [Loubal, F. Len o hospodársky program? (Just about economic program?), *Slovenské slovo*, 1926, v. 6, no. 15, April 16, p. 2].

5. The great weakness of Hlinka's Party is its governing cadres. Apart from the Hungarian, the "sworn enemy of everything Slovak and Czech", the "traitor and spy" Prof. Vojtech Tuka (1880 – 1946) [Illýová, Malatinský; Fedorčák], it has not a single real political head in its ranks and is led by people of flat opinions who are neither above average nor have their own opinion and political concept. "Juriga, Hlinka, Tománek, this is a symbol of offended vanity and resentment of everything anti-Czech. Nothing, absolutely nothing is sacred to these agitators to break up the Republic" [Juriga a spol. (Juriga et al.), *Slovenské slovo*, 1922, v. 2, no. 5, June 2, p. 1]. "It is, however, directly ironic when the priestly editors á la Juriga, Tománek and Hlinka are in no condition to express themselves otherwise than by swearing, outright lies and challenges unworthy of a Slovak journalist" [Ludácka žurnalistika (People's Journalism), *Slovenské slovo*, 1922, v. 2, no. 12, July 28, p. 2]. The priest Andrej Hlinka is a hypocrite and egoist seeking popularity [Poplach v ľudovej strane (Alarm in the People's Party), *Slovenské slovo*, 1922, v. 2, no. 13, August 5, p. 1]. He manifests himself as a moody leader not unlike a political Hamlet [Hlinka a Jehliczka (Hlinka and Jehliczka), *Slovenské slovo*, 1926, v. 6, no. 33, August 13, p. 1]. He is an ambitious politician, but "one man's ambition must not be the grave of the whole nation" [Zahraničné cesty ľudákov (Foreign Journeys of the People), *Slovenské slovo*, 1924, v. 4, no.

27, July 4, p. 1]. "Hlinka is a great man for his party. That he would be such a great politician for the Republic, not even a small child from Ružomberok could confirm that" [Okolo Hlinkovej sedemdesiatky (Around Hlinka's Seventy), *Slovenský socialista*, 1934, v. 2, no. 11, 4 October, p. 2].

In 1934, one of the members of the CSNP in the pages of the National Socialist assessed Hlinka's Slovak People's Party as a danger to the Czechoslovak Republic and to Slovakia itself. Its policy is unfolding in a spirit of disruption that threatens the very existence of the national Czechoslovak community. "Whoever preaches separatism belongs in court for treason against the integrity of the state and the future of Slovakia". The more lenient the state is towards its public appearances, the more brazen are the bullies in its ranks, and with impunity, they undermine the roots of fraternal unity. The task of the day is therefore to take decisive action against these people and the party as a whole. He ended his analysis of the behaviour of Hlinka's Party in the political system with a challenge: Abolish Hlinka's Slovak People's Party while there is still time. Don't let Slovakia find itself left to itself and its weak forces [Rozpusťte zavčasu ľudovú stranu (Dissolve the People's Party in Time), *Národný socialista*, 1934, v. 2, no. 12, 24 October, p. 2].

Research conclusions. The attempt of the Czechoslovak National Socialists to extend their political party to Slovakia was not very successful. Unlike the Czech lands in the east of the country, it had a limited number of members and a small electorate, regardless of the upward trends. There were several reasons for this. It was an organization that was new on the Slovak political scene, it could not build on previous traditions and the time space for its establishment was not long enough. The overall social and political climate in Slovakia did not create favourable conditions for its mass spread. The opposition of the overwhelming majority of the population was met with three basic pillars of its programme. It presented itself as a consistent spokesperson and defender of the national unity of Czechs and Slovaks and of the Czechoslovak Republic as a unitary state. It sharply defined itself against the alternative programme of the Slovak autonomists. It came out with its programme for building Czech socialism at a time when the reformist and revolutionary-minded left-wing lower and middle classes it targeted also had the opportunity to satisfy their interests in competing political parties. The space for reaching out to the unorganized members of this group was therefore narrow. In the theoretical sphere, the party preached religious tolerance and an ambivalent attitude towards churches. It moved the confessional issue into the private sphere of human thought. It proclaimed to fight only clericalism understood as the abuse of religion for political purposes. In reality, however, it introduced the ideas of separation of the churches from the state and the fight against "religious obscurantism" into the Slovak Catholic environment, sharply criticized the Catholic Church and its clergy, and supported the efforts of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church to penetrate Slovakia. In addition to these programmatic limits, it is also necessary to point out the mistakes related to the management of the party in Slovakia, or to mention the circumstances that had a negative impact on its development. The most significant was

the lack of financial resources necessary for the creation of the membership base and the material support of members of a high-quality, functional and sufficiently numerous professional party apparatus, as well as for the expansion

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prof. PhDr. PaedDr. Павел Марек, Ph.D

почесний професор кафедри історії, філософський факультет, Університет Палацького, Оломоуц, Чехія

ЗАХИСНИК ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКОЇ ЄДНОСТІ. ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПОЛІТИКИ ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКИХ НАЦІОНАЛ-СОЦІАЛІСТІВ У СЛОВАЧЧИНІ В 1918 – 1938 рр.

Реформістська течія національних соціалістів аж до 1989 року була одним з базових елементів чеської/чехословацької партійно-політичної системи. Політична партія чеських національних соціалістів формувалася з 90-х років XIX століття і стала постійною складовою частиною урядових коаліцій у роки Першої Чехословацької Республіки (1918 – 1938) під назвою Чехословацька національно-соціалістична партія. Цьому відповідає історіографічне трактування їхньої діяльності та участі у вирішенні політичних, економічних, соціальних і культурних проблем побудови держави. Винятком у цьому контексті є історія партії у Словаччині у період з 1918 до 1938 року, коли лідери партії вирішили поширити діяльність організації на всю територію новостворюваної держави. Крім окремих згадок, ми маємо лише кілька коротких історичних досліджень, дані яких є неточними і політику партії на цій території відображують лише в найзагальніших рисах. Тому представлено дослідження є одним з нових «зондів» до діяльності партії у Словаччині, спрямованих на зменшення історіографічного боргу. З огляду на обмеження про її чехословацьку програму, програму чехословацької національної та державної єдності, яка не була прийнята з розумінням або принципово відкидалася в консервативному та передусім націоналістично й автономістично орієнтованому словацькому середовищі. У сфері політичної практики партія проєкціювала концепцію єдності на питання пошуку оптимальної адміністративної системи Чехословацької Республіки. Вона виступала не тільки проти концепції автономного статусу Словаччини у

складі ЧСР, яку правильно сприймала як перший крок у процесі державно-правового відокремлення чехів і словаків, але й проти земської системи. Ідеалом, який втілює в реальність уявлення про самоврядування, автономію та незалежність, вона вважала жупну систему. Вивчаючи згадану вище тему, дослідження також аналізує стосунки національних соціалістів у Словаччині з Глінковою словацькою народною партією, що мала найбільшу електоральну підтримку населення і з питань, обговорюваних у нашій роботі, програмно та політично з ними розходила. Вона була їхнім основним політичним супротивником.

Ключові слова: політичні партії, національні соціалісти, Словаччина, чехословакізм, автономія.