

HISTORY OF THE PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK TRADERS' PARTY IN SLOVAKIA IN THE YEARS 1920 – 1938

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The Czechoslovak Traders' Party formed an integral part of the party-political system of the first Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1938. In the Czech environment, it followed on from older attempts, when several political parties gradually and separately emerged in Bohemia and Moravia from the 1890s, but they did not gain a foothold in political life due to their marginality. They faced a great amount of competition from a broad and differentiated system of non-political professional organizations, capable of satisfying most of the economic interests and needs of their membership base, and at the same time from a network of so-called satellite organizations, which offered traders the opportunity to rehabilitate their political ambitions; affiliated professional organizations were founded by all relevant political parties. Therefore, after the end of the Great War and the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic, the political parties of traders and merchants merged into one organizational unit with the vision of creating a strong and influential political unit. The party unified and at the same time expanded its activities to the territory of Slovakia and gradually to Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Given that the aforementioned competitive environment in which it operated before the war remained essentially the same after 1918, the party remained an ambitious but relatively small political grouping without significant political influence even during the years of the First Republic. On the other hand, the Traders' Party was part of all government coalitions from 1925 (with the exception of the period between 1932 and 1935) and its policies contributed to strengthening the democratic character of the government regime, so it cannot be completely trivialized. This study is devoted to the evocation of the activities of the Slovak provincial organization of this party. It was established and formed after the parliamentary elections in 1920. Slovak traders and merchants decided to resign from the joint action with the Slovak National and Peasant Party, merged with the Czechoslovak Traders' Party and create a single organization with it. They adopted its agenda and organizational rules and elected their own provincial executive committee. The way the provincial party branch was established was thereby reflected in the fact that the Slovak party faction, unlike all (Czechoslovak) political parties operating on a nationwide scale, maintained relatively significant autonomy and independence from the headquarters in managing its structures, without, however, any fundamental or insurmountable differences between the party leadership and the provincial organization. The Prague party headquarters tolerated the different position of the provincial organization both towards the problem of Slovak autonomy and also Czechoslovakism, the solution of the national question in Czechoslovakia and to a certain extent also towards religious issues. In the partial party-political system of Slovakia, the provincial branch of the Czechoslovak Traders' Party did not gain ground. The reasons are mainly found in the inability to face the competition of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, the Slovak National Party and the provincial faction of the National Democrats, which, thanks to their better financial standing, not only had a larger and more flexible apparatus developing more effective agitation and organizational activities, but the parties were able to offer mainly material benefits to traders. The lukewarm attitude towards the key issue of the country's autonomy also plays a role. In addition, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that Slovak members of this social class were confronted with the interests of their economically relatively stronger Hungarian, Jewish, and even German colleagues.

Keywords: Czechoslovakia, political party, middle classism, press, autonomy.

Formulation of the issue. One of the deficits of the history of Czech, but also Slovak, political parties is the insufficient knowledge of several features of the activities of Czechoslovak political parties in Slovakia during the years of the first Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1938. It is true that the basic contours of their activities are known, which primarily concern the most important ones, such as the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants (the so-called Agrarian Party) or the anti-systemic but substantially voter-supported Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, but if we intend to analyze in more depth and reconstruct in more detail the history of the provincial

organizations of both socialist parties or, for example, the Czechoslovak National Democracy (National Unity), we still find ourselves on thin ice. A synthesising overview of political parties operating in Slovakia during the period under review is contained in a collection entitled Political Parties in Slovakia 1860 – 1989, compiled by Lubomír Lipták (1930 – 2003) and published in 1992 in Bratislava by the Archa publishing house. Since its publication, new research into the history of political parties creating their organizations not only in Slovakia but throughout the entire territory of the then republic has moved forward only slowly.¹ In addition to the works dedicated to the

¹ We are referring here to monographic studies devoted to the analysis of internal party life, not the entry of organizations and their officials into

the interwar political system, which we understand as one of the segments of political party activity.

Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [Benko, Šuchová, Zemko], we can only mention, without claiming a detailed list, the publication of a collective monograph dedicated to social democracy *demokracii* [Sikora, Hotár, Láluha, Zala], a collection of works created by, among others, the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts of the Catholic University in Ružomberok, whose authors elaborate on the activities of the provincial organization of the Czechoslovak People's Party [Pehr; Marťák; Maruniak; Zmátlo; Olexák] and the collections edited by Miroslav Pekník and dedicated to various prominent figures in Slovak politics [Pekník, 1994, 2012, 2022]. Our effort is to expand the portfolio of this interest with research devoted to the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party [Marek, 2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c] and currently the Czechoslovak Traders' Party (ČZOSS).

Study objectives. A political party with the ambition to unite one of the important segments of the so-called old middle class, i.e., small-time entrepreneurs, craftsmen, tradesmen and merchants, into one entity, was established in 1919 by the merger of traders' parties in Bohemia and Moravia, whose tradition reached back to the turn of the 20th century. Its leading elites had the concept of building a political organization operating throughout the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic, including Slovakia and gradually also Subcarpathian Ruthenia, which, along with other class parties of workers and peasants, would be an influential spokesman and defender of the interests of small traders facing large capital in economic competition [Mlčoch]. In the short period of the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the party leaders working around the personalities of the chairmen Rudolf Mlčoch (1880 – 1948) [Rudolf Mlčoch, 1930] and Josef Václav Najman (1882 – 1937) [Josef Václav Najman, 1932; Marek, 1997a; Jakubec, 2007b] failed to fulfill this vision and the organization remained a relatively small political party (in the absence of precise data, estimates regarding the size of the membership base on a nationwide scale range between 50,000 and 100,000 members), which did not have a large electorate and the number of votes obtained in parliamentary elections placed it in the top ten on the list of political party success rates.

The reasons for the failure lay in the enormous heterogeneity and fragmentation of small business owners, which had characterized this social class since the advent of industrial society and had not been overcome even after the establishment of an independent state. In addition, small business owners were overwhelmingly members of a very diversified non-political system of professional organizations that satisfied their professional interests, and therefore they mostly refused to enter political structures and perceived it as a negative factor discouraging part of the public from using their work and services. At the same time, since the 1890s, when witnessed the process of political differentiation of Czech society, virtually all relevant political parties showed interest in expanding their membership base to include traders and created special sections for them in their organizational structures, which resulted in the fact that those small business owners who were interested in engaging in politics became members of various political parties. Therefore, the idea of building a purely class-based party of small traders ran into objective limits resulting from the described situation, but it also

caused tension in the party-political system, with other political parties rejecting it as redundant and treating it accordingly [Marek, 1996a, 1999]. However, it should be objectively noted that the party's credibility was weakened often by the behavior of some of the organization's leading elite.

On the other hand, the importance of the Traders' Party should not be underestimated. It formed an integral part of the party-political system of the First Republic, and its assessment would not be complete without a reflection on its activities. The same applies to the knowledge of the history of Czechoslovak parliamentarism. With the exception of the years 1932 – 1935, when part of its then leadership was tactical and went into opposition in the hope of gaining a larger number of votes in the next parliamentary elections, the Traders' Party was part of all government coalitions in the years 1925 – 1938, and its representatives held ministerial positions. The party's policy, following in the footsteps of the agrarians, contributed to the consolidation of the Czechoslovak democratic regime. In the party-political structure of the 1930s, the party had the potential to offer the middle class an organizational alternative to its inclination towards the extreme right. Electoral gains in the First Republic's parliamentary elections signaled the gradual but steady rise of the Traders' Party, which was only stopped by the events of the late 1930s.

We managed to compile the history of the Czechoslovak Traders' Party in the years 1918 – 1938 in the Czech lands in the form of a monograph in 1995 [Marek, 1995]. In the following years, we elaborated and supplemented this theme. [Marek, 1996b, 1998, 2000, 2005]. The aim of the presented study is to complete the research by reflecting on the activities of the provincial organization of the party in Slovakia and thereby expand the knowledge contained in the above-mentioned compendium edited by Ľ. Lipták [Lipták].

Analysis of sources and literature. A fundamental problem limiting the study of the history of ČZOSS is the absence of an archive resource containing documents originating from the activities of the party headquarters. We must also note the deficits regarding the personal resources of leading party officials. Exceptionally, only archival resources mapping the activities of lower organizational units of the party are available, but their informative value has a local scope. Therefore, the researcher is dependent on collecting information contained in various national archives in Prague and Bratislava, in the provincial, regional and district archives of the Czech and Slovak Republics, but also in the Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic, the T. G. Masaryk Institute, the National Museum in Prague, etc. Their detailed list is given in our monograph from 1995 [Marek, 1995, p. 159]. However, printed sources are of far greater importance for research on the theme, including both periodicals published by the party itself and mostly by state institutions documenting various areas of life in interwar Czechoslovakia, and periodicals published primarily by the party itself, but also by other political entities that critically monitored the activities of ČZOSS. We consider periodicals to be a key source enabling reflection on the history of the party. In this case too, we refer to the relatively extensive list of periodicals given in

our monograph. [Marek, 1995, pp. 160–161]. Information on the history of the party is also contained in secondary literature. The problem, however, is that these are periodical titles whose authors are party functionaries themselves [Čekl; Mlčoch; Pekárek, Zimák], so their conclusions must be taken critically. The second difficulty lies in the fact that the vast majority of these are overview works that are limited to the general characteristics of the Traders' Party, or touch on it only marginally. The following works are only attempts to summarize the history of the party: Jana Fejfarová focused on Moravia [Fejfarová] and included the results of her research in a handwritten diploma thesis defended at the University of Olomouc in 1969. Furthermore, Josef Harna prepared an overview of the history of the party in the Czech lands [Harna] in 2012, relying on our results of research on this theme. The author of the only work published about the party in Slovakia is the aforementioned Ľ. Lipták [Lipták, pp. 172–178], who created a sketch of its activities in the east of the then republic. Our work dedicated to the provincial organization of the party in Slovakia, using the results of our previous research on the theme, relies on the sources listed below, among which the periodical Hlásnik dominates.

Research results. ČŽOSS was one of the nationwide, Czechoslovak organizations and also had its provincial branches in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Its Slovak part was constituted on the initiative of Slovak tradesmen and merchants on 14 November 1920 at the congress in Turčianský Sv. Martin. [Rozmach našeho hnutí na Slovensku, 1921; Vytrvať, 1922; Slamený oheň, 1922; Kianička, 1927]. The establishment of the provincial structure was decisively influenced by the results of the first parliamentary elections, when activists of this social class tried to gain representation in the National Assembly on the candidate lists of the Slovak National and Peasant Party. When this plan failed [Všenárodní strana na Slovensku, 1920; Naše slovenské věci, 1921], in the mid-1920s they established closer contacts with the leaders of ČŽOSS and decided to join it as its provincial organization. [Slovenské remeslníctvo a obchodníctvo se probudilo, 1920; Nová politická strana na Slovensku, 1920]

Autonomous status of the provincial organization

The fact that it was a free choice of Slovak small traders had a fundamental influence on the position of this regional unit within the entire party. Although it was an integral part of it, on the other hand, unlike the provincial branches of socialist parties, for example, it had considerable autonomy and was tied to the Prague headquarters through representation in national units, but the party center provided it with freedom both in terms of managing the organization and taking positions on various issues. A large part of this model of the organization's functioning was due to the fact that the Slovak regional organization was financially independent of the party headquarters, the expected influx of subsidies from Prague did not come, and therefore it had to rely on its own resources [Slovenskí živnostníci a naša strana, 1929], and in addition, the officials at the head of the regional organization, the vast majority of whom were Slovaks, made it clear to their Prague colleagues from the very beginning that they were not sufficiently qualified to solve problems related to the needs of Slovak traders, that they had not penetrated the

local specifics and conditions, and that therefore the final decision should be left to the Slovak authorities.

The issue of Slovak agenda specifics

This autonomy of the Slovak party faction was reflected both in the fact that the party in Slovakia held a different opinion to the party leadership on some fundamental issues (e.g., the problem of Slovak autonomy, Czechoslovakism, the language question, the provincial system, the relationship to small traders of other nationalities than Czech or Slovak), and in the fact that, up until the parliamentary elections in 1925, it to a certain extent flirted (or strategized) with the efforts of national democracy or the Slovak National Party after the merger of these parties in Slovakia [Uvažujme!, 1924; Zasadnutie ústredného výkonného výboru, 1925] and the party leadership set conditions as a prerequisite for maintaining the existing model of cooperation.

The provincial party organization did not formulate a special Slovak agenda and adopted the Czech, all-party one [Marek, 2021]. Understandably, given the time of its creation, it did not contain the passage concerning Slovakia. The visions of Slovak craftsmen and traders are therefore formulated on the pages of their press, or the central periodical of the provincial organization, the weekly Hlásnik. Their reflection shows that in its basic features the agenda of Slovak small traders was identical to the intentions of their Czech colleagues (protection from big capital, provision of advantageous loans for small traders, reform of the tax system, innovation of the trade licensing code, introduction of old-age and disability insurance, establishment of trade licensing education, etc.), only the emphasis and elaboration with regard to Slovak needs and conditions were new: support for the concept of building professional organizational structures based on the existence of trade licensing associations, trade committees and their provincial headquarters; development of the cooperative movement; optimization of the transport system with emphasis on the road and railway network (Košice-Bohumín railway); priority allocation of state contracts to Slovak small traders; staffing the administrative apparatus in all spheres with Slovak officials, etc. [Hore sa do obecných volieb, 1923; Volby sa určite blížila, 1925]

The Traders' Party's agenda therefore prioritized issues related to the economic and social status of small business owners and formulated demands for changes that would ensure prosperity and stability for the middle class. The aforementioned, albeit narrow view of the development of society, did not mean that the party's leaders and spokespeople avoided formulating positions on sensitive or fundamental issues of national, political and social life in the country. However, the truth is that their frequency on the pages of the party press is still lower than in other political parties. The explanation for this fact is found in the tactics of Mlčoch's party leadership in particular, which wanted to create an image of the party as a subject serving the interests of all middle classes regardless of the political opinions of individuals within or outside its ranks. As if the party wanted to be "on good terms" with everyone and thereby set itself apart from the pillar structure of society. We identify this tactical maneuver, for example, in the different views of the Czech and Slovak parts of the party

on the issue of relations between Czechs and Slovaks and on matters concerning doctrinal and religious issues forming one of the priorities of the First Republic's political events; different positions did not become a cause of discord in the party and the party press essentially suppressed them.

Statements to the effect that there was one "Czechoslovak nation with two branches" penetrated the party periodicals of traders published in the Czech lands to a very limited extent, for example, we know that they were already heard at the founding congress of the Slovak organization in November 1920 and then also at the Brno party congress in 1923 from K. Anděl [Slovenské řemeslnictvo a obchodnictvo se probudilo, 1920; Fildan, 1931]. However, from the beginning of the 1920s, criticism of state and Czech party policy towards Slovakia was given relatively wide space, which sought reasons for the discord in Czech-Slovak relations identified mainly in the ranks of the Slovak People's Party. The Czechoslovak daily wrote: the behavior of Hlinka's party is a reaction to Czech policy, which, with its ruthlessness towards Slovakia, has inflamed "misunderstandings between the two fraternal branches." Initially, Czechs were welcomed in Slovakia, "but now we see hatred due to looting, rape and other excesses." [Hlinka, 1919]. In one year, the government made so many mistakes in Slovakia that it will take at least ten years to correct them. We must pursue a sensible policy towards Slovakia "so that we do not raise traitorous Hlinkas". People must be instilled with love for the Czechoslovak Republic. Of course, this cannot be achieved through Karabáč or Dykov chauvinism [Z republiky, 1920]. In the mid-1920s, the party leader Mlčoch declared that the Slovak question is an economic and social problem. By solving it, we will erase the Czech-Slovak question. The cure for discontent and emigration is to give Slovaks work in Slovakia. In the cultural direction, we need to focus on the Slovak identity and culture, not to provoke the people with anti-religious agitations, and to use the natural talent and art of the Slovak people for the revival of our national art, and eventually to use it in crafts and industry. We will solve the differences in the field of Czech-Slovak understanding by ourselves and calmly. Let's not call those who have hunger and poverty querulants. They are not Czech masters and Slovak subjects [Minister Mlčoch o slovenskej otázke, 1926].

The Slovak regional organization of the Traders' Party, immediately after joining the Czech organization, sharply defined itself against the idea of Czechoslovakism [Rychlík, 1993, 2002, 2017; Galandauer]. It described the claim that there is one Czechoslovak nation with two branches and two languages as a confusing and ridiculous fact, which, thanks to the fact that it is proclaimed on the official stage, discredits the country in the world. Until 1918, Slovaks were perceived as a separate tribe among the Slavs and as such they also entered Czechoslovakia. From a political point of view, Czechs and Slovaks do form one common state and we must be united if we want to maintain it, but the concept of Czechoslovak, just like Czech-Russian or Czech-Polish, is purely comical. Siamese twins are attached to each other without taste and their own will. It is a phenomenon that is not only unhealthy, imperfect, but also unnatural. The claim that Slovaks need to be Czechized so that they become

Czechoslovak in the next generation is the most fatal mistake [Hubocký, 1924].

Likewise, immediately upon the creation of the national party organization, its Slovak elites, in an addendum to the party agenda of 14 November 1920, endorsed the idea of Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic. Its acceptance is justified in the congress resolution: we demand the creation of a self-government of the country that will enable Slovaks to maintain their own identity, "so that every loyal Slovak, regardless of profession, can apply himself throughout Slovakia, so that agitation directed against Czechoslovak unity and its efforts is thereby made impossible. To establish the equality of Czechs and Slovaks". It was essential, however, that the congress postponed the implementation of the demand for Slovak autonomy to the future, not today or tomorrow [Slovenská samospráva, 1921]. Michal J. Hubocký justified this position in 1923 on the pages of Hlásnik with the following words, "It will be better to demand and stand up for a gradual autonomy, than in a fevered mood to chase something that would do nothing for the nation, only to help some glory-worshipping individuals to satisfy their ambition and to wealth". Autonomy of a politically underdeveloped, economically weak nation cannot by itself become salvation and a cure for its wounds from which it is bleeding... "Although the spokespersons of the Slovak party organization did not publish a specific idea of the form of autonomy, they knew one thing that it could not take the form that some extremists of Hlinka's party want to imprint on it: "Yes, we are not autonomists of the same style as they are, which is the freedom of our Slovak nation of Hekuba [the mythological queen Hecuba] and even at this price they want to transfer the autonomy, whose spirit would be Tuka!" People of this kind must disappear from Slovakia and the country's politics must be put in the hands of "reliable Slovaks" who "have a Slovak past behind them" [Prečo sú proti nám, 1925] "The Slovak question must be solved [...] not by provoking Czechs. The Slovak question is a question of two brothers, to be solved fraternally and in harmony." The idea of Slovak autonomy would be appealing to every conscious Slovak if it were not for the exponents of the Hungarian regime and Slovak Hungarians standing behind it. The discussion on the form of administrative reform at the end of the 1920s showed that the Slovak provincial party organization preferred the county system to the provincial system. It considered it a centuries-old form of administration that, thanks to the existence of three instances, gave small traders more certainty than the untested provincial authorities. It did not agree with the claim that the provincial system was the answer to the call for Slovak autonomy, because the idea itself could supposedly be implemented even under the conditions of the county system [Nové župy, 1922; Zemská samospráva, 1927; Naša strana a reforma verejnej správy, 1927].

Organizational development of the provincial organization

The Slovak provincial organization of the Traders' Party took over not only the party-wide agenda, but also the organizational rules. Its organizational development was relatively slow, the first district organizations were established only at the turn of the 1930s. Initially, the party agenda was handled by the central secretariat in Turčianský

Sv. Martin, where the headquarters of the provincial organization was located, which was assisted from the mid-1920s by the county secretariats in Košice (established in 1926 with a full-time secretary) and in Bratislava (from January 1927). Local organizations in the early 1920s were established mainly in southwestern and central Slovakia. The party penetrated the east of the country to a greater extent only from the late 1920s, and from its center in Košice it also directed the activities of party organizations emerging in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The ground for the establishment of organizations in the territory of western Slovakia was prepared by the activities of the Slovak Craftsmen's (from 1924 also Merchants') Union, founded in Turčianský Sv. Martin in 1919 [Živnostenské hnutí na Slovensku, 1920; Slovenská remeselnícka jednota, 1923; Valné zhromaždenie, 1923; Päť rokov, 1924]. It was a non-political trade union structure with its own press in the form of the Martin fortnightly newspaper Slovenský remeselník a obchodník (in English: Slovak Craftsman and Merchant) (1919 – 1941), which had its branches in a number of urban and rural locations and was involved in the establishment of trade associations and trade committees of Slovak traders and merchants and recruited them for the development of the professional self-help movement (trade production, consumer and building cooperatives and savings banks). This linking and interweaving of the activities of both entities, which can be described as a characteristic feature of the building of the party organization in Slovakia throughout its existence, was made possible by the fact that a number of members of the provincial central executive committee of the party simultaneously held leading positions in the unit e.g., Igor Thurzo (1884 – 1926), Gustáv Šimko (1860 – 1937), Ján Hlavaj (1879 – 1963), M. Schmidt, etc. Similarly, since the mid-1920s, the party elites sought to penetrate the leadership of the Trade and Trade Union for Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Provincial Union of Trade Unions, the Provincial Union of Trade Unions and Unions, the Union of Trade Union Credit Unions and Cooperatives for Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Provincial Trade Union Council for Slovakia, provincial professional unions (e.g., the Provincial Union of Innkeepers), Chambers of Commerce and Industry, etc. The slow pace characterizing the emergence of party organizations was caused not only by the lack of financial resources limiting the expansion of the party apparatus and the scope of the party's agitation activities, primarily its periodical press, but above all by the national or religious composition of this social stratum, which was dominated by Jewish, Hungarian and German small traders.

The Slovak Party Traders' Organization managed to gather in its ranks only a small part of the allegedly more than one hundred thousand Slovak and small traders. A certain breakthrough in the principle of admitting only Slovaks to the party, to which the nationalistically oriented Czech elites adhered relatively strictly, occurred after 1926, when the provincial executive committee resisted permission to admit traders of other nationalities than Slovaks to the organization. In the second half of the 1930s, a county executive committee and party secretariat were established in Nové Zámky [Živnostníci v Nových Zámkoch, 1924; Marek, 1995, p. 71], which managed the activities of party organizations composed of small traders

of Hungarian nationality emerging in the territory of southern Slovakia. Its central figure was a trader from Parkán (today Modrý Kameň) Artur Menczel, who also became a member of the presidium of the provincial executive committee of the party in Slovakia. The acceptance of members of different nationalities led to an increase in the number of party members in Slovakia, but on the other hand, their coexistence was not without problems and in the second half of the 1930s it resulted in ethnic friction in party organizations in several places (e.g., Bratislava, Košice) [Nespokojenost medzi bratislavskými živnostníkmi, 1937].

Overall, the process of establishing the Traders' Party in Slovakia may be characterized as relatively very gradual, albeit slightly upward. This was also reflected in the fact that we do not have any detailed information about the existence of satellite organizations of the party. From 1926, the Czechoslovak Traders' Academy, headed by J. Liška, was to develop activities in Slovakia. In the 1930s, several of its branches were established. One of the headquarters of the trade union Headquarters of the Czechoslovak Commerce operated in Bratislava. We hear only sporadically about the activities of the Purple Legions. We do not yet know anything about the establishment of special women's or youth branches of the party. In mid-June 1937, the first provincial congress of the young generation of the Traders' Party in Slovakia was held in Skalica, at which the organization was represented by Š. Širchich (Chairman).

Press of the provincial party organization

We have already mentioned that the press of the Traders' Party was considered by the newspaper publishers themselves as a "sad chapter" of its existence. The party's central weekly, Hlásnik, published in Turčianský Sv. Martin in 1920 – 1929, was even the private property of M. Schmidt in the initial phase of publication. He edited the periodical between 1919 and 1928 and alternately lent it first to the Slovak Craftsmen's Union and then to the party's executive committee. From 1929, the editorial office was managed by Senator B. Kianička. The paper was heavily in debt, which is why we also register several interruptions in its publication. It had few subscribers (most of whom didn't pay) and readers, and it was not possible to use financial resources from membership fees to cover costs, since most party members in Slovakia did not pay them. In 1929, the publication of the newspaper had to be stopped and the provincial executive committee was unable to replace Hlásnik. Apparently, episodically, in the early 1930s (1934), a mutation of the Prague National Center was published in Bratislava under the title Slovak Center. In 1925 – 1926, the party's county executive committee in Nitra attempted to launch a regional weekly called Obrana remeselníctva a obchodníctva na Slovensku (in English: Defense of Crafts and Commerce in Slovakia). The local party organization in western Slovakia in Holič also published the weekly Hlásateľ stredného stavu (in English: Announcer of the middle state) in 1928 – 1929 [Marek, 1999b; Encyklopédia Slovenska, 6, p. 659].

Problems of managing a provincial organization

A look into the internal party life of the provincial organization, which in 1927 had 12,365 members associated in 56 organizations, confirms the dominant role of the Martin executive committee in the management of

the party in Slovakia, which initially relied on local craftsmen and merchants [Slovenské remeslníctvo a obchodníctvo se probudilo, 1920] and in fact only from the first Slovak provincial party congress (1927) did officials from other areas, mainly from the Bratislava and Košice party centers, significantly penetrate its composition [Velkolepý sjezd, 1927; Veľkolepý zemský sjezd, 1927]. This body of more than thirty members was renewed three times, always after provincial congresses. From the pleiad of its members, we can only point out selected individuals.

The position of Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee was held in the years 1920–1938 by B. Kianička, who was also the only representative of Slovaks in the Prague party leadership and from 1930 served as third Vice-Chairman of the First Elected National Executive Committee of ČŽOSS. He trained as a butcher and sausage maker and from the parliamentary elections in 1925 until his death (1938) he served in the National Assembly as a senator. The organizational work of the member of the executive committee and owner of a stove factory, I. Thurzo, who was elected mayor of Martin in 1921, was of great importance for the establishment of the party in the initial phase of its existence. The third key figure standing at the cradle of the provincial organization is represented by the First Secretary of the party M. Schmidt. He came from a patriotically passionate family that was traditionally involved in the national, economic, educational and cultural work. He trained as a baker, but he worked primarily as a book publisher and editor.

The connection between the party and the class movement was guaranteed by another prominent figure among the members of the executive committee, the builder J. Hlavaj. We cannot forget the figure of the Martin saddler and upholsterer G. Šimek, whose contributions to the establishment of the Martin centre of the trades movement and the professional structures were recognized by his colleagues in 1931 by appointing him Honorary Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee of the ČŽOSS in Slovakia [Velkolepá manifestace, 1931]. From the end of the 1920s, when he became a member of parliament (in 1929–1939), J. Liška asserted himself in the leadership of the provincial executive committee as its Vice-Chairman (in 1931–1938). After Kianička's death, he took over the position of provincial chairman and in 1938, after the signing of the Žilina Agreement, he transferred the party to Hlinka's People's Party – the Party of Slovak National Unity [Živnostníci, obchodníci, podnikatelé!, 1938; Čarnogurský, p. 126]. Kianiček's mandate in the Senate was taken over by Juraj Vyskočil (1881–1951), a businessman, brewery and soda factory owner, and long-time mayor of Trnava from 1922–1927 and 1931–1938. Like Liška, he joined the Hlinka People's Party in December 1938. Among the functionaries of the Košice party center, Milan Maxoň (1890–1943), Director of the Slovak Bank branch, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Mayor of Košice in the 1930s (between 1933 and 1938, with a pause), made a significant impact. His name is associated with one of the largest internal party crises that the party went through in its history. Disputes with the then party Chairman J.

V. Najman between 1935 and 1937, caused, among other things, by also his omission in filling the parliamentary mandate in the second round of parliamentary elections, [Slovenská živnostenská strana?, 1935] resulted not only in his expulsion from the party and temporary departure from the position of mayor of the city, but also in national discord within the party in the east and at Košice city hall.

The entry of the provincial organization into the political system

A probe into the issue of the provincial organization's involvement in the political system shows that the organization entered it most significantly through municipal, district, county, provincial and parliamentary elections. We have already mentioned the results of the last two elsewhere in this commentary. It first entered the competition between political parties in the municipal elections of 1923. The organization's leadership evaluated the gain of about a hundred mandates throughout Slovakia as a failure. The fact is that over the years the party's gains in municipal elections grew (for example, in 1927 it won 9098 votes), but rather from a general point of view, otherwise it had an average of two to three representatives in municipal committees (far from all). In the county elections of 1923, the party fielded candidates in only two of the six counties (in Považská and Bratislava). The number of votes received (2325–2729) was not enough to gain an elected mandate, and the traders had two representatives appointed by the government (J. Hlavaj and the factory owner, former member of the Revolutionary National Assembly Milan Žuffa).

The provincial organization first participated in parliamentary elections in 1925 with high hopes in six electoral districts for the Chamber of Deputies and in three for the Senate. Its expectations were not fulfilled, the number of votes cast did not correspond to its wishes, and moreover, the post-election disillusionment among the elites was so great that the provincial executive committee officially considered the alternative of secession from ČŽOSS. It seemed to the hotheads that the Slovak organization of the party had been "cheated" by the Czechs in contrast to the promises, because instead of the mandate of a deputy and senator in the second round of voting, it only received the post of senator, which they considered completely inadequate. [Dúfali sme..., 1925] After the parliamentary elections in 1929 and 1935, the provincial organization had one of its members in each of the representative bodies. Although the number of votes cast in favor of the party in Slovakia had an upward trend, the overall result was never enough to win a mandate in the first round of elections. Essentially the same applied to provincial elections, and the party won representatives through government appointment (1928 J. Liška; 1935 businessman Ľudovít Mayer); the exception of the election of Pavol Ušiak, a railway station restaurateur in Košice, in 1935 only confirms the rule (Ušiak, as a substitute for the deceased M. Schmidt, had already been a member of the council in 1934–1935). In the elections to district councils in 1928, the party won 13 mandates in Slovakia (i.e., 1.24%) and was the tenth most successful among the parties.

1. Election results of ČŽOSS in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the National Socialist Party in the years 1920–1935 on a nationwide scale. The table shows the number of votes cast for the party on a nationwide scale in absolute numbers and in percentages, the number of mandates obtained and the ranking among the parties in terms of winning votes first for the Chamber of Deputies (PS) and then for the Senate

Rok	PS	v %	mandáty	Pořadí	Senát	v %	mandáty	Pořadí
1920	122 813	2,89	6	14	107 674	2,06	3	8
1925	286 058	4,1	13	10	257 171	4,22	6	1
1929	291 209	3,9	12	11	274 085	4,3	6	11
1935	495 726	5,9	17	9	393 732	5,41	8	9

2. Election results for the Chamber of Deputies in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the years 1920 - 1935 in absolute numbers and in percentages

Rok	Čechy	v %	Morava a Slezsko	v %	Slovensko	v %	pořadí na Slov.	Podkarpatská Rus	v %
1920	80 757	3,62	42 056	2,91	0	0	0	0	0
1925	194 162	9,3	80 320	7,7	11 574	1,2		0	0
1929	176 188	4,56	77 539	4,25	30 134	2,1	10	7 348	2,76
1935	274 673	6,43	122 703	6,06	42 002	2,58	7	8 677	2,8

3. Election results for the Senate in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the years 1920 - 1935 in absolute numbers and in percentages

Rok	Čechy	v %	Morava a Slezsko	v %	Slovensko	v %	Podkarpatská Rus	v %
1920	72 779	3,8	34 895	4,1	0	0	0	0
1925	173 506	9,5	72 433	8,1	11 232	1,4	0	0
1929	157 705	7,8	68 307	6,8	39 197	4,4	8 876	5,4
1935	241 718		104 934		37 726		9 354	

4. Results of the provincial elections in 1928

Země	počet získaných hlasů	v %	počet zastupitelů zvolených	v %	počet zastupitelů jmenovaných
Čechy	162 213	4,6	4	5	3
Morava a Slezsko	68 729	4,2	2	5	1
Slovensko	15 489	1,2	0	0	1
Podkarpatská Rus	11 465	4,7	1	8,3	1
Celkem	257 596	3,8	7	4,2	6

5. Results of the provincial elections in 1935

Země	počet získaných hlasů	v %	počet zastupitelů zvolených	počet zastupitelů jmenovaných
Čechy	254 086	6,35	5	3
Morava a Slezsko	116 032	6,14	3	2
Slovensko	31 641	2,09	1	1
Podkarpatská Rus	3 703	1,24	0	0
Celkem	405 462		9	6

Research conclusions. The subject of our interest was the evocation of the history of the provincial organization of ČŽOSS in Slovakia. Its entry into the provincial party-political system was delayed, given the fact that all political parties operating in Slovakia showed interest in the organizational support of small traders, but on the other hand, we evaluate the decision of its elites to form a provincial faction of the national party in conditions where there was no Slovak tradition of a trade union political movement and a network of state-ordered and voluntarily

created organizations was absent. The building of the provincial organization was influenced by several factors, which, considering the context of the current state and development of Slovak interwar society, cannot be evaluated as completely unambiguously favorable. The party's construction was managed from the Martin Center, whose aim was to deal with the great deficit of the trades movement in Slovakia, which was the absence of organizational structures (trades associations, business committees and their higher organizational units -

provincial unions) resulting from the dictation of the Trades Act. The protagonists linked these activities with agitation work in favor of the politicization of the trades movement, which can be evaluated as a positive, since a number of support structures for the establishment of party organizations were created.

At the same time, however, it is impossible not to see that the relatively small group of organizers could not fully cope with both demanding tasks without the help of a larger professional apparatus, for the creation of which there was a lack of financial resources. The provincial organization of the party was built under the influence of the Prague headquarters on the Slovak (Czechoslovak) national principle. Small traders of Hungarian and Jewish origin thereby remained outside its interests, which, considering the national composition and economic potential of members of this social class in Slovakia, definitely weakened the party. However, overcoming this tendency by the will of the Slovak leadership of the organization resulted in the emergence of national frictions.

One of the essential motives for the fusion of the political structures of Slovak and Czech tradesmen and merchants was the expectation of help for Slovaks from a more advanced Czech environment. However, these assumptions were not fully fulfilled. There can be no doubt about the moral and methodological help and support of the Czech branch of the party to the Slovak provincial organization, although complaints in the press indicate the existence of reserves. However, Slovak officials had the

idea that the Prague headquarters would also distribute financial subsidies to Slovakia in an amount that would allow covering a significant part of the needs of the provincial component of the party. This assumption was not confirmed in practice, so the party in Slovakia was underfunded in the long term, and in addition suffered from a very poor payment morale of its membership base; the vast majority of party members did not pay membership fees. The Prague party leadership cannot be blamed for its attitude, because the funds obtained were barely enough to cover the needs arising in the Czech lands. The lack of funds significantly limited the development of the party's activities in Slovakia.

Although over time we reflect on the gradual, moderate expansion of the size of the party's membership base and its electorate, which was interrupted by the events of the late 1930s and World War II, the limit to its growth was set by the fact that it was unable to address a larger mass of traders with its class agenda and policy. Most of them remained politically indifferent, and those who wanted to get involved politically remained fragmented and mostly headed for Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, or among the Hungarian Christian Socials, in the cities to the national democratic and in the countryside to the agrarian political formations. ČŽOSS was not able to compete with these forces in Slovakia and remained only a marginal political force, successful more locally than on a national scale. Therefore, further research into its history should focus on studying the situation in selected regions.

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ДО ІСТОРІЇ ЗЕМСЬКОЇ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКОЇ ПІДПРИЄМНИЦЬКО-ТОРГОВЕЛЬНОЇ ПАРТІЇ СЕРЕДНЬОГО КЛАСУ В СЛОВАЧЧИНІ У 1920 – 1938 РОКАХ

Чехословацька підприємницько-торговельна партія середнього класу в 1918 – 1938 роках була невіддільною частиною партійно-політичної системи Першої Чехословацької Республіки. У чеському середовищі вона стала продовженням попередніх спроб, коли з 90-х років XIX століття у Богемії та Моравії поступово й окремо виникло кілька політичних партій, які, однак, не набули ваги в політичному житті через свою маргінальність. Велику конкуренцію для них становила широка та диференційована система неполітичних станових організацій, здатних задовольнити більшість економічних інтересів і потреб своїх членів, а також мережа т. зв. сателітних організацій, які пропонували підприємцям і комерсантам можливість задовольнити їхні політичні амбіції, афілійовані станові організації засновували всі релевантні політичні партії. Тому після закінчення Першої світової війни та створення незалежної Чехословацької Республіки політичні партії підприємців і комерсантів об'єдналися в одну організаційну структуру з метою створення сильного та впливового політичного утворення. Партія згуртувалась і водночас розширила свою діяльність на територію Словаччини та поступово і Підкарпатської Русі. Оскільки згадане конкурентне середовище, в якому вона діяла до війни, після 1918 року було, в принципі, тим самим, партія і в роки Першої Республіки залишалася амбітним, але відносно невеликим політичним угрупованням без значного політичного впливу. З іншого боку, підприємницька партія з 1925 року входила до складу всіх урядових коаліцій (за винятком 1932 – 1935 років) і своєю політикою сприяла зміцненню демократичного характеру державного режиму, тому її роль не можна недооцінювати. Представлене дослідження зосереджується на відтворенні діяльності словацької земської організації цієї партії. Вона виникла і сформувалася після парламентських виборів 1920 року. Словацькі підприємці та комерсанти тоді вирішили відмовитися від спільних дій зі Словацькою національною та селянською партією і об'єдналися з Чехословацькою торговельно-підприємницькою партією, щоб створити одну організацію. Вони перейняли її програму та організаційні положення і обрали власний земський виконавчий комітет. Тож спосіб формування земського партійного осередку відбився на тому, що словацька партійна фракція, на відміну від усіх (чехословацьких) політичних партій, що діяли в національному масштабі, зберегла відносно високий ступінь автономії та незалежності від штабу в управлінні своїми структурами, не маючи, однак, жодних принципових чи нездоланих розбіжностей між керівництвом партії та земської організації. Празький штаб партії толерував інший погляд земської організації як на проблему автономії Словаччини, так і на чехословакізм, вирішення національного питання в Чехословаччині, а також певною мірою на релігійні питання. В межах партійно-політичної системи Словаччини земський осередок Чехословацької підприємницько-торговельної партії середнього класу (ČŽOSS) не набув значного впливу. Причини цього можуть полягати передусім у нездатності витримати конкуренцію з боку Глінкової словацької народної партії, Словацької національної партії та земської фракції націонал-демократів, які завдяки кращому фінансовому становищу не тільки мали більш розгалужений і гнучкий апарат, що вів ефективнішу агітаційну та організаційну діяльність, але й могли запропонувати підприємцям і комерсантам переважно матеріальні пільги. Має значення і прохолодніше ставлення до ключової проблеми автономії країни. Крім того, треба пам'ятати, що словацькі представники цієї соціальної верстви зіштовхувалися з протистоянням інтересів економічно відносно сильніших угорських, єврейських або навіть німецьких колег.

Ключові слова: Чехословаччина, політична партія, середній клас, автономія, преса.

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