

SLOVAK SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE POLITICAL ORDER OF THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC (1918 – 1939)

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The Slovak provincial organisation of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party was formed in 1918, evolving out of its pre-war existence as an autonomous section of Hungarian Social Democracy. Its integration into the organisational structures of the Czech Social Democratic Party reflected both long-standing cooperation between the two movements since the late nineteenth century and the political realities created by the establishment of the Czechoslovak state. This realignment was framed by the doctrine of Czechoslovakism, which postulated the existence of a unified Czechoslovak nation and functioned as an integrative response to ethnic nationalism and centrifugal tendencies within a multinational polity. In the early years of the Republic, Slovak Social Democrats aligned themselves closely with the defence of Czechoslovak state unity, together with the Agrarian Party and the Czechoslovak National Socialists. Although this stance initially proved electorally advantageous – most notably in the parliamentary elections of 1920 – it soon became a political liability. As Slovak political life matured, electoral support increasingly shifted towards autonomist programmes, articulated most effectively by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. As a result, Slovak Social Democracy experienced a sustained decline in electoral support, descending from a leading political force to a marginal, albeit persistent, presence within the party system. This trajectory was further exacerbated by an internal party crisis in the early 1920s, when the secession of radical socialist factions and the establishment of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia significantly weakened the party's organisational base. The resulting fragility constrained its ability to translate electoral representation into durable influence within executive office, despite the prominence of several individual figures at the national level. The party's final political engagements unfolded against the backdrop of the Munich crisis of 1938, when its leadership participated in negotiations over Slovak autonomy. Its initial refusal to endorse the Žilina Agreement proved short-lived; the subsequent reversal, however, failed to prevent the party's dissolution. During the Second World War, former Social Democratic activists were relegated to clandestine political activity. Beyond formal politics, Slovak Social Democrats sought to shape public discourse through the party press and affiliated organisations. Persistent financial constraints, however, rendered these initiatives structurally fragile, resulting in a volatile landscape of short-lived periodicals at provincial and local levels. In contrast to the Czech lands – where dense networks of affiliated organisations enhanced Social Democratic mobilisation – the Slovak organisation remained comparatively under-institutionalised. This dimension of Social Democratic activity in Slovakia has thus far received only limited attention in the historiography.

Keywords: Slovakia, party politics, Social Democracy, Czechoslovakism, autonomism.

Formulation of the Issue. Compared with other political parties operating within democratic party-political systems in Slovakia (1918 – 1938, 1945 – 1948), the history of the Slovak Social Democratic Party belongs among those that have been relatively well researched [Šikora, 1996; Lipták & Ruman, 1990, 1992, 1996; Malíš & Marek, 2025]. This assessment applies both to the quantity and the quality of historiographical reflections on the party's past. It is further reinforced by the fact that the party's formative period – during the constitutional incorporation of the territory of present-day Slovakia into the Habsburg Empire – as well as the years in which, following the ban on its activities in 1938, it operated illegally, have also been addressed at a solid scholarly level [Hapák; Fremal].

The sustained interest of historians and political scientists in social democracy stems primarily from the importance of the party in the modern history of Slovakia from the late nineteenth to the twentieth century. As one of

the oldest and most traditional political actors in the country, it functioned essentially as a corporative party of the working class with internationalist roots. It played a significant role in the emancipation of the proletariat and in addressing the social question generated by the emergence of industrial society. Within the party, decisive processes of ideological and political differentiation unfolded at the turn of the 1910s and 1920s, culminating in the formation of the Communist Party. During the First Republic, social democracy ranked among the backbone actors of both the party-political system and the broader political order. It served as a pillar of the democratic regime, defended the integrity of the state against destabilising forces, and promoted the principles of social and national equality and justice. Alongside the Agrarian Party and the National Socialists, it was – both in Slovakia and in Czechoslovakia as a whole – among the most consistent advocates of Czechoslovakism. The party also included figures who played a significant role in the

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political history of the First Republic, notably Ivan Markovič (1888 – 1944) and Ivan Dérer (1884 – 1973). For these reasons, the history of the Slovak provincial organisation of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party in the interwar period remains a subject deserving continued scholarly attention.

Study Objectives. A review of existing historiography suggests that the conditions for producing a comprehensive evaluative synthesis – one that would analyse all spheres of internal party life while simultaneously capturing the party's conduct within the broader political system – have not yet fully matured. Research remains dominated by analytically focused studies. Consequently, further work should continue to identify partial themes that have received insufficient attention, while also developing case studies capable of synthesising knowledge about individual spheres of party activity. Such efforts may serve as building blocks for a future monographic treatment. The present study therefore aims to systematise and summarise existing findings concerning the forms through which the Slovak provincial organisation of the party intervened in the political and party-political system, and to outline the fundamental characteristics of its political behaviour.

Analysis of sources and literature. As noted above, among the political parties operating at the nationwide level during the years of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the Social Democrats rank (alongside the Agrarians and the Communists) among those political actors whose history Slovak – and to some extent also Czech – historiography has addressed most frequently. Because the party represented an undesirable competitor to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) in the eyes of communist historiography of the 1950s to the 1980s – a fact borne out in practice by the enforced merger of the two parties initiated and implemented by the Communists and their supporters – historians largely avoided the topic, or else approached it primarily as the cradle from which the Communist Party had emerged. Their perspective was naturally biased and critical, subordinated to the official interpretative framework of the history of the workers' and communist movement. The situation changed only after the shift in the political climate in Slovakia and the Czech lands in the early 1990s, following the so-called „Velvet Revolution“, which initiated a return to the construction of a democratic political regime. Historians were then afforded the opportunity to remedy the deficits in research on the Social Democratic Party. One product of this wave was the publication of what remains the most significant edited volume devoted to the history of social democracy in Slovakia [Sikora, 1996]. It contains seminal

contributions by leading Slovak historians (e.g. Marián Hronský, Xénia Šuchová, Peter Zelenák, Ladislav Ruman, Stanislav Sikora, among others) reflecting on the party's activities during the period under consideration. Particularly valuable are the analytical studies by Ladislav Ruman [Ruman, 1990, 1992], which focus primarily on issues of internal party development. A synthetic overview of the Slovak provincial organisation is provided by the handbook *Politické strany na Slovensku 1860–1989*, edited by Lubomír Lipták [Lipták, 1992]. In the absence of extensive archival collections offering fundamental information on the topic, printed sources constitute a valuable body of evidence. These include, first, the regularly published party press (listed in our study, with the exception of newspapers issued by trade union organisations), which has so far been underutilised by researchers, and, second, authored works produced by prominent party politicians such as Ivan Dérer [Dérer, 1935, 1938, 1946]. Additional sources of information used are listed in the concluding inventory of sources and literature appended to this article.

Research results. The Slovak territorial organisation of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (ČSDSD) entered the party-political and political system of the First Czechoslovak Republic primarily through elections held at both the national and regional levels (county/territorial, district, municipal), through its periodical press, and also via affiliated (so-called satellite) organisations.

1. Electoral Results of the Slovak Social Democrats

In analysing electoral performance, this section focuses on the results achieved in elections to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the National Assembly, as well as to the Slovak Territorial Assembly. These electoral arenas are regarded as the most relevant indicators of the party's political standing and its capacity to participate in executive power. The overall position of the Slovak Social Democrats can be most clearly assessed through a synoptic presentation of empirical data summarising their electoral performance in parliamentary elections between 1920 and 1935. The table below presents the number of votes cast for the party in Slovakia in absolute figures and percentages, the number of seats obtained in both chambers of parliament, and the ranking of the Slovak provincial organisation in competition with other political parties. The data are drawn from the official compilation published by the State Statistical Office in Prague [Výsledky parlamentních voleb, 2008].

| Year of election | Votes obtained for the Chamber of Deputies | Seats in the Chamber of Deputies | Votes obtained for the Senate | Seats in the Senate | Ranking among parties in the Chamber of Deputies | Ranking in the Senate |
|------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1920 | 510 341 | 21 | 497 981 | 12 | 1st place | 1st position |
| 1925 | 60 635 | 2 | 52 104 | 2 | 6th place | 6th position |
| 1929 | 135 506 | 4 | 121 971 | 4 | 5th place | 5th position |
| 1935 | 184 389 | 7 | 163 732 | 3 | 5th place | 5th position |

The first parliamentary elections in the newly established republic, held in 1920, were won by the Social

Democrats. At the nationwide level, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party obtained 25.7 per cent

of all votes cast (a total of 1,466,958 voters), securing 74 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 41 seats in the Senate. Within the interwar period, this represented a record electoral result [Národní shromáždění, 1928, pp. 123–190; Dérer, 1946, p. 247; Šuchová, 2004, pp. 553–554]. The party thus assumed a leading position not only within the Czechoslovak party system as a whole, but also in Slovakia. This success was undoubtedly influenced by the strong post-war revolutionary wave that swept across Czechoslovakia and much of Europe. Societies exhausted by the war were imbued with high expectations of rapid social and political change that, in reality, could not yet be fulfilled. The Social Democrats benefited from intensive agitation that capitalised on widespread social frustration and disillusionment. Their strongest results in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies were recorded in electoral districts 17 (Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš), 20 (Košice), and 15 (Trnava); in the Košice district, the party even obtained 73.9 per cent of the votes cast. By contrast, the weakest outcome was registered in district 16 (Nové Zámky).

The second parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia, held on 15 November 1925, were won in Slovakia by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which secured almost 35 per cent of the votes cast [Národní shromáždění, 1928, pp. 325–328; Šuchová, 2004, pp. 559–560]. The Social Democrats suffered a severe defeat both in Slovakia and nationwide, falling from first to sixth place in the overall ranking. The principal cause lay in a deep intra-party crisis. The party had effectively split into two factions over attitudes towards communist ideology. Supporters of the radical wing initially formed a de facto „shadow party”, the so-called Marxist Left, which under the influence of the Communist International was transformed in 1921 into the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [Bartlová, p. 238; Kocian, Marek, Rákosník, pp. 25–252].

The „old“ Social Democrats, who remained a numerical minority, managed to preserve the basic organisational structures of the party. However, they lost not only their mass membership base but also a significant number of experienced organisers and agitators. This inevitably affected both the preparation and the course of the election campaign. The most dramatic loss of votes in the Chamber of Deputies occurred in eastern Slovakia,

particularly in the Košice and Prešov electoral districts. In Prešov, for example, only 2,901 votes were cast for the party, representing merely 1 per cent of the votes in the district. Relatively stronger support was recorded in the districts of Nové Zámky (including Bratislava), Trnava, and Banská Bystrica.

Despite gradual consolidation in the subsequent years and a renewed growth in membership and electoral support, the party remained a relatively minor political force in eastern Czechoslovakia until the end of the First Republic. It lagged behind not only Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, but also the Republican (Agrarian) Party, the Hungarian Christian Socials, and the Communists. It is reasonable to assume that the party's persistent adherence to the programme of Czechoslovakism contributed to this marginalisation, as this concept increasingly encountered resistance across all social strata of Slovak society amid processes of political radicalisation and national mobilisation [Národní shromáždění, 1938, pp. 79–86, 179–185; Šuchová, 2004, pp. 564–574].

Territorial elections held in Slovakia in 1928 and 1935 largely confirmed the results achieved in parliamentary elections [Šuchová, 2004, pp. 581–590]. This occurred despite efforts by the provincial party leadership to strengthen its position through joint candidate lists with selected partner parties. In the 1928 elections, the party fielded candidates in 53 constituencies; in 16 cases it cooperated with the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, in four cases with National Socialists and Communists, and in another four cases exclusively with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The results are summarised in the table below, which presents the number of votes obtained in absolute figures and percentages, as well as the total number of seats won – both elected and appointed by the government. Even in these elections, the party's results lagged behind those of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (the autonomist bloc), the Republicans, the Hungarian and German minority parties, and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The 1935 elections, however, indicate a certain consolidation of the party following its near disintegration in the early 1920s and suggest a modest revival during the 1930s.

| Year of election | Votes obtained | Total seats | Elected | Appointed |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|---------|-----------|
| 1928 | 96 901 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| 1935 | 148 984 | 8 | 4 | 3 (4) |

We shall now reflect on the results of the elections from the perspective of their intra-party personnel consequences. With regard to the elections of 1920, it may be stated that the delegation of Slovak Social Democrats in parliament was not only quantitatively substantial, but that among the deputies and senators – predominantly Slovaks from a national perspective, alongside several Czechs – we find a number of relatively capable politicians. Some of them participated in shaping its profile throughout the entire interwar period. Seats in the Chamber of Deputies were obtained, for example, by several men who had stood at the origins of the party before the war and after the establishment of the republic, such as Emanuel Lehocký [Poláčková, p. 11], Ivan Dérer [Poláčková, p. 26], Ivan Markovič, and Ján Pocisk. Among the representatives were

the educators Anna Sychravová (1873 – 1925) and Daniel Ertl (1886 – 1962), a member of the Provincial Executive Committee and a future mayor of Zvolen. Further deputies included officials of satellite organisations: the chairman of the Metalworkers' Union group, Vincenc Čunderlík (1873 – ?), from Tisovec, and the trade union official Štefan Tadolánek (1884 – 1943). Journalists and individuals with literary inclinations were also strongly represented: the editor and later minister in the Šrámek governments-in-exile Ján Bečko (1889 – 1972), the editor of *Robotnícke noviny* Ferdinand Benda (1880 – 1952), the editor, proletarian poet, and also mayor of Žilina Andrej Hvizdák (1883 – 1948), and the editor and publisher of *Trnavský kraj* Andrej Kubál (1880 – 1957). This list also includes members of the Marxist left who, after the establishment of

the faction of the Third International, left the Social Democrats and later found application among the Communists as well. From this group, one may name the long-serving pre-war official Karol Svetlík Sr. (1878 – ?), secretary of the Provincial Trade Union Council working in Ružomberok. He was among the most active founders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) in Slovakia and remained among the Communists until 1927. An active participant in the founding congress in Lubochňa was also the railway worker based in Vrútky, Štefan Daruľa (1888 – 1951), who had already been engaged among the Social Democrats before the war. Worthy of mention is also the strongly left-oriented Herrmann Taussig (1878 – 1961). He significantly influenced the process of ideological differentiation within the Social Democratic Party and, in the course of holding his mandate, transferred to the KSČ. Within that party, he left behind the legacy of a controversial figure.

Within the Social Democratic Senate caucus, Slovak voters were represented by twelve politicians, including the Banská Bystrica inspector Juraj Babka (1868 – 1942), the smallholder from Mošovce Ján Blaho (1873 – ?), the pre-war party activist and Košice printer Alexander Dráb (1873 – 1952), the painter Karol Endlicher (1873 – ?) residing in Trnava, the founder and editor of *Hlas ľudu* in Banská Bystrica Václav Chlumecký (1861 – 1944), party secretary Jozef Cholek (1873 – 1928), the Žilina shoemaker Štefan Kada (1865 – 1949), the farmer from Vyšný Svidník and Orthodox Church activist Jurko Lažo (1867 – 1929) [Švorc], the Prešov railway worker Theodor Matuščák (1872 – 1942), the smallholder Pavol Mudroch (1872 – 1950), the civil servant František Poliak (1872 – 1933), and the Bratislava editor František Zimák (1872 – 1940). At least three of these figures – Dráb, Chlumecký, and Matuščák – later joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

The electoral defeat of 1925 had a lasting impact on the composition of Slovak Social Democratic deputies and senators throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In the Chamber of Deputies, the provincial organisation was represented until 1939 solely by Ivan Dérer and Ján Bečko [Šuchová, 2004, p. 561]. Following the 1929 elections, Ivan Markovič – Vice-President of the Chamber between 1935 and 1938 – and the former member of the Revolutionary National Assembly Ferdinand Benda (1880–1952) joined them and retained their mandates until 1939 [Národní shromáždění, 1938, pp. 845–848; Šuchová, 2004, p. 567]. After the 1935 elections, the parliamentary group was further expanded by party secretary Ignác Schulcz (1894 – 1954), the chairman of the War Invalids' Association and former Communist deputy (1925 – 1929) Jozef Kopasz (1889 – 1947), and the controversial Uzhhorod teacher Julian Révai (1899 – 1979) [Šuchová, 2004, pp. 573–574]. Révai may be regarded as a leading representative of Carpatho-Rusyn Social Democracy. During the post-Munich crisis, he served as a minister in the autonomous governments of Andrej Brody (Ukr. Brodij) and Augustin Vološin, and in 1939 he became Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of independent Carpathian Ukraine.

Among senators repeatedly elected between 1925 and 1939 were Ján Pocisk (1870 – 1941) and František Zimák. During the 1929 – 1935 term, the Senate also included the

Košice lawyer Zoltán Farkaš (1881 – 1945), who had previously been active in the Slovak Soviet Republic, and the Košice school director Jindřich Netvich (1875 – ?), who retained his mandate until 1939.

The Slovak Territorial Assembly was established following the 1928 elections and consisted of 54 members, two-thirds elected by voters and the remainder appointed by the government from among recognised experts. In the 1928 – 1935 term, Social Democrats were represented by the elected members Rudolf Drahovský – initially a cooperative manager and later mayor of Spišská Nová Ves (1930 – 1938) – the secondary-school professor from Zvolen Ján Nešpor (1891 – 1972), and the editor Michal Korman (1897 – 1957) [Sekanina, p. 527]. Appointed members included the district health insurance director Emanuel Lehocký, who was replaced in 1930 by the Nitra mayor and lawyer Vojtech Szilágy (1881 – 1932). Following Szilágy's premature death, his seat was filled in 1932 by Jozef Kulhánek, head of the Social Department of the Territorial Workers' Insurance Office [Šuchová, 2004, p. 582].

In the 1935 Assembly, Social Democratic representation included, alongside Michal Korman, the typographer Emil Winkler from Trnava, the mayor of Turčiansky Svätý Martin Ján Fraňo (1876 – 1963), and the locksmith Ján Černický from Zvolen. Appointed representatives were the Bratislava secretary Jozef Och, the Žilina cooperative union secretary Alojz Březina, and Rudolf Drahovský. As a guest member of the Assembly caucus, the Bratislava lawyer and Zionist activist Július Reisz (1880 – 1976) also participated [Šuchová, 2004, p. 587].

Although Slovak Social Democrats were numerically underrepresented in the highest executive bodies, the party was represented by ambitious and politically capable figures who were able to influence national affairs. Ivan Dérer emerged as a key figure throughout the First Republic. In the second Tusar government (May–September 1920), he served as Minister with Full Powers for Slovak Administration. In 1921 – 1922 and again in 1926, he held the post of Minister for the Unification of Laws and Public Administration. He exerted particularly strong influence in the field of education as Minister of Education and National Enlightenment (1929 – 1932) in the second Udržal government and the first Malypetr government (1932 – 1934). By the mid-1930s, he headed the Ministry of Justice (1934) and remained in office until the end of the First Republic. In 1938, he briefly administered the Ministry of Health and Physical Education.

Ivan Markovič likewise occupied several ministerial positions. From September 1918, he served as a government secretary at the Ministry for Slovak Administration; in 1920 he briefly held the post of Minister of National Defence in the second Tusar government; between 1922 and 1925 he was Minister for the Unification of Laws and Public Administration in Švehla's first government; and from 3 October 1924 he simultaneously acted as Minister of Education and National Enlightenment during the illness of his colleague Rudolf Bechyně [Šuchová, 2004, pp. 598–607].

2. Channels of Entry into the Political System through

the Party Press

Party journalism constituted one of the principal channels through which Slovak Social Democrats sought to enter the political system and to mediate and stabilise their relationship with public life. From an analytical perspective, the party press may be understood as a mechanism of political linkage, connecting party elites, organisational structures, and broader social constituencies. Beyond its immediate informational function, it operated as an instrument of political mobilisation, ideological articulation, and organisational integration. Although a comprehensive qualitative analysis of its content lies beyond the scope of this chapter, a structured quantitative and institutional overview permits analytically relevant observations regarding the party's communicative strategies, organisational capacities, and the structural constraints under which they were implemented.

The comparatively wide range of periodicals issued by the party and by trade union organisations aligned with it – presented here in chronological order – reflects a sustained effort by the provincial party leadership to institutionalise the press as a permanent party component of political activity. From a methodological standpoint, this strategy corresponds to broader patterns observable among mass-based political parties of the early twentieth century, which relied heavily on print media to maintain ideological coherence and organisational cohesion. At the same time, the predominantly short lifespan of many of these titles and the recurrent financial difficulties faced by their editorial boards reveal the structural fragility of this endeavour. Party journalism thus appears less as a stable institutional pillar than as a repeatedly renewed compensatory strategy responding to limited material and organisational resources. The rapid replacement of discontinued newspapers by new titles indicates that the party leadership consistently regarded the press as indispensable to political practice, even when its institutional foundations remained precarious [Beránková, Křivánková, Ruttkay, 1988, pp. 180–196; Dubajová, Šefčák, 1968, 1993; Beránková, Malec, 1976].

Within this fragmented media landscape, *Robotnícke noviny* occupied a central and analytically distinctive position. Published between 1909 and 1938, and appearing as a daily from 1920 onwards, it provided the Slovak Social Democratic movement with a rare element of organisational and communicative continuity. Its editorial leadership during the First Republic included figures who significantly shaped the political and ideological trajectory of Slovak socialism, among them Emanuel Lehocký, Ferdinand Benda, Edmund Borek (1880 – 1924), Michal Korman, and František Zimák (1872 – 1940). The symbolic legitimacy conferred by the support of President Tomáš G. Masaryk and the material backing of Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš further embedded the newspaper within the political culture of the republic. Methodologically, *Robotnícke noviny* may therefore be interpreted as a semi-institutionalised interface between the party and the political system, rather than merely as a partisan instrument of political communication.

By contrast, the press associated with the Marxist Left represented a more fluid and organisationally unstable segment of party-related journalism. The weekly *Hlas*

ľudu, first published on 21 December 1919, served as its principal platform. The repeated relocation of its editorial office – from Banská Bystrica to Vrútky and later to Ostrava-Přívoz – may be analytically interpreted as an indicator of both political realignment and limited infrastructural embeddedness. Following the establishment of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), the paper became its official press organ between 1921 and 1926, thus transforming from a factional socialist outlet into an integrated component of a newly formed party apparatus under the editorship of Václav Chlumecký (1861 – 1944).

The organisational vulnerability of Marxist Left journalism is further illustrated by the brief existence of *Zornička pravdy*. Although formally published by Karol Svetlák Sr., a co-founder of the KSČ, the weekly functioned in practice as the press organ of the Executive Committee of the Sub-Tatra County and eastern Slovakia. Its publication between 18 April and 5 May 1920 exemplifies the dependence of such initiatives on fragile local organisational structures and ad hoc financial arrangements. By contrast, *Pravda chudoby*, first issued in Ružomberok on 15 September 1920, achieved a more substantial reach. Its initial circulation of up to 8,000 copies – facilitated by its dual role as the press organ of the left-wing trade union movement – underscores the importance of organisational overlap between party and trade unions. Following the thirteenth party congress, the newspaper acquired all-Slovak status within Social Democracy and, in May 1921, was elevated together with *Hlas ľudu* to the position of central press organ of Slovak Communists. This transition illustrates the process through which fragmented socialist communication structures were consolidated into a more centralised communist party system.

In the same spirit, the Provincial Executive Committee of the party, following the congress of the right wing in Prague in November 1920, supported the idea of establishing four regional weeklies to be published in all its districts. The periodical *Trnavský kraj* was issued under the auspices of the deputy Andrej Kubál (1880 – 1957) in the Bratislava district. The newspaper *Právo ľudu* was intended for the Trenčín district, and its editor Andrej Hvizdák (1883 – 1948) published it first in Žilina and later in Ružomberok. For the needs of the Banská Bystrica district of the party, the title *Rovnosť ľudu* (1921 – 1922), edited in Zvolen, was published, and for the Košice district the paper *Žiara východu* (1921 – 1922). Regardless of the fact that in all the cases mentioned the publication of the weeklies was financially subsidised by the party headquarters and that the costs were covered using funds from the proceeds of a collection organised by the American–Slovak proletariat in support of the workers' movement in Slovakia, the newspapers ceased publication relatively soon.

The weekly *Bojovník* (1922 – 1924), published in Žilina, represented an attempt to overcome these limitations through greater organisational centralisation. Initially issued by the Provincial Executive Committee and later transferred into the ownership of Ján Pocisko (1870 – 1941), the paper nonetheless failed to escape the structural constraints affecting regional party periodicals. Its collapse once again decentralised responsibility for

press initiatives, shifting it back to local party actors. Subsequent titles, including *Pohronský socialista* (1924–1925) and *Prebudenie*, edited by Member of Parliament Jozef Skotek (1892–1950), further illustrate the experimental and contingent nature of these endeavours. Skotek's later initiatives – *Slovenský pozorovateľ* (1929) and a further attempted periodical in 1933 – underscore the persistent difficulty of sustaining party journalism in the absence of strong institutional backing.

This pattern continued throughout the 1930s, when regional party newspapers existed almost exclusively as short-lived ventures. Publications such as *Ružomerské záujmy* (1935), *Nitriansky kraj* (1935), *Podtatransko* (1936), and the Bratislava-based *Pokrok* (1935) remained episodic. In the case of *Pokrok*, initiated by Member of Parliament Ján Bečko (1889–1972) and published by the Provincial Executive Committee, only fifteen issues reached readers, illustrating the persistent gap between political ambition and organisational capacity.

A partial exception to this general trend was the monthly *Nový hlas*, published in Bratislava from early February 1933 until 1937. Conceived as a review devoted to social and cultural issues, it functioned both as a forum for the Slovak Association of Social Democratic Academics and as a platform for the young oppositional left within the Social Democratic Party. Under the editorial leadership of František M. Komzala (1898–1980) and later Ferdinand Ziegler, the journal marked a shift away from mass-oriented political agitation towards a more reflective and programmatic mode of party discourse. From a methodological standpoint, *Nový hlas* may be interpreted as an attempt to create an intellectual sub-public within the party, complementing rather than replacing traditional forms of party press activity.

Finally, for the sake of completeness, it should be noted that the weekly *Naše právo*, published episodically in Košice in 1933–1934, functioned in practice as a Saturday supplement to *Robotnícke noviny*, rather than as an independent periodical.

3. Satellite Organisations in the Service of a Political Party

In the case of Slovak Social Democrats, the role of affiliated organisations as instruments facilitating the party's penetration of the public sphere remained relatively limited [Soukup, pp. 1597–1625]. This observation holds even though an overall view of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (ČSDSD), with its core in the Czech lands, reveals a traditionally extensive and richly ramified network of satellite organisations, which in the past even served as a source of inspiration for other parties. A plausible explanation for this discrepancy lies in the different social and political character of Slovak society, which was more conducive to the emergence of Catholic-oriented political currents, strongly nationalist in outlook, and advocating radical forms of political action. Contributing factors may also include organisational weaknesses in the party's work in the eastern part of the state and an incomplete understanding of the local context, reflecting gaps in both contemporary practice and historiography.

In Slovakia, the largest and most institutionalised

satellite organisation of the party was the Czechoslovak Trade Union Association (Odborové združenie československé). By the 1930s, it had consolidated approximately 77 000 members (1937). Its activities were directed by the Provincial Trade Union Council (Zemská odborová rada), headquartered in Ružomberok. The association was affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions and functioned as an umbrella body for individual trade unions representing metalworkers, railway workers, miners, white-collar employees, and other occupational groups.

Consumer cooperatives were also among the most significant satellite organisations, particularly the Future (Budúcnosť) network, coordinated centrally by the Central Union of Czechoslovak Cooperatives (Ústřední svaz československých družstev). By the late 1930s, Future encompassed some 20 000 members and operated approximately 130 retail outlets. Closely linked to the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions in Slovakia was the health insurance system, administered by the Workers' Insurance Fund for Slovakia (Robotnícka poisťovňa pre Slovensko), based in Bratislava with branch offices throughout the regions.

Physical and educational activities were promoted through additional organisations. The Workers' Gymnastic Associations (Robotnícke telocvičné jednoty, DTJ), were relatively widespread, with the federation administering 112 local units and approximately 10 000 members by the end of the First Republic. Educational objectives were further pursued through the Workers' Academies (Robotnícke akadémie), which maintained sixteen branches across Slovakia. Youth engagement was organised through the Slovak Union of Social Democratic Youth (Slovenský zväz sociálnodemokratickej mládeže), which comprised twenty-five regional units, encompassing between 3 000 and 5 000 members by the late 1930s. Leading officials included Alexander Bahurinský (1900–1984) and Jozef Dieška (1913–1995).

The left wing of young Social Democrats maintained the Association of Social Democratic Academics (Združenie sociálnodemokratických akademikov), which from 1933 published the monthly journal *Nový hlas*. Prominent members included the controversial Anton Rašla (1911–2007) and Jozef Šoltész (1909–1977), whose subsequent political careers were closely associated with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). In 1935, Member of Parliament Ján Bečko founded in Bratislava the cultural and educational association Progress (Pokrok), providing a platform for the Slovak Social Democratic intelligentsia. The association promoted democratic values and the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic in opposition to autonomist, radical, and fascist currents, while also securing financial resources for the publication of party newspapers and other printed materials.

4. Fundamental Characteristics of the Politics of the Slovak Provincial Organisation of the Party

In the interwar period, the Social Democratic Party emerged as the most prominent bearer of the idea of Czech-Slovak unity. This was by no means accidental. The integration of Slovak Social Democrats into the Czech organisational structures of the party in 1918 represented

the logical outcome of long-term cooperation between the leaderships of both organisations during the period of Austria-Hungary. In the initial phase following the establishment of the republic, the continuation of this arrangement was desired by the majority of Slovak party members. These positive experiences were further reinforced by the existence of the official doctrine of Czechoslovakism, based on the concept of a single Czechoslovak nation, which was intended to facilitate the integration of the newly established multinational state.

One of the most influential spokesmen of Slovak Social Democracy, Ivan Dérer, articulated this position explicitly when he wrote: „It is my deepest conviction that Czechs and Slovaks constitute a single nation.”¹ [Dérer, 1934] He supported this view through his own interpretation of selected ideas of the Slovak national revivalist Ľudovít Štúr (1815 – 1856) and the writer Svetozár Hurbán Vajanský (1847 – 1916) [Dérer, 1946, p. 267; Strítecký, pp. 291–296], illustrating his argument with examples drawn from the historical development of both peoples since the period of Great Moravia (c. 833–907). At the same time, the assertion of national unity did not imply a denial of the existence of a Slovak nation. In 1934, Dérer explicitly stated: „Czechoslovak national unity does not mean the absorption of Slovaks, but rather their strengthening.”² [Dérer, 1934] He neither desired nor advocated the fusion of the two ethnic groups, rejected attempts at the Czechisation of Slovaks, and was convinced that historical development was naturally leading towards the gradual rapprochement of Czechs and Slovaks. He regarded this trend as advantageous for Slovaks, believing that they would follow the more advanced partner, draw inspiration from it, and strive to attain a comparable level of development. In his view, Czechoslovak unity thus guaranteed Slovaks the preservation of their own identity [Dérer, 1935, p. 89].

Nevertheless, Dérer expressed reservations concerning the idea of „a fully sovereign, separate, independent Slovak nation”³ [Dérer, 1935, p. 95]. He feared that such a concept would generate conflicts threatening not only national unity but the very existence of the Czechoslovak state. The prospect of a clash between Czech and Slovak nationalism caused him particular concern; recognition of the sovereignty of both nations would, in his view, inevitably lead to such a confrontation, resulting in the disintegration of national unity and the collapse of the common state. He articulated his second major concern as follows: „An independent Slovakia, or a Slovakia striving for independence, would become nothing more than a plaything in the hands of those who have – or will have – interests in compensating themselves at Slovakia’s expense. A separate, distinct Slovak nation would not be a free nation, but rather a compensatory object of the

powerful states surrounding us. The ideology of a distinct Slovak nation and the denial of Czechoslovak unity lead to the destruction of the Slovak national idea. [...] Only the strong unity of Czechs and Slovaks within a single nation provides the means of securing our state; it is the only possible foundation of our free life.”⁴ [Dérer, 1935, pp. 91–92] The security dimension constituted a recurring theme in Dérer’s thinking. In 1938, he wrote: „A ten-million-strong Czechoslovak nation, with two equal branches – Czech and Slovak – cannot easily be erased from the map of Europe. But with a two-million-strong Slovak nation incited against the Czechs, the powerful will find it easy to deal with it: those who today present themselves as its friends only in order to detach it from the Czechoslovak whole, weaken it, and divide it among themselves.”⁵ [Dérer, 1938, p. 257]

The construction and preservation of a unitary state of Czechs and Slovaks represented a fundamental priority for the Slovak provincial organisation of the Social Democratic Party, to which its approach to almost all other Slovak-related issues was subordinated. The party adopted a clearly negative stance towards the idea of Slovak autonomy and, in the initial years, also rejected a provincial (zemské) organisation of the state. This position brought it into direct opposition with Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, the most vocal advocate of these concepts. Social Democrats were convinced that territorial autonomy constituted merely the first step on the path towards Slovak independence and the disintegration of the Czechoslovak Republic. They evaluated this concept as leading to catastrophe and to the weakening of both Slovak national identity and Slovakia as a whole [Dérer, 1938, pp. 89–90]. As an alternative, Slovak Social Democrats proposed a project of administrative decentralisation, based on the transfer of competences and decision-making authority from Prague to Slovak provincial, county (župa), district, and other regional bodies. Dérer also advocated a fundamental reform of the system governing the selection of officials and employees appointed to positions in Slovakia. Recruitment was to be guided exclusively by the needs of the state, irrespective of political or national considerations.

A similar conceptual approach characterised the stance of the provincial organisation towards the resolution of economic and social problems in Slovakia. Its representatives correctly identified the country’s needs and publicly articulated them at party meetings and rallies. Ministers belonging to the party, as members of coalition governments, also intervened significantly in this area. For instance, in 1924 Ivan Markovič, serving as Minister for Unification, submitted to the government a catalogue of measures he deemed necessary for improving Slovakia’s economic situation. He demanded a substantial increase in

¹ Original version: „Je mojim najhlbším presvedčením, že Česi a Slováci tvoria jeden národ.“

² Original version: „Československá národná jednota znamená nie pohltienie Slovákov, ale naopak ich posilnenie.“

³ Original version: „plného suverénneho, separovaného, neodvislého národa slovenského“

⁴ Original version: „Slovensko samostatné, alebo Slovensko o svoju samostatnosť zápasiace – bude len hračkou v rukách tých, ktorí majú alebo budú mať záujmy, aby sa na úkor Slovenska odškodňovali. Samostatný, zvláštny slovenský národ nebude slobodným národom, ale kompenzačným objektom nás obklopujúcich mocných. Ideológia

zvláštno slovenského národa a negovanie československej jednoty vedú k záhube národnej myšlienky slovenskej. [...] Jedine v silnom somknutí Čechov a Slovákov v národnú jednotu je prostriedok zabezpečenia nášho štátu, je jedine možná základňa slobodného nášho života.“

⁵ Original version: „Desaťmiliónový národ československý, s rovnoprávnymi dvoma vetvami, českou a slovenskou, nedá sa len tak ľahko vymazať z mapy Európy. Ale s dvojmiliónovým národom slovenským, nahuckaným proti Čechom, ľahko si pomôžu tí silní, ktorí sa dnes vydávajú za jeho priateľov len preto, aby ho odtrhnúť od československého celku, oslabili a medzi sebou podelili.“

state subsidies for industry, advocated reform of the system of public procurement so as to prioritise enterprises operating in Slovakia, and called for greater representation of qualified Slovaks within the state administration, who were to be preferred over other candidates. He identified deficiencies in the implementation of the language law and sought to ensure that the use of Slovak would reach parity with Czech. Further shortcomings were noted in the legislative sphere, which lagged behind actual needs and failed to reflect the real situation in Slovakia. The social demands of the leadership of Slovak Social Democracy were articulated at the party's provincial congress in 1931. Slovak delegates also drew attention to the causes inhibiting Slovakia's development at the 16th and 17th national party congresses in 1930 and 1933.

Nevertheless, an impression emerged that the promotion of economic and social demands lacked sufficient determination on the part of the party's central leaderships in both Bratislava and Prague [Ruman, 1996, pp. 210–212]. It must be emphasised, however, that the problem did not lie in inadequate assertiveness but rather in the adoption of a different conceptual framework. Social Democrats attributed Slovakia's relative backwardness, compared to the Czech lands, in economic and social development to deficiencies in the educational and cultural level of the population. In their interpretation, this lag resulted from the historical development of Slovaks, who had lived for several centuries under Hungarian rule. Consequently, the elimination of deficits in education, schooling, and culture, together with the development of the population's intellectual potential, was regarded as the primary priority of policy towards Slovakia. Only after these deficiencies had been addressed was it considered possible to open space for the implementation of a broader concept aimed at building a viable economy, developing industry and trade, and improving the social conditions of the broad masses. Ivan Markovič expressed this view succinctly: „*First educational lectures, and only then understanding for the needs of an intensive economy.*”¹ A similar argument was advanced by *Robotnícke noviny*: „*If we wish to raise Slovakia economically, we must прежде everything ensure that the cultural level of the Slovak working class becomes the most urgent task in the near future.*”² An important component of this rhetoric was the acknowledgement that the new state – the Czechoslovak Republic – faced numerous challenges which could not be resolved simultaneously, within a short period, or to universal satisfaction. Patience was therefore deemed necessary.

The policies of the Social Democrats and of the Prague governmental circles concerning the so-called Slovak question diverged in many respects from the views held by representatives of the majority of contemporary Slovak society. At the same time, it must be recognised that the Slovak provincial organisation of the Social Democratic Party represented a marginal force in terms of influence and its capacity to intervene decisively in the political system and to shape coalition government policy towards Slovakia. The same assessment applies to the Social

Democratic Party as a whole, despite the fact that it remained an influential coalition partner throughout most of the First Republic [Národní shromáždění, 1928, pp. 1153–1168; Národní shromáždění, 1938, pp. 838–847]. Many proposals submitted by Social Democratic ministers failed to be implemented, encountering disagreement and often outright resistance from other political parties – above all Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, the Catholic Church, and conservative political forces in Slovakia. The People's Party differed from the Social Democrats not only ideologically but also substantially in programmatic terms. Considerable political tension also existed between Social Democrats and Communists, with the split of the early 1920s remaining difficult for reformists to accept. By contrast, Slovak Social Democrats were relatively close to the National Socialists. Both parties subscribed to socialism, albeit understood in different ways, and were united by their conviction of the necessity of addressing the social question. They shared similar positions on Czechoslovakism, on the People's Party and the Communists, defended democratic values, and preferred the county (*župa*) system to a provincial one. Nevertheless, their mutual understanding had clear limits, and it would be inappropriate to speak of cooperation or partnership. Differences also emerged in their attitudes towards national minorities, particularly the Hungarian minority. Contacts between the two provincial party organisations were predominantly pragmatic in nature.

5. The Demise of the Social Democratic Party in 1938

As noted above, one of the core priorities of the Social Democratic Party – including its Slovak provincial organisation – was the preservation of Czechoslovakia as a unitary state and the maintenance of Czech–Slovak unity in the spirit of the theoretical concept of Czechoslovakism. Throughout almost the entire existence of the First Republic, political and social developments in Slovakia stood in tension, and often in direct contradiction, to this concept. The situation escalated dramatically in 1938 under the influence of contemporary events in Europe and beyond. Slovak autonomists took advantage of the crisis into which Czechoslovakia was plunged following the diktat imposed by the great powers in Munich and resolved to escalate the issue of Slovakia's position within the Czechoslovak Republic in order to achieve a definitive solution.

It is beyond the scope of this study to address the problem in all its broader contexts. Instead, the following outline focuses on the conduct and actions of representatives of Slovak Social Democracy in this situation, which proved critical to the very existence of Czechoslovakia, and seeks to evoke the party's role in the conclusion of the so-called Žilina Agreement of 6 October 1938. Following its adoption, Slovakia – still formally part of the Czechoslovak Republic – set out on the path towards autonomy. The Constitutional Act on the Autonomy of the Slovak Land (*Ústavní zákon o autonomii Slovenskej krajiny*) No. 299/1938 Sb. entered into force on 23 November 1938 [Ústavný zákon, 1938; Národní

¹ Original version: „Najskôr osvetové prednášky, a potom porozumenie pre potreby intenzívneho hospodárstva.”

² Original version: „Keď chceme Slovensko hospodársky povzniesť, musíme sa v prvom rade starať o to, aby kultúrna úroveň slovenskej

pracujúcej triedy stala sa najnaliehavejšou úlohou aj v blízkej budúcnosti.”

shromáždění, 1938, p. 867].

The principal driving force behind the events of autumn 1938 was Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which effectively relegated the other political parties operating in Slovakia to the role of mere bystanders. Their concepts and proposals had little chance of successfully resisting the pressure exerted by the People's Party. During this period, the main spokesmen of Slovak Social Democracy were Ivan Markovič, Ivan Dérer, and Michal Korman. On 29 September 1938, Markovič represented the party in Prague at negotiations between representatives of Czechoslovak political parties active in Slovakia and Hlinka's Slovak People's Party [Bystrický, Písecká, p. 78]. In the initial phase of the talks, Markovič presented and supported the so-called Beneš Plan, which, compared to the government's earlier rejectionist stance, entailed far-reaching concessions. It essentially proposed a transformation of Czechoslovakia along the lines of an asymmetrical federation. Only the army, finances, and foreign policy were to remain common; all other matters were to fall exclusively under the authority of Slovak institutions. In the central bodies in Prague, Slovaks were to enjoy parity representation in order to ensure their equal participation in the formulation of nationwide policy. Beneš also guaranteed increased future investment in Slovak industry and infrastructure. The proposal explicitly recognised the distinctiveness of the Slovak nation. Subsequently, Markovič presented the plan of the Slovak Social Democrats, which appeared less radical when compared with Beneš's proposal. Its core aim was essentially the preservation of the status quo, combined with the legislative entrenchment of Slovak representation within state and public administration. Ivan Dérer also participated in the negotiations; his proposals focused primarily on adjustments to parliamentary competences. He envisaged the preservation of parliament in its existing form and did not exclude the possible establishment of a Slovak provincial assembly.

A new situation emerged following the Munich diktat of 30 September 1938. While President Edvard Beneš resigned in early October and the reconstructed government of Jan Syrový initiated negotiations on resolving the Slovak question, the leadership of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party decided to exploit the situation to advance its own agenda. It relocated to Slovakia and convened political parties in Žilina on 5 October to continue negotiations on Slovak autonomy.

The position of Slovak Social Democrats for the Žilina negotiations was prepared by Ivan Dérer [Lipscher, pp. 129–130]. He rejected Slovak autonomy and demanded the preservation of a unitary state with a central government and a central parliament. He opposed both the establishment of an independent Slovak assembly and the creation of a fully competent Slovak government, which he proposed to replace with a board of commissioners subordinate to the Czechoslovak government. The problem, in his view, was to be resolved through decentralisation measures. His project represented an alternative vision to the autonomy concept promoted by Hlinka's party. Dérer's proposal, however, did not escape criticism even within his own ranks. Consequently, Michal Korman – acting as the principal spokesman of the Social Democrats in Žilina, as Dérer had become persona non

grata in direct negotiations with the People's Party due to his Czechoslovakist positions – presented a revised version of the proposal. This version had been prepared during inter-party talks held in Bratislava on 4 October at the office of the provincial president Jozef Országh (1883 – 1949) [Krajčír; Bystrický, Písecká, pp. 88–91; Dérer, 1946, pp. 294–299] and was subsequently finalised by Dérer as the joint position of those political parties active in Slovakia for whom the projects of Hlinka's party were unacceptable. The core of Dérer's plan nevertheless remained essentially unchanged, differing only in details – for example, the board of commissioners was replaced by a „council of ministers for Slovak affairs” operating within the framework of the central Czechoslovak government.

The actual inter-party negotiations in Žilina on 5 October 1938 – poorly formalised and accompanied by confusion – demonstrated that the hopes of political parties to withstand the pressure exerted by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party were, in reality, illusory. In practice, no alternative to the programme of Slovak autonomy stood any chance of success. Ivan Markovič, whose personal engagement during the Žilina negotiations was extraordinary and who made genuine efforts to identify constructive solutions, attempted to salvage the position of Slovak Social Democracy through negotiations with the leader of the People's Party, Jozef Tiso (1887 – 1947), and through an attempt to merge the party with the Slovak National Party [Bystrický, Letz, Podolec, pp. 129–130; Krištofík, p. 48]. When these initiatives failed, Slovak Social Democrats withdrew from the negotiating platform and, as one of only two political parties (together with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), refused to sign the so-called Žilina Agreement on Slovak autonomy of 6 October 1938 [Bystrický, Písecká, p. 105; Kováč, p. 201; Falťan, pp. 290–291].

It is evident that the decision of Slovak Social Democrats to oppose the stance of the majority – however principled it may be considered and consistent with their programme orientation during the First Republic – led to their political isolation and, ultimately, to an existential threat to the party itself. The Slovak executive committee quickly recognised this reality and, at its meeting in Bratislava on 8 October 1938, expressed its approval of the agreement on Slovak autonomy. This was followed by the establishment of a new leadership of the provincial organisation, which on 10 October declared its separation from the all-state party and proclaimed the formation of the *Sociálno-demokratická strana Slovenska*. Ján Bečko was appointed as its leader. Regardless of assurances given by Tiso that the party would be allowed to continue its activities, its operations were suspended on 20 October 1938, and on 16 November 1938 the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Land decided to ban the party altogether [Krištofík, p. 47]. Three days later, the Žilina Agreement was approved by both chambers of the National Assembly in Prague, and the extraordinary congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, held in Prague on 18 December 1938, resolved to terminate the activities of the Social Democratic Party throughout the entire territory of the republic [Dérer, 1946, pp. 301–303; Čarnogurský, pp. 80–127; Rychlík, 1997, pp. 143–144; Borbélyová, 2021, pp. 118n].

Research conclusions. The aim of our research on the

provincial organisation of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party during the years of the First Czechoslovak Republic was to examine the forms of its involvement in the political as well as the party-political system at both the nationwide and the provincial levels. We focused on an analysis of the party's participation in parliamentary, provincial, county (*župa*), and district elections, which demonstrated that, after the success achieved in the first parliamentary elections in 1920, the organisation was unable to defend its position in subsequent years and in practice ranked among the less influential political parties in Slovakia. Evidence for this claim is provided by the overview of its representation in legislative bodies and in the organs of executive power presented in this study. The decline in the party's significance was associated with a radical reduction in its membership base and a decrease in the number of party organisations, developments that were not offset even by the relatively strong trade union movement with which the party was linked. According to our findings, the erosion of the party's position was also connected with its programmatic orientation. Most notably, it lost support as a result of its consistent adherence to the idea of Czechoslovakism. The party remained loyal to this concept until the September Crisis of 1938, and we are convinced that this stance conditioned its initial rejection of the so-called Žilina Agreement on Slovak autonomy. In a subsequent phase, the party leadership did sign the agreement, albeit under the pressure of general uncertainty and fear regarding future developments. Somewhat paradoxically, the party also paid a price for its socialist

profile, despite the fact that its splinter group, the radical socialists (Communists), ranked among organisations with a large electoral base not only in Slovakia but throughout Czechoslovakia as a whole. In theory, the party declared the religious orientation of its members to be a private matter of each individual; in practice, however, it adopted an anti-Catholic stance, rejected clericalism, and supported ideas of the secularisation of society. Slovak society was, at its core, Catholic (although a number of influential actors in the public and political spheres adhered to Protestant denominations), and, moreover, from the second parliamentary elections in the mid-1920s onwards, the most significant and dominant political force within the Slovak party-political system – strongly shaping Slovak society – was Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which was closely ideologically linked to the Catholic Church. There can be no doubt that the party's activities and position were also constrained by a lack of financial resources. Our research further addressed other forms of the Social Democrats' engagement in public life. The present study includes an inventory and basic editorial data concerning the party's relatively unstable press organs at both the national and regional levels. We have also concluded that party life in Slovakia was limited by an insufficiently developed system of recruitment (satellite) organisations. This hypothesis and finding, however, will need to be corroborated by further research in the future. The research has confirmed that the elaboration of a comprehensive account of the history of the Social Democratic Party in Slovakia in the interwar period remains a topical challenge for contemporary historians.

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ДО РОЛІ СЛОВАЦЬКИХ СОЦІАЛ-ДЕМОКРАТІВ У ПОЛІТИЧНІЙ СИСТЕМІ ПЕРШОЇ ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКОЇ РЕСПУБЛІКИ (1918 – 1939)

Словацька крайова організація Чехословацької соціал-демократичної робітничої партії постала у 1918 році, продовживши свій довоєнний розвиток як автономна складова угорської соціал-демократії. Рішення про приєднання до організації чеської соціал-демократичної партії стало кульмінацією успішної співпраці провідних діячів обох організацій наприкінці XIX століття та значною мірою було зумовлене створенням спільної держави чехів і словаків. Процеси інтеграції підтримувала ідея чехословакізму — візія існування єдиного чехословацького народу, яка як прагматичний політичний конструкт у багатонаціональній державі протистояла націоналізму, дезінтеграційним тенденціям і сепаратистським прагненням. Словацькі соціал-демократи поряд з Аграрною партією та чехословацькими соціалістами належали до найпопулярніших прихильників ідеї чехословацької єдності. Саме ця політична позиція значною мірою пояснює, чому після несподіваної переконливої перемоги на парламентських виборах 1920 року в наступні роки вони на виборах усіх рівнів зазнавали невдач, а їхні електоральні результати відсунули партію з провідних позицій приблизно на п'яте-шосте місце серед політичних сил. В емансипованому словацькому суспільстві, що дедалі більше перебувало під впливом Словацької народної партії Глінки, натомість утверджувався концепт автономії Словаччини в межах Чехословацької Республіки. Вагомий вплив на те, що словацькі соціал-демократи в період Першої Чехословацької Республіки (1918 – 1939) залишалися в словацькій партійно-політичній системі акторами другорядного значення, мала також внутрішньопартійна криза початку 1920-х років. Унаслідок виходу радикального крила соціалістів, яке заснувало Комуністичну партію, чисельність членської бази істотно скоротилася. Обмежене політичне становище партії відобразилося і на її представленості у виконавчій владі, хоча серед її представників траплялися окремі помітні постаті, що змогли реалізуватися і на загальнодержавному рівні. Після укладення

Мюнхенської угоди великих держав у 1938 році керівництво партії брало участь у переговорах щодо автономії Словаччини. На початковому етапі воно відмовилося підписати так звану Жилінську угоду про автономію. Під політичним тиском це рішення було оперативно переглянута, однак навіть подальше схвалення її положень не врятувало партію від заборони. У період Другої світової війни її члени здійснювали діяльність у підпіллі. У роки Першої Чехословацької Республіки словацькі соціал-демократи інтегрувалися в словацьке публічне життя та партійно-політичну систему не лише через участь у виборах і діяльність у виконавчих органах влади, але й за посередництвом партійної преси та приєднаних (сателітних) організацій. Водночас видавничі підприємства, що діяли на території Словаччини, через недостатнє фінансове забезпечення здебільшого характеризувалися низьким рівнем стабільності: періодичні видання крайового або нижчого регіонального рівня досить часто виникали та так само швидко припиняли існування. Словацькій крайовій організації не вдалося в ширшому масштабі розбудувати систему приєднаних організацій, яка, наприклад, у чеському середовищі вирізнялася значною тематичною диференціацією та дозволяла соціал-демократам ефективно виконувати функцію рекрутингової структури. Водночас слід зауважити, що ця проблематика досі не є повною мірою опрацьованою в історіографії, присвяченій території Словаччини.

Ключові слова: Словаччина, політика, соціал-демократи, чехословакізм, автономія.

Конфлікт інтересів

Павел Марек, член редакційної колегії, є автором цієї статті та не брав участі в редакційному розгляді й ухваленні рішення щодо рукопису. Опрацювання рукопису здійснювалося незалежним редактором. Рецензування відбувалося зовнішнім рецензентом. Інші члени редакційної колегії заявляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів.

Фінансування

Дослідження було проведено без фінансової підтримки.

Доступність даних

Усі дані доступні в цифровій або графічній формі в основному тексті рукопису.

Використання штучного інтелекту

Автор підтверджує, що при створенні даної роботи він не використовував технології штучного інтелекту.

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