

# THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC 1939–1945. THE NATURE AND MAJOR MILESTONES OF THE REGIME

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## 1 Introduction

Evaluation of the regime ruling in Slovakia in the years 1938–1945 is an extremely difficult task. The period of the Slovak Republic (Slovenská republika – SR) between the years 1939–1945 belongs to the most inconsistent periods not only in the Slovak historiography, even though over 70 years have elapsed since the end of its existence.<sup>1</sup> It is partly understandable. On the one hand, the Slovak historiography was marked by more than 40 years of ideologization which – perhaps with the exception of a brief period of the “thaw” after 1968 – did not allow the authors to apply an unbiased approach to this topic. On the other hand, the ambivalence and the tragedy of the period of the Slovak Republic existence do not help to evaluate the regime and the political system, either. The Slovak Republic in the years 1939–1945 interfered in the history of Central Europe in the time when Europe was experiencing one of the most tragic periods of its modern history. The Nazi Germany rise to power and the subsequent World War II left distinctive mark on its evaluation. Older terms like “wartime republic”<sup>2</sup> or “clerofascist state”<sup>3</sup> are more ideologically motivated by the socialist historiography than expressing its true nature.

<sup>1</sup> The Slovak Republic formally ceased to exist on 8th May 1945 when the Slovak government in the Austrian exile surrendered to the US Army.

<sup>2</sup> The attribute “wartime republic” is biased mostly in regard to the fact that the republic had been established almost six months before the start of the war.

<sup>3</sup> This historiographic term often used until 1989 mostly refers to the connection between the regime and the Catholic clergy. For more information on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the regime, see MULÍK, Peter: *Katolícka cirkev a politika Slovenskej republiky 1939–1945* (*Catholic Church and the policy of the Slovak Republic 1939–1945*). In: BOBÁK, Ján (ed.): *Slovenská republika (1939–1945)* (*The Slovak Republic (1939–1945)*). Martin 2000, pages (pp.) 101–113; PETRANSKÝ, Ivan A.: *Katolícka cirkev v období prvej Slovenskej republiky* (*Catholic Church in the time of the First Slovak Republic*). In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov I* (*The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians I*). Trnava 2002, pp. 33–52.

The unbiased evaluation of the period of the Slovak Republic existence is also prevented by its obvious contradictory moments. Its own statehood is definitely a positive aspect but the practical realization of the statehood at that difficult time was showing many undemocratical signs which cannot be positively assessed. On the one hand, the Slovak fight for the statehood was finished with the establishment of the Slovak Republic, on the other hand, Slovakia, having on mind the Central European spheres of influence (if it wanted to survive), could not withstand the undisputable pressure of Nazi Germany – all this has disunited the interpretation of Slovak history during the years 1939–1945.

Different interpretations of the questions of the establishment of the Slovak state on 14th March 1939, “the solution of the Jewish question” or collaboration with Nazi can be found in different works. This is the reason why one group of historians or laymen perceives the Slovak Republic as the first state formation of Slovaks in modern history and they point out to the end of the struggle for the statehood or relatively good economic situation in comparison with the neighbouring countries, the opponents point out to the ties to the Nazi Third Reich, the tendency towards totality or mostly to the later radical “solution of the Jewish question”. To prove their theses, both groups often choose selective arguments that are supposed to support the correctness of their respective theories and that is how they prevent the unbiased approach to the investigation. The Slovak Republic had its positive as well as negative aspects. It is necessary to realize that it existed only for slightly more than 5 years. During that short time it underwent a turbulent development and it still arouses passionate discussions in the society as well as in the community of historians.

The Slovak Republic and its regime underwent considerable internal development during its existence. For better know about its respective phases, it is essential to know the major milestones marking individual chronological phases of the development of the Slovak regime. It is necessary to take into account more levels when considering the political regime in Slovakia in 1939–1945 and its support by people. The question is if positive aspects can counterbalance the tendency towards totality, the effort at “Gleichschaltung” of the society, the ties to Nazi Germany and mostly the radical “solution of the Jewish question”. Historiography cannot present an unambiguous answer to this question. It stays more or less at the level of moral values. However, it is certain that Slovakia became an object of international law<sup>4</sup> for the first

<sup>4</sup> ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 1999, pp. 21–27.

time in its history, it was integrated into international relations,<sup>5</sup> its culture was on the rise,<sup>6</sup> its own statehood brought wide range of possibilities of the use of the mother tongue which had mostly been suppressed until then... First of all, many “defenders” of the Slovak Republic point out to the economy in that period that was in a relatively good condition compared to the neighbouring countries. Slovaks were relatively satisfied with the economic situation in Slovakia. In spite of the appearance of the predictions that Slovakia would not be able to financially secure<sup>7</sup> its independence and the separation from the Czechs, but the reverse was true.

In spite of the raging war it was managed to keep the economy relatively steady, mostly because of the ties to the Nazi Germany.<sup>8</sup> Many new opportunities were opened for Slovak industry and agriculture in the field of German economy and they grew alongside with the successes of the German army.<sup>9</sup> Sales increase caused by the military boom meant huge growth for Slovak economy. Besides, the government of Nazi Germany needed to create a positive picture of Slovak economy because Slovakia played the role of a “shopping window” of the German relations towards small nations.<sup>10</sup> Nazis were able to show that Central European states under their ideological leadership were able to secure their existence and relatively high economic standards for citizens. All above mentioned indicators contributed to the

<sup>5</sup> HRNKO, Anton: *Zaraďovanie Slovenskej republiky do systému medzinárodných vzťahov (Integration of the Slovak Republic into the System of International Relations)*. In: BOBÁK, Ján (ed.): *Slovenská republika (1939–1945) (The Slovak Republic /1939–1945/)*. Martin 2000, pp. 47–55.

<sup>6</sup> ĎURKOVSKÁ, Mária: *Kultúra ako jedna z dimenzií spoločenského života v Slovenskej republike v rokoch 1939–1945 (Culture as one of the dimensions of the social life in the Slovak Republic in 1939–1945)*. In: SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (ed.): *Život v Slovenskej republike (Life in the Slovak Republic)*. Bratislava 2010, pp. 245–258; MAGDOLENOVÁ, Anna: *Slovenská kultúra v rokoch 1939–1945 (Slovak culture in the years 1939–1945)*. In: BOBÁK, Ján (ed.): *Slovenská republika (1939–1945) (The Slovak Republic /1939–1945/)*. Martin 2000, pp. 142–154.

<sup>7</sup> TKÁČ, Marián: *Slovenské hospodárstvo v rokoch 1939–1945 (Slovak economy in the years 1939–1945)*. In: BOBÁK, Ján (ed.): *Slovenská republika (1939–1945) (The Slovak Republic /1939–1945/)*. Martin 2000, p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> HALLON, Ľudovít – SABOL, Miroslav: *Zlaté roky hospodárskeho vývoja Slovenskej republiky 1940–1943 (Golden years of economic development in the Slovak Republic 1940–1943)*. In: SOKOLOVIČ, P. (ed.): *Od Salzburgu do vypuknutia Povstania (From Salzburg to outburst of the Uprising)*. Bratislava 2009, pp. 399–432.

<sup>9</sup> SABOL, Miroslav: *Až na dno blahobytu (Hojnosť alebo chudoba slovenských rodín vo vojnovnej Slovenskej republike) (To the bottom of the richness (Wealth or poverty of Slovak families in the wartime Slovak Republic))*. In: SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (ed.): *Život v Slovenskej republike (Life in the Slovak Republic)*. Bratislava 2010, pp. 376–389.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

fact that people were burdened neither with economic problems nor daily efforts to provide their vital needs in the first years of the existence of the republic which determined their attitude towards the regime. Building of infrastructure, electrification of Slovakia<sup>11</sup> or relative availability of goods for everyday use can be perceived as positive.

As a result of the exploitation by German capital<sup>12</sup> and growing war requirements from the German side as well as other measures, the inflation in Slovakia started to grow. Also tax burden grew, the state started to collect a so-called war tax and even other kinds of taxes were not unusual.<sup>13</sup> Mostly in the last phase of the regime, going hand in hand with the failures of Nazi Germany, the inflation grew rapidly.

Until then almost unknown fights had been relocated to the Slovak territory in 1944. The support of the regime from the side of Slovak people started to decline after their initial euphoria from their own statehood and economic successes of the young state.

The government used different ways to achieve identification of the people with the regime. One of the typical ways of authoritarian and totalitarian states is organizing mass marches, holding mass gatherings or creating national heroes. In the period of the Slovak Republic mostly the declaration of Slovak independence was commemorated, A. Hitler's birthday and other holidays were the centres of attention, too. Besides the above mentioned holidays that were used as the manifesting presentation of the unity between the people and the regime and the cohesion of regimistic units, a large number of religious holidays was celebrated. Public attendance at those holidays did not decrease, however, it is typical for the gradual degradation of the regime that for instance the commemoration of the establishment of the Slovak Republic

<sup>11</sup> SABOL, Miroslav: *Elektrifikácia v poslednom období Slovenskej republiky (1939–1945)* (*Electrification of Slovakia in the last phase of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945)*). In: ŠMIGEL, Michal – MIČKO, Peter – SYRNÝ, Marek (eds.): *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov V.* (*The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians V.*) Banská Bystrica 2006, pp. 170–179.

<sup>12</sup> TKÁČ, Marián: *Slovenské hospodárstvo v rokoch 1939–1945* (*Slovak economy in the years 1939–1945*). In: BOBÁK, Ján (ed.): *Slovenská republika (1939–1945)* (*The Slovak Republic /1939–1945/*). Martin 2000, pp. 116–117; LIPTÁK, Lubomír: *Ovládnutie slovenského priemyslu nemeckým kapitálom* (*Domination of German capital over Slovak industry*). Bratislava 1960.

<sup>13</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Sonda do snáh štátneho aparátu v boji s nadmernou konzumáciou alkoholu v rokoch 1939–1945* (*A Study of efforts of the state apparatus in fight against excessive alcohol consumption in the years 1939–1945*). In: SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (ed.): *Život v Slovenskej republike* (*Life in the Slovak Republic*). Bratislava 2010, pp. 85–100. See also *Slovenský zákonník* (*Slovak Law Code*), Act no. 19 of 26/2/1943 that enforces the war liquor tax, general beverage tax, sparkling wine tax and beer tax.

abundantly attended in the early years were later compulsorily attended only by the members of army and the Hlinka Guard (Hlinkova garda – HG) – a paramilitary unit that stylized itself in the role of the greatest supporters of the regime.<sup>14</sup> The support of the regime among the members of the Guard started to decline, too. Although there were almost more than 100,000 members in the Guard in 1939, gradually, considering its connection to the solution of the Jewish question when Guardists often dealt with Jews very cruelly, but also its unfulfilled political ambitions, the Guard started to wither away and for instance in 1942 there remained only slightly more than 50,000 members, most of whom stagnated in their jobs for HG.<sup>15</sup>

The regime in Slovakia in 1939–1945 in spite of all its negative aspects cannot be labelled as a totalitarian one in the correct definition of this word. Mostly in the early phase, the attribute authoritative or authoritarian is more suitable. Although some authors label it as totalitarian,<sup>16</sup> it can be classified as an authoritarian regime according to its numerous features. It did not gain those tendencies that would allow to call it a totalitarianism. In the phase of its gradual decline it tried to multiply totalitarian actions, mostly in the matters of establishing a unified system of leadership on all state levels, however those were just last attempts to preserve the regime.

Democratic remains from the period of the Czechoslovak Republic (Československá republika – ČSR) are included in the Slovak Constitution, unfinished unification of parties in Slovakia, as well as seeming “details” such as not carrying out any death penalties or other-in comparison with other totalitarian states – mild methods, considerable independence of the justice from the regime and mild punishments for antiregimistic activists indicate that the regime cannot be labelled as totalitarian even though some authors point out that classification into fixed categories would be counterproductive and it might not show the dynamics of its internal development.<sup>17</sup> This need is even more obvious when examining the Slovak Republic, as its respective phases of existence are characterized by different levels of influence by Nazi Germany and also implementation of national-socialist ideas in practice or efforts of a certain political group to bring totalitarianism into regime and society.

<sup>14</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009.

<sup>15</sup> KÁRPÁTY, Vojtech: *Vybrané jednotky Hlinkovej gardy 1941–1944 (Chosen Units of Hlinka Guard 1941–1944)*. In: *Pamäť národa (Nation's Memory)*, no. 1, 2007, issue (iss.) 3, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> KAMENEC, Ivan: *Hľadanie a blúdenie v dejinách (Searching and wandering through History)*. Bratislava 2000, pp. 138–150.

<sup>17</sup> BAKA, Igor: *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939–1940 (Political system and regime in the Slovak Republic in the years 1939–1940)*. Bratislava 2010, p. 7.

Totalitarianism had different forms and intensity during the brief period of the history of the Slovak Republic. Characteristical feature of the development of Slovakia at that time is more or less active struggle between moderate representatives of the political line represented by the President Jozef Tiso and radicals grouped around Vojtech Tuka and the head of HG Alexander Mach. The inner tension on the Slovak political scene, which Nazi took advantage of, served as accelerator for many crucial actions. Both groups in their effort to overtake power used the issue of the solution of the Jewish question and collaboration with Germany to push through their own agenda and that way they often artificially (in their effort to be distinguished from their political opponents) brought new-by the public not gladly accepted and acknowledged – matter of implementation of national-socialist ideas into practice. Alongside with that also the totalitarisation of the society had different form in each political camp. While the group around Jozef Tiso struggled for an authoritarian state based on the religious and social principle, the radical group around V. Tuka and A. Mach spread the revolutionary way and their aim was to push through a stronger interference of the state with politics, implementation of national-socialist ideas and social policy in the spirit of Nazi Germany.<sup>18</sup> Both groups, but mostly the so-called radicals,<sup>19</sup> in their efforts to gain the ruling power in Slovakia raised their requirements too strongly. However, they failed to attract masses. Power and status of the radicals was grounded in the German support and their confidence grew alongside with the successes of Wehrmacht. Their supporters were found mostly among the handful of functionaries of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana – HSĽS), antiregimistic intellectuals and a part of HG.<sup>20</sup> It was the Hlinka Guard, a paramilitary armed organisation, established within HSĽS in the summer months in 1938,<sup>21</sup> that became the liaison in the relations between both groups.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Slovak National Archive (Slovenský národný archív – SNA), fund (f.) „S“, S-47-1/160-167.

<sup>19</sup> In this study is used “radicals”, because it's in Slovak historiography common expression.

<sup>20</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 2008, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> HLAVÁČ, Emil: *Vznik a význam Hlinkovej gardy (The establishment and importance of Hlinka Guard)*. In: *Hlinkova garda 1941 (Hlinka Guard 1941)*. Bratislava 1941, p. 69; Slovenský národný archív v Bratislave (ďalej jiba SNA), f. Alexandria Archive, microfilm C-971. Historical development of Hlinka Guard, SNA, f. National Court (Národný súd – NS), 8/46 Alexander Mach, microfilm II. A-902. Testimony of Alexander Mach; ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov v časovej následnosti faktov dvoch tisícročí (History of Slovakia and the Slovaks in the chronological succession of two milleniums)*. Bratislava 2003, p. 365; *Gardista (The Guardsman)*, 28/1/1939, p. 7.

After the establishment of Slovak autonomy, HG made connection with the emerging regime and it gained increasingly growing influence. Their connection to the radicals, the growing discontent with implementation of their ideas into practice or their unsatisfied power ambitions -considered to be rightful regarding HG's role in the establishing of the Slovak state-turned HG into a liaison where both political camps met. Power status of the radicals and HG was changing a lot through the history of the Slovak Republic. After being initially pushed into defence, after the Hitler's intervention they got to the top of the political scene; however they were not able to fulfill their own political ambitions. Until the outburst of the Uprising in August 1944, balance of power between the Guard and the Party had been changing. Since the end of the year 1942 or the beginning of 1943 it is possible to speak about the gradual decline of the regime.<sup>22</sup> The crucial change was caused by the events in August 1944 and the introduction of occupation regime in Slovakia. The existence of the Slovak Republic and its regime was ended in a not very standard way and under the burden of occupation of their own territory.

Considering all internal chronological and ideological indicators, the regime in Slovakia in the given period can be roughly defined by three stages reflecting partly the inner tension between the radicals and the moderate group (conservatives), partly the most important milestones which had influenced Slovak political life to a large extent and changed it radically:

1st phase of the regime (October 1938–July 1940); 2nd phase of the regime (July 1940–end of August 1944); 3rd phase of the regime/occupation regime/ (end of August 1944–April 1945).

## **2 1st phase of the regime (October 1938–1940)**

In spite of the fact that the Slovak Republic was established on 14th March 1939<sup>23</sup> the first phase of the regime in Slovakia is not defined by its establishment but by the declaration of autonomous Slovak Country on 6th October 1938. March 1939 brought a change to the political system in

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<sup>22</sup> For more, see KORČEK, Ján: *Slovenská republika 1943–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1943–1945)*. Bratislava 1999.

<sup>23</sup> BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián – LETZ, Róbert – PODOLEC, Ondrej (eds.): *Vznik Slovenského štátu 1–2. (The establishment of Slovak state)*. Bratislava 2007–2008.

Slovakia that had been a part of Czechoslovakia<sup>24</sup> until then but the regime had already developed its character during autumn 1938.

The establishment of the Slovak Republic was “only” a legal action that did not have any influence on the character of the regime even though it undoubtedly contributed to its stability and institutionalism. Therefore this treatise is focused on the analysis of the regime not since the establishment of Slovak independence but since autumn 1938.

On 6th October 1938 Hlinka's Slovak People's Party gained practically political monopoly in the Slovak territory.<sup>25</sup> From among all parties, it had the best preconditions. In the struggle for Slovak autonomy, HSLS played a major role during the whole existence of the Czechoslovak state.<sup>26</sup> It still remains a tragedy that the national-emancipative process which was represented by HSLS<sup>27</sup> was culminating at the time of Nazi expansion in Europe which carried certain negative influences and consequences for the future. On the other hand, the forming foreign policy orientation of HSLS towards Nazi Germany was pragmatically justified. Logically, Germany had been perceived as a power that was supposed to influence territorial changes in Central Europe which had been stated after the declaration of the autonomous Slovak Country in the Manifest of Slovak Nation.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Slovakia was a part of Czechoslovakia from its establishment on 28th October 1918 to the establishment of an independent state on 14th March 1939. On 6th October 1938 it gained certain competences as an autonomous country, it had even its own Government and Parliament but still it was a part of the common state with the Czechs. About Slovak Parliament see also: PODOLEC, Ondrej: *Prvý slovenský parlament – Snem Slovenskej republiky a jeho legislatívna činnosť. (First Slovak Parliament)*. Bratislava 2017.

<sup>25</sup> LACKO, Martin – IVÁNEK, Peter (eds.): *Autonómia Slovenska. 75 rokov. (Slovak autonomy. 75 years)*. Krakov 2013.

<sup>26</sup> LETZ, Róbert: *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana (pokús o syntetický prehľad) (Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Attempt for a synthetic summary))*. In: LETZ, Róbert – MULÍK, Peter – BARTLOVÁ, Alena (eds.): *Slovenská ľudová strana v dejinách 1905–1945 (Slovak National Party through history 1905–1945)*. Martin 2006, pp. 12–108.

<sup>27</sup> Besides HSLS also Slovak National Party promoted autonomistic policy within Czechoslovakia.

<sup>28</sup> SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Das Deutsche Reich und die Slowakische Republik 1938–1945. Dokumente. Band I. Von München bis Salzburg 1938–1940. Dokumente und Essay. Buch I. (The German Reich and the Slovak Republic 1938–1945. Documents. Volume I. From Munich to Salzburg 1938–1940. Documents and Essay. Book I.)*. Bratislava 2008, Document 7, Druffel's Telegramm from 6/10/1938, p. 50.

*Slovák (The Slovak)*, 7/10/1938, p. 1. Compare National Archive of the Czech Republic (Národní archiv – NA) Praha, f. 136 (Zahraniční úřad /Foreign Office/), box 29, file (fl.) 136-29/2, 442 265 – 442 329. German translation of the Manifest of Slovak Nation from 6/10/1938, 442 342.



The primary effort of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party was creation of a single state party. Other parties were either "optionally – compulsorily" merged into it<sup>29</sup> or their activities were banned as was the case of the Communist Party.<sup>30</sup> Mostly the monopoly of a single state party is the main indicator of an undemocratic regime. In spite of the fact that activities of just one party were allowed, numerous authors partly rightfully call the regime in Slovakia "holey totality". HSLS (that later carried the attribute Party of Slovak National Unity – /Strana slovenskej národnej jednoty – SSNJ/) recruited into their ranks numerous prominent politicians from dissolved parties. However, their involvement in governing was gradually dropping.<sup>31</sup> That way many people who disagreed with the pragmatic policy of HSLS got into the Slovak Government. It is a Slovak paradox that is, however, partly understandable. Slovakia used to be a part of Austria-Hungary until 1918 and later a part of Czechoslovakia. Slovaks usually did not have any important positions in the state administration, offices, police or army until 1938. Even in 1938 this issue became a bone of contention between Prague and Bratislava and a suitable area for gaining new voters for HSLS.<sup>32</sup>

Hlinka's Slovak People's Party overtook the power dominance in October 1938 but it was not possible to carry it out completely because of the shortage

<sup>29</sup> ROGUTOVÁ, Jaroslava: *Likvidácia Slovenskej národnej strany (Elimination of Slovak National Party)*. In: ČSEFALVAY, František – PÚČIK, Miloslav (eds.): *Slovensko a druhá svetová vojna (Slovakia and World War II)*. Bratislava 2000, pp. 96–104.

<sup>30</sup> Compare BAKA, Igor: *HSLS od 6. októbra do salzburských rokovani v lete 1940 (HSLS from 6th October to negotiations in summer 1940)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov II. (The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians II)*. Bratislava 2003, pp. 12–13.

<sup>31</sup> The first autonomous government was based on a proportional representation 3 (HSLS): 2 (Agrarians), the second one from december 1938 3 (HSLS): 1 (Agrarians): 1 (Slovak national Party) (Slovenská národná strana – SNS) and the third one 4 (HSLS): 1 (Agrarians): 1 (SNS). BAKA, Igor: *HSLS od 6. októbra do salzburských rokovani v lete 1940 (HSLS from 6th October to Salzburg negotiations in summer 1940)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov II. (The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians II)*. Bratislava 2003.

<sup>32</sup> According to the results of the census from 1/12/1930, 230,556 Czech clerks, assistants and workers were working in the state administration in Slovakia. Most of them were in justice and state administration 9,814 (9,046 Slovaks), in the department of railway transport 5,247 (18,157 Slovaks), in school system 2,399 (7,122 Slovaks), among soldiers by profession 4,115 (523 Slovaks), in post service 1,981 (4,328 Slovaks). Quoted as per BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián: *Vystahovanie českých štátnych zamestnancov zo Slovenska v rokoch 1938–1939 (Resettlement of Czech civil servants from Slovakia in the years 1938–1939)*. In: *Historický časopis (Historical magazine)*, no. 4, 1997, iss. 45, p. 597; SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Hlinkova garda od svojho vzniku po salzburské rokovania (1938–1940) (The Hlinka Guard from its establishment to Salzburg negotiations /1938–1940/)*. In: *Zborník Múzea SNP 1969*. Banská Bystrica 1969, p. 170.

of experts. The lack of their own political experts made them to cooperate with other parties, that merged into HSEŠ, and with their representatives. This problem was even more noticeable in the state administration, police, security and army, where the representatives of opposition outnumbered HSEŠ. Mostly in lower ranks of the state administration, the representation by people faithful to the new political government was minimal.<sup>33</sup> This phenomenon, when on the one hand a single state party existed but it did not have unconditional support in the state administration, not even in their own security forces, eventually had a fatal impact on the Slovak Republic. Numerous high ranking army officers<sup>34</sup> and representatives of State Security Headquarters (Ústredňa štátnej bezpečnosti – ÚŠB),<sup>35</sup> a kind of secret police, together with some influential representatives of HSEŠ<sup>36</sup> and Hlinka Guard<sup>37</sup> participated in the preparation of an armed action against Nazi and the regime that was launched in autumn 1944 and is known as the Slovak National Uprising. On the other hand, presence of non-ludaks (non-HSEŠ) politicians in the government, security and administrative was undermining the regime from within. Mostly the Hlinka Guard members were unsatisfied, they felt not fully appreciated for their alleged merits as protectors of Slovak possession and people's lives, they separated from the moderate group around Jozef Tiso, followed Nazi Germany and launched backstage fight against the President's supporters. These aspects weakened the regime and contributed to its disintegration. Relative non-dealing with political opponents influenced by political conception of unification by the President Jozef Tiso contributed to the fall of the regime, too.

<sup>33</sup> LIPTÁK, Ľubomír: *Politický režim na Slovensku v rokoch 1939–1945 (Political regime in Slovakia in the years 1939–1945)*. In: Slovenské národné povstanie v roku 1944. (Sborník príspevkov z národnoslobodzovacieho boja 1938–1945). Slovak National Uprising in 1944. (Anthology of contributions from the National Liberation Movement 1938–1945). Bratislava 1965, pp. 24–25.

<sup>34</sup> See LACKO, Martin: *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944 (Slovak National Uprising 1944)*. Bratislava 2008.

<sup>35</sup> MEDVECKÝ, Matej: *Spravodajské eso slovenského štátu. Kauza Imrich Sucký (Informational ace of the Slovak state. The case of Imrich Sucký)*. Bratislava 2007.

<sup>36</sup> See for example JABLONICKÝ, Jozef: *Z ilegality do Povstania (From illegality to Uprising)*. Banská Bystrica 2009 (2nd edition); JABLONICKÝ, Jozef: *Samizdat o odboji 1 (Samizdat about the resistance movement 1)*. Bratislava 2004; MEDRICKÝ, Gejza: *Minister spomína (The Minister reminisces)*. Bratislava 1993; TEREN, Štefan (ed.): *Narodohospodár Peter Zatko spomína (National keeper Peter Zatko reminisces)*. Bratislava 1993 and other.

<sup>37</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Dilemy Františka Galana (Dilemmas of František Galan)*. In: SYRŇÝ, Marek and comp.: *Kolaborácia a odboj na Slovensku a v krajinách nemeckej sféry vplyvu v rokoch 1939–1945. (Collaboration and the resistance movement in Slovakia and in countries of German sphere influence in the years 1939–1945)*. Banská Bystrica 2009, pp. 371–381.

Jozef Tiso's main idea was the quite difficultly applicable credo "one nation, one party, one leader".<sup>38</sup> He was behaving more as a priest than as a politician when implementing this idea into practice. His well-meant but politically not very elaborated idea became actually feasible to carry out because of its ideological incoherence with supporters of dismissed parties as well as different opinions of two formed groups within HSLS on the solution of the Jewish question, on social matters and on the connection to Germany. Two other national parties – the German one and the Hungarian one – were politically active in Slovakia besides HSLS; however they did not participate in governing and their existence was allowed only because of the Nazi pressure, respectively with regard to the Slovaks living in Hungary.<sup>39</sup>

In the spirit of words uttered by Jozef Tiso at the 7th HSLS Assembly in Piešťany in 1936 that the party's effort was supposed to be achievement of leading position of the party as a single representative of the Slovak nation, the regime of autonomous Slovakia started to form. The motto "One nation, one party, one leader", uttered in 1936 became its basic idea.<sup>40</sup> The first phase of the regime is characterized by the power struggle between radicals and the moderate group with the advantage of the moderate group around Jozef Tiso. Building up of the power monopol of HSLS and the regime was supported by former non-ludaks. During the initial period, the clerical wing of the party

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<sup>38</sup> See Kočíš, Aladár: *Náš siedmy zjazd. Pamätnica VII. zjazdu HSLS (Our seventh assembly. Commemorative book of the 7th assembly)*. Bratislava 1936, p. 16; Compare BAKA, Igor: *HSLS od 6. októbra do salzburských rokovaní v lete 1940 (HSLS from 6th October to Salzburg negotiations in summer 1940)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov II. (The Slovak Republic Through the eyes of young historians II)*. Bratislava 2003, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 2008. For information about forming Slovak-Hungarian relations see for example HETÉNYI, Martin: *Slovensko-maďarské pomedzie v rokoch 1938–1945 (Slovak-Hungarian border area in the years 1938–1945)*. Nitra 2008; LIPTÁK, Lubomír: *Maďarsko v politike slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939–1943*. Historický časopis (Historical magazine), no. 1, 1967, iss. 15, pp. 1–35; PODOLEC, Ondrej: *Slovensko-maďarské konflikty a ich odraz na pôde slovenského snemu (Slovak-Hungarian conflicts and their reflection on the field of the Slovak Assembly)*. In: ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal – PURDEK, Imrich (eds.): *Slovensko vo vojnách a v konfliktoch v 20. storočí (Slovakia in the wars and conflicts of the 20th century)*. Bratislava 2003, pp. 182–193.

<sup>40</sup> See Kočíš, Aladár: *Náš siedmy zjazd. Pamätnica VII. zjazdu HSLS (Our seventh assembly. Commemorative book of the 7th assembly)*. Bratislava 1936, p. 16; Compare BAKA, Igor: *HSLS od 6. októbra do salzburských rokovaní v lete 1940 (HSLS from 6th October to Salzburg negotiations in summer 1940)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov II. (The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians II)*. Bratislava 2003, p. 12.

gathered around the Prime Minister and later President Jozef Tiso<sup>41</sup> had practically unlimited power. This group of so-called moderate politicians tried to turn Slovakia into a kind of authoritative state with the support of some non-ludak politicians, they wanted to accentuate its christian tendencies, social fairness with some applied pro-nazi aspects mostly in the matter of anti-Jewish legislation.<sup>42</sup> In the constitution from July 1939, 3 fundamental principles were accentuated-the national one, the christian one and the social one.<sup>43</sup>

The evidence for the fact that the state cannot be labelled as standard totalitarianism but rather as an authoritative regime is for example that some democratic principles of the former Czechoslovakia had been preserved in the new constitution. – for example the Parliament (Snem) that Nazi called a democratic relic and together with the Hlinka Guard they took measures to eliminate it.<sup>44</sup> However, the Parliament was not of great importance and did not have the power to make decisions in practical political matters. Gradually it was losing its status and influence and in that way it partook in the forming of an authoritative regime.<sup>45</sup> Its tasks were overtaken by the government of the Slovak Republic, they were even able to pass decrees with legislative power which is inconcievable in democratic states. On the other hand, despite all authoritative signs, many positive social acts were anchored in the constitution – parents were obliged to take care of their children, people were obliged to pay taxes, also the protection of life, property and freedom were anchored in the constitution, however, these could have been restricted

<sup>41</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*, Bratislava 2008, p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> First anti-Jewish laws were passed in 1939. The beginning of aryanization might be dated back to this year. See SLNEKOVÁ, Veronika: *Arizácia židovského hnutelného majetku ako súčasť „riešenia“ židovskej otázky v hospodárskej oblasti – modelové mesto Trnava v rokoch 1939–1945. (Aryanization of Jewish chattel as a part of the “solution” of the Jewish question in the economic area – a role model town of Trnava in the years 1939–1945.)* In: NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard (ed.): *Studia historica Nitriensia VIII*, Nitra 1999, pp. 208–209.

<sup>43</sup> PODOLEC, Ondrej: *K niektorým prvkom prvej slovenskej ústavy a ich reálnej aplikácii v politickom živote štátu (To some aspects of the first Slovak constitution and their real application in the political life of the state)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov II. (The Slovak Republic Through the Eyes of Young Historians I)*. Trnava 2002, pp. 11–31; PODOLEC, Ondrej: *Medzi kontinuitou a diskontinuitou... (Between continuity and discontinuity...)*. Bratislava 2014.  
PETRUF, Pavol: *Zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky 1939–1945. (Foreign Policy of Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 2011.

<sup>44</sup> SNA, f. 209, 209-837-4. Record of ÚŠB from 23/1/1949.

<sup>45</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 2008, p. 49.

by the law which happened mostly during the Jewish persecution.<sup>46</sup> The anti-Jewish legislative noticeably restricting rights of individual group within population can be perceived as one of the greatest traumas that is connected with discussed time period and implicitly belongs to the evaluation of the regime in the Slovak Republic. The undemocratic regime in Slovakia was exponentiated by other measures – the freedom of the press was limited, Propaganda Bureau serving as a guide was modelled after German example, later internment and labour camps were opened. Unification in the terms of the idea of the national unification affected different areas of life in Slovakia. Back in 1938 non-ludaks interest groups and sport organizations had been dissolved and replaced by ludak ones, mostly by Hlinka Guard.<sup>47</sup> In 1938 HG had overtaken possessions of dissolved sport and military groups and had become the only paramilitary organization in Slovakia.<sup>48</sup> Gradually it was gaining more competences and power and its existence aroused conflict between the pro-nazi radicals and moderate ludaks, later known as the base of the president Tiso. The youth was supposed to be raised in the ludak spirit via the organization Hlinka Youth<sup>49</sup> and all citizens were supposed to be arranged into 6 groups that were to replace political parties.<sup>50</sup> This idea of unification of life in Slovakia had never been put into action for numerous reasons.

According to the Constitution, the president of SR Jozef Tiso who remained in the function all six years of the existence of the republic held extensive powers.<sup>51</sup> In the later period (from 1942 onward) a new system of leadership modelled after Germany was being introduced and Tiso took the title vodca (leader).<sup>52</sup> This step ensured him great prestigiousness in the subsequent struggle with radicals-his competences as the party chairman strengthened and elements of democratic electoral system of electing party functionaries were removed. The authoritative system became even stronger this way. The State Council became a control and advisory body – this

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009, pp. 86–91.

<sup>48</sup> SNA, f. 604, 604-51-3, State Archive (Štátny archív – ŠA) Trnava, f. County office in Trnava 1923–1944. 392-1938,33885, 330/adm.

<sup>49</sup> MILLA, Michal: *Hlinkova mládež 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Youth 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Agriculture, industry, trade, finance and banking, freelance work, public professions.

<sup>51</sup> Until the elections in summer 1939 he was the Prime Minister of the autonomous government (from 14th March 1939 the Prime Minister of slovak government).

<sup>52</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009, p. 287.

element was adopted from Fascist regimes, however it did not possess any direct political power.<sup>53</sup> The power was represented mostly by the president and the government. The State Council was a kind of “an association of well-merited politicians” whose decisions had mostly only declarative character without any political importance. The character of the state was independent of its decisions, it changed according to the fact which of the two political groups had the predominance on the political scene at given time.

The struggle for ruling posts and setting control over the character of the state between radicals and conservatives and the German intervention in summer 1940 marked the end of the first phase of the regime. It was ushered in by the crisis of the regime which fully broke out at the beginning of 1940. Radicals grouped around the Hlinka Guard complained about too slow implementation of national-socialist ideas into practice, over-clericalism thus too many priests in politics<sup>54</sup> and not solving pressing social issues. They also criticized slow solution of the Jewish question.<sup>55</sup> In radical circles appeared some thoughts that “brushed up” an older idea from the end of 1938 of marching to Bratislava and discharging the Assembly.<sup>56</sup> Events moved rapidly in February 1940 when an argument between the head of HG Mach and the Minister Ďurčanský broke out with the dispute about the form of anti-Jewish actions in the background.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> KAMENEC, Ivan: *Štátna rada v politickom systéme slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939–1945* (*The State Council in the political system of the Slovak state in 1939–1945*). Historický časopis (Historical magazine), no. 2, 1996, iss. 44, pp. 221–242.

<sup>54</sup> SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Das Deutsche Reich und die Slowakische Republik 1938–1945. Dokumente. Band I. Von München bis Salzburg 1938–1940. Dokumente und Essay. 2. Buch Slovensko v jeseni 1944* (*The German Reich and the Slovak Republic 1938–1945. Documents. Volume I. From Munich to Salzburg 1938–1940. Documents and Essay. 2. Book Slovakia in the autumn 1944*). Bratislava 2008. Document 270–S, p. 403. Record from the investigation of Jakub Grom by ÚŠB. In addition to the president three more members of the state administration were priests and they formed one fifth of the MPs of the Slovak Parliament. See PETRANSKÝ, Ivan A.: *Katolícka cirkev v období prvej Slovenskej republiky* (*Catholic Church in the time of the First Slovak Republic*). In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov I* (*The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians I*). Trnava 2002, p. 35.

<sup>55</sup> SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Das Deutsche Reich und die Slowakische Republik 1938–1945. Dokumente. Band I. Von München bis Salzburg 1938–1940. Dokumente und Essay. 2. Buch Slovensko v jeseni 1944* (*The German Reich and the Slovak Republic 1938–1945. Documents. Volume I. From Munich to Salzburg 1938–1940. Documents and Essay. 2. Book Slovakia in the autumn 1944*). Bratislava 2008. Document 270–S, p. 403. Record from the investigation of Jakub Grom by ÚŠB.

<sup>56</sup> SNA, f. 209, 209-837-4. Record of ÚŠB from 23/1/1949.

<sup>57</sup> SNA, f. 209, 209-865-5. Official record from 20/2/1940. Ibid. Draft of a letter from ÚŠB to Mach from 20/2/1940. Ibid. Record of ÚŠB agent about the events. Draft of a letter from ÚŠB to Mach from 20/2/1940. NA Praha, f. 136, b. 17, 248346. Report of SD from 27/2/1940;

It was obvious that the climax of the crisis in the state was very close. Radicals wanted to introduce the so-called “Slovak national socialism” in Slovakia which was a kind of German Nazism adapted to Slovak conditions. To achieve this they needed either to carry out a coup d'état or to precipitate a state crisis. The crisis precipitated by Mach and some guardistic functionaries broke out at the beginning of May and it sharpened after the intervention of Tiso after he had discharged Mach from all public functions.<sup>58</sup> On 21st May 1940 the President appointed František Galan as the head commander.<sup>59</sup> Radicals went on the defensive from which they were put out after the German intervention.

The Germans decide to take advantage of the situation and they expressed their support for Mach.<sup>60</sup> They correctly realized that was the right moment for altering the course of policy of the young country and they tried to take the best possible advantage of this situation.<sup>61</sup> They decided to summon leading representatives to Salzburg where they were supposed to discuss the later distribution of power in Slovakia.<sup>62</sup> On 28th July 1940, Hitler summoned Tiso, Tuka and Mach to Salzburg and he made the President to exclude Ďurčanský<sup>63</sup> from the government and he appointed Mach as Interior Minister and Tuka as Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>64</sup> According to many German analytic reports about the development of Slovakia, Salzburg

VNUK, František: *Mať svoj štát znamená život (To have one's state means life)*. Bratislava 1991, p. 246.

<sup>58</sup> Mach had already handed in his resignation in February, Tiso, however, refused to sign it afraid of a German intervention. NA Praha, f. 136, b. 13, 208170–208174. Woermann's report from 23/5/1940. Ibid, 208182. Bernard's report from 21/5/1940.

<sup>59</sup> NA Praha, f. 136, b. 13, 208176–208179. Report from German embassy in Bratislava from 22/5/1940. Compare SNA, f. 209, 209–837–10. Command no 20 from 28/5/1940. F. Galan took the office one day after his appointment.

<sup>60</sup> *Grenzbote (Borderline Herald)*, 25/5/1940, p. 1. See NA Praha, f. 136, b. 12, 202021–202025. Woermann's report from 23/5. 1940.

<sup>61</sup> Soon after Mach's dismissal Ernst Woermann said that the new course that appeared after his dismissal was not acceptable for the Germans. On the basis of this could have been presumed that the Germans would try, sooner or later, to intervene.

<sup>62</sup> ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: *Scripti vobis III*. Bratislava 2017, pp. 257–262; LIPTÁK, L.: *Príprava a priebeh salzburských rokovani roku 1940 medzi predstaviteľmi Nemecka a slovenského štátu (Preparation and course of Salzburg negotiations in 1940 between the representatives of Germany and the Slovak state)*. Historický časopis (Historical magazine), no. 3, 1965, iss. 13.

<sup>63</sup> See extensive German material “Ferdinand Ďurčanský, the Slovak Minister of Interior and Foreign Affairs”. NA Praha, f. 136, b. 13, 208123–108134. Ibid, 208137–208139. Undated report “Events in Slovakia”. Ibid, 208170–208174. Woermann's report from 23/5/1940.

<sup>64</sup> NA Praha, f. 136, b. 13, 208024–208029. Compare Ibid, 208103. Bernard's report from 22/7/1940.



was “the height of Hlinka Guard’s fight against clericalism, czechoslovakism, freemasonry and Jewishness”.<sup>65</sup> The future revealed this had been just a temporary victory and the stake on Mach had been a mistake for the Germans and HG, as the later analyses show.<sup>66</sup>

### 3 2nd phase of the regime (July 1940–the end of August 1944)

After Salzburg, Alexander Mach was appointed back to be not only the head commander of Hlinka Guard but also Interior Minister. A critic of Tiso’s, supporter of the national-socialism and of stronger ties to Nazi Germany, prof. Vojtech Tuka, became Minister of Foreign Affairs. By means of their appointment to crucial posts within the state, Germans were following their own political agenda. According to them, the purpose of Salzburg negotiations lay in the fact that power given into the hands of Jozef Tiso was going to be redistributed again in the hands of Tuka and Mach in summer 1940. Germans expected they would be able to influence the way in which the ideas of new Europe and national-socialism were going to be put into practice.<sup>67</sup>

This was the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the regime characterized by the struggle between radicals and Tiso’s wing for the conception of state policy. Radicals demanded quick solution of the Jewish question, however, this issue started to be perceived very delicately by Slovak society from 1942 onward after dispatching transports to the territory of occupied Poland (by Nazis) when they saw excessive radicalism and brutality of high profile individuals from among the ranks of the Hlinka Guard. Almost daily speeches about implementing national-socialist ideas into practice did not appeal to Slovak people. The national-socialism became the symbol of the subsequent period and a bone of contention between so-called Tiso’s wing and Tuka’s wing.<sup>68</sup> Radicals tried to alter the nature of the regime by excluding Jozef Tiso’s wing from the state government, however, Germans themselves did not want to cause any rebellion in the society by removal of quite a publicly popular president. They needed to turn Slovakia into a role-model obedient state and therefore radicals’ efforts to strengthen their positions as well as their attempts to replace Tiso by Tuka were rejected. Radicals and the Hlinka Guard

<sup>65</sup> SNA, f. Alexandria Archive, microfilm C – 971. Report from 20/5/1942.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Report SD from 24/8/1943.

<sup>67</sup> SNA, f. “S”, S – 47 – 1/187–190. Report of political situation in Slovakia.

<sup>68</sup> See for example SNA, f. “S”, S – 47 – 1/160–167.



were gradually losing their status and their attempts for implementation of national-socialist ideas were declining. Jozef Tiso, who was on the defensive for a short time after Salzburg, started to gain back his lost positions and he was acquiring predominance over the radicals.

The nature of the national-socialist Slovakia was being pushed through mostly by the Hlinka Guard. After the July events, it became highly influential in the state. Shortly after Otoman Kubala had become the head of the Guard,<sup>69</sup> the German advisor for HG SS-Obersturmbannführer Viktor Nageler came.<sup>70</sup> Germans tried hard to turn Slovakia into a role-model satellite state with its own state administration that was supposed to be influenced by German ideas. This was the reason why, after the Salzburg negotiations, came to Slovakia a group of advisors, so-called “Berater”, supposed to guide the life in Slovak state.<sup>71</sup>

According to words of H. E. Ludin “*the advisors delegated by the Reich*” “*were supposed to work on creating and forming the state and thus in the sector assigned to them...*”<sup>72</sup> The division of the Slovak political scene into two wings deepened. In the struggle, Tiso relied on the party, that was according to one Nazi report, “*almost all in the hands of clerus*”.<sup>73</sup> Radicals sought support in Nazi Germany, however, it had its own political intentions and therefore supported the status quo on the Slovak political scene. In their pragmatism, the Hlinka Guard and radicals played quite an important role but Germans did not want to destabilize conditions in Slovakia which could complicate the ways of using Slovak industry and army and thus upset their concept of an oasis in a country controlled by Germany.

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<sup>69</sup> 30/7/1940.

<sup>70</sup> 26/8/1940.

<sup>71</sup> Altogether there were about 70–80 of them, including the assisting staff and members of the German Military Mission. See SCHVARC, Michal: *Úvaha nemeckého vyslanca Hansa Elarda Ludina o systéme poradcov na Slovensku* (A reflexion of a German member of parliament Hans Elard Ludin about the system of advisors in Slovakia). In: Pamäť národa (Nation's memory), no. 3, 2008, iss. 5, p. 64.

See also NA Praha, f. 136, b. 13, 208104. Bernard's report “Nemeckí beráteri na Slovensku” (“German advisors in Slovakia”) from 22/7/1940.

TÖNSMAYER, Tatjana: *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939–1945* (The Third Reich and Slovakia 1939–1945). Paderborn 2003.

<sup>72</sup> SCHVARC, Michal: *Úvaha nemeckého vyslanca Hansa Elarda Ludina o systéme poradcov na Slovensku* (A reflexion of a German member of parliament Hans Elard Ludin about the system of advisors in Slovakia). In: Pamäť národa (Nation's memory), no. 3, 2008, iss. 5, p. 67.

<sup>73</sup> NA Praha, f. 136, b. 1, 167622 – 167625. Report from 4/10/1940 for the Foreign Bureau in Berlin.

Discrepancies between the Guard and the party characterized actually all post-Salzburg period of the Slovak Republic. They culminated at the beginning of 1940 along with the backstage struggle between Tuka and Tiso by declaration of Tuka's 14-point programme which Tuka attended to impugn the president with by accentuating national-socialist principles.<sup>74</sup> However, Tiso with his pragmatical policy managed to handle this struggle.<sup>75</sup> His wing often used the term national socialism in their statements, the representatives of the wing perceived it as necessity that arose from the international situation and as follow-up of Nazi ideas of new Europe.<sup>76</sup> The balance of power was shifting towards the side of the president's group.<sup>77</sup> In one German report from August 1943 is literally written that "Mach has been down for a long time (...) and he is Tiso's toy".<sup>78</sup> The fight about the nature of the regime was won by Tiso's moderate supporters. Hopes of Guardsmen after Salzburg had not been fulfilled.<sup>79</sup> Even the Hlinka Guard got under control of the party of Jozef Tiso after the replacement of HG head and after Mach's leaving for the president's wing.<sup>80</sup>

An important part of the post-Salzburg period is the so-called solution of the Jewish question. After Salzburg negotiations the procedure of passing anti-semitic acts was sped up as well as the process of Aryanization which was the peak of undemocratic interference of the regime with the life in Slovakia.

Law no. 210 from September 1940 authorized the Slovak Government to deal with the aryanization of Jewish property without involvement of the Parliament. Shortly afterwards, the second aryanization law No 303 was passed in November 1940, it did not even count on "voluntary aryanization" based on the concept of shared ownership.<sup>81</sup> Aryanization was an important interference into properties in Slovakia. For many regimists, redistribution of possessions meant a great opportunity to profit from the suffering of

<sup>74</sup> SNA, f. "S", S – 47 – 1/160 – 167. Report about the political situation in Slovakia.

<sup>75</sup> VNUK, František: *Mať svoj štát znamená život (To have one's state means life)*. Bratislava 1991, p. 239.

<sup>76</sup> SNA, f. Alexandria Archive. Microfilm C – 970. Nageler's letter from 10/2/1942.

<sup>77</sup> See for example NA Praha, f. 136, b. 1, 11863-11864. Weizsäcker's report for Foreign Office in Berlin from 7/4/1942.

<sup>78</sup> In original "Spielball" ("Toyball"). See SNA, f. Alexandria Archive, microfilm C – 971. Report SD from 27/8/1943.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Undated material with the title "The beginning of Rodobrana".

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Historical development of the Hlinka Guard. List addressed to Dr. Hermann from SD Vienna from 7/4/1943.

<sup>81</sup> SNA, f. 604, 604 – 52 – 3. Act No 303/1940 in § 21 stated that the base of the transfer fee and sales tax is the value set by the Central economic office.

Jewish citizens. Affiliation to the regime, cronyism and corruption became in many cases major criteria for choosing the aryanisers (executors of aryanism) which the industry suffered from. Hastiness of aryanization and the cronyism were criticized by numerous politicians but without any success.<sup>82</sup> Aryanization created a large group of citizens whose property had been confiscated and whom the state “had to” get rid of. The idea of Jewish deportations, that have remained a huge trauma and a black stain on the existence of the Slovak Republic, came in handy.

Many works have been written on the subject of Jewish deportations.<sup>83</sup> The peak of the deportations was supposed to be the process of expulsion of all Jews from the Slovak territory.<sup>84</sup> The beginning of the first Jewish deportations from the Slovak territory dates back to 25th March 1942. During deportations, many cruel scenes displayed. For many Guardsmen they were, similarly to aryanization, opportunity to enrich themselves.<sup>85</sup> Deportations were stopped in the middle of October 1942.<sup>86</sup>

Despite all above mentioned negatives, many Slovaks were satisfied with the status of Slovakia and relatively good industrial and cultural situation, on the other hand, Guardistic blunders showed that critics of the regime and of the ties with Nazi Germany were rightful. Society gradually started to stagnate in their support of the regime. People did not agree with Guardistic blunders and national-socialist ideas presented on a daily bases did not appeal to them, either. With the worsening situation on the eastern front, they realized possible difficulties brought to Slovakia by its connection to Nazi Germany in the matter of the future arrangement of Europe.

Although Slovak side tried to moderate German requests in the matter of committing Slovak troops and they sent the lowest possible number of soldiers to the front,<sup>87</sup> the service side by side with Nazi Germany

<sup>82</sup> MEDRICKÝ, Gejza: *Minister spomína (Minister reminisces)*. Bratislava 1993, p. 176.

<sup>83</sup> KAMENEC, Ivan: *Po stopách tragédie (In the tracks of a tragedy)*. Bratislava 1991; NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard (ed.): *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942 (Holocaust in Slovakia. Deportations in 1942)*. Bratislava 2005 and many other works.

<sup>84</sup> As follows from German news from March 1942, Germans were planning to deport all Jews from Slovakia. See NA Praha, f. 136, b. 1, 11870. Luther's report for Foreign Office in Berlin from 29/3/1942.

<sup>85</sup> NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard (ed.): *Holokaust na Slovensku 4. Dokumenty nemeckej proveniencie (Holocaust in Slovakia 4. Documents of German provenience)*, p. 204. Report SD Vienna Central Office to SS Standartenführer Ehlich “The Jewish question in Slovakia”.

<sup>86</sup> KAMENEC, Ivan: *Po stopách tragédie (In the tracks of a tragedy)*. Bratislava 1991, p. 195.

<sup>87</sup> For committing of Slovak troops on the front see more in three-part monography MIČIANIK, Pavel: *Slovenská armáda v ťažení proti Sovietskemu zväzu (Slovak army in the fight against the Soviet Union)*. Banská Bystrica 2007–2010.

aroused aversion against the connection to Germany within the army as well as within the society. Even the state's own ranks had their hand in destabilization of the regime – both, the army that had been preparing an armed action and whose aversion against the radicals had been well-known since the establishment of the republic,<sup>88</sup> and the judicial bodies that managed to resist “Gleichschaltung” and kept considerable independence from the political power.<sup>89</sup> It was manifested in mild sentences, political trials and relatively bearable conditions for political prisoners.<sup>90</sup> Deeds, that would have been awarded by death penalty in Germany, earned only a short-term stay in prison in Slovakia against which appeared protests right from Berlin.<sup>91</sup> This observation shows the regime in Slovakia in a different light in comparison with some other states, however, many political opponents, who later participated in the preparation of action against the regime, were able to continue in their activities and that way the regime undermined itself through its benevolent attitude which hit back in autumn 1944 when the Uprising against the regime was launched under the leadership of army ranks.<sup>92</sup> The regime tried for all it was worth to avert its gradual decline but without success. In the course of 1943, the regime tried to “gleichschalt” the last remains of autonomous bodies and it carried out other measures leading to implementation of the “leader principle” on the lower levels of the territorial-governing apparatus.<sup>93</sup> However, it failed to avert the regime crisis.

From 1943 onwards, going hand in hand with unfavourable conditions on the World War II fronts and citizens fed up with the tense anti-semitic policy pushed through by radicals, mostly the Hlinka Guard, a gradual crisis of the regime was starting which culminated into preparations or armed actions against the Germans at the end of August 1944. To the regime crisis also contributed the fact, that among police ranks, state administration and mostly in the army and State Security Headquarters there were many people undermining the regime and in the autumn 1944 they openly rose against

<sup>88</sup> Army had bad relations mostly with the Hlinka Guard. See SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009, pp. 155–163, 232–240, 315–325, 405–412.

<sup>89</sup> KAMENEC, Ivan: *Slovenský štát (The Slovak State)*. Praha 1992, p. 122.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1939–1945)*. Bratislava 2008, p. 53.

<sup>92</sup> LACKO, Martin: *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944 (The Slovak National Uprising 1944)*. Bratislava 2008.

<sup>93</sup> KORČEK, Jozef: *Slovenská republika 1943–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1943–1945)*. Bratislava 1999, p. 30.

the regime. Atmosphere in the society was culminating in the first half of 1944.<sup>94</sup>

Although the situation in Slovakia was not as serious as in neighbouring countries, there were increasing problems with the rationing system which had to be used to regulate the consumer market with the shortage goods as Slovakia was in the state of war.<sup>95</sup> The atmosphere in the society and its perception of the regime had been influenced by increasing number of air raids in the Slovak territory and activities of partisan units that were increasing in the middle of 1944.<sup>96</sup> Propaganda was working at full throttle at that time. After the deportations had been stopped, radicals demanded their resumption which had been promised to them by Interior Minister himself.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the regime in the period of destabilization in summer 1944 tried to avoid its gradual decline, unsuccessfully, however.<sup>98</sup> At that unenviable stage of “the crisis development of the regime”,<sup>99</sup> before the launch of the Uprising, the Slovak Republic entered its – from the point of view of the political regime at that time – final, third phase.

#### 4 3rd phase of the regime (the end of August 1944–April 1945)

In cooperation with the Soviets, from the middle of the year 1944 onwards, number of partisan raids in Slovak territory was increasing. Germans perceiving Slovakia as an important transit station decided to step in and they introduced occupation regime in Slovakia at the end of August 1944. The third phase of the regime started with the break-out of the Uprising and it lasted till the end of the Slovak Republic in May 1945. For

<sup>94</sup> PODOLEC, Ondrej: *Ticho pred búrkou. (Sonda do nálad slovenskej spoločnosti na jar 1944)* *Silence before the storm. (A study about the atmosphere in the Slovak society in spring 1944)*. In: LACKO, Martin (ed.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov III. Povstanie roku 1944 (The Slovak Republic Through the Eyes of Young Historians III. The Uprising in 1944)*. Trnava 2004, pp. 19–32.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>96</sup> HRUBOŇ, Anton – KRIŠTOFÍK, Juraj (eds.): *Partizáni a Slovensko. (Partisans and Slovakia)*. Krakov 2013; LACKO, Martin: *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944 (The Slovak National Uprising 1944)*. Bratislava 2008, p. 62.

<sup>97</sup> *Gardista (The Guardsman)*, 9/2/1943, p. 2. See ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov v časovej následnosti faktov dvoch tisícročí (History of Slovakia and the Slovaks in the chronological succession of two milleniums)*. Bratislava 2003, p. 449. Compare SNA, f. NS, 13/46 Otomar Kubala, microfilm II. A – 920. Testimony from 31/5/1946.

<sup>98</sup> KORČEK, Jozef: *Slovenská republika 1943–1945 (The Slovak Republic 1943–1945)*, pp. 96–99.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Slovak people until then not-known fights were moved to Slovak territory, until then, Slovak people did not experience war atrocities in their territory, which was changed by the Uprising. Although Jozef Tiso remained President formally, the rule over Slovakia had been overtaken by the occupation army headed by Gottlob Berger.<sup>100</sup> In the very first day after the Uprising break-out the radicals from the Hlinka Guard were activated, they started to serve the Nazi and supported the declining regime in the fight against the rebels and partisans. Since the Germans did not trust the army,<sup>101</sup> the Hlinka Guard seemed them to be a suitable opportunity of using a local organization in the fight against the rebels. The Hlinka Guard Emergency Units were created, partly and initially as a substitute for the army, headed by Otomar Kubala,<sup>102</sup> their task was to help to carry out assisting services for the Germans.<sup>103</sup>

According to the radicals, the break – out of the Uprising was caused by unfinished of the “slovakization” of the state that still did not get rid of its opponents in the year 1938 or 1939. At that time, HSLS was not able to deal with the problem of shortage of the “laic intelligence” within their own ranks.<sup>104</sup> The highest positions such as the government, leadership of the Parliament and highest offices were almost exclusively in the hand of ludaks but “*only one step lower where high qualification is necessary, where the decisions about the realization of the government policy are made, there the*

<sup>100</sup> SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Das Deutsche Reich und die Slowakische Republik 1938–1945. Dokumente. Band I. Von München bis Salzburg 1938–1940. Dokumente und Essay. 2. Buch Slovensko v jeseni 1944 (The German Reich and the Slovak Republic 1938–1945. Documents. Volume I. From Munich to Salzburg 1938–1940. Documents and Essay. 2. Book Slovakia in the autumn 1944)*. Bratislava 2008. Document 9-S, p. 19. An undated record by the Emergency Unit H of security police and security service about the meeting at General Berger from 1/9/1944.

<sup>101</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009, pp. 385–394.

<sup>102</sup> SUŠKO, Ladislav: *Das Deutsche Reich und die Slowakische Republik 1938–1945. Dokumente. Band I. Von München bis Salzburg 1938–1940. Dokumente und Essay. 2. Buch Slovensko v jeseni 1944 (The German Reich and the Slovak Republic 1938–1945. Documents. Volume I. From Munich to Salzburg 1938–1940. Documents and Essay. 2. Book Slovakia in the autumn 1944)*. Bratislava 2008. Document 9-S, p. 19. An undated record by the Emergency Unit H of security police and security service about the meeting at General Berger from 1/9/1944. Ibid, document no 16 – S, pp. 28–29. Berger’s report for Himmler.

<sup>103</sup> SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945 (The Hlinka Guard 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 2009, pp. 405–436.

<sup>104</sup> LIPTÁK, Lubomír: *Politický režim na Slovensku v rokoch 1939–1945 (Political regime in Slovakia in the years 1939–1945)*. In: *Slovenské národné povstanie v roku 1944. (Sborník príspevkov z národnoslobodzovacieho boja 1938–1945). Slovak National Uprising in 1944. (Anthology of contributions from the National Liberation Movement 1938–1945)*. Bratislava 1965, p. 24.

*vassals or outright opponents of the regime dominate*".<sup>105</sup> Among them can be found many former agrarians, members of other parties but also true blue "Czechoslovaks" or Czechs. That way the Guard got the possibility to point out their presence in the state apparatus and seditious activities even more intensively which they fully used.

The regime was already in agony. One of the indicators of the fact that Slovak people were not willing to fight for Slovakia to stay on the side of Germany is that the Hlinka Guard Emergency Units (Pohotovostné oddiely Hlinkovej gardy – POHG) were forced to draft Slovak people into army by means of "calling cards" because of the lack of volunteers.<sup>106</sup> That period is one of the most tragic parts of the regime in the 1<sup>st</sup> SR. While in 1942 the Slovaks managed to stop Jewish transports despite German complaints, a few thousands Jews were even rescued in the labor camps,<sup>107</sup> after the break-out of the Uprising, mass murdering of the Jews in Slovak territory started under supervision of the Germans cooperating with POHG. The executed ones were not only the Jews but also communists and enemies of the regime. The regime of the Slovak Republic was definitely drawing to an end. The newly appointed government of Štefan Tiso faced an uneasy task – to secure the running of the state. They did relatively well despite the occupation regime until the arrival of the Red Army, but other tasks other than keeping the state running or long-term investment intentions were at that time unfeasible.<sup>108</sup> The power was basically only in the hands of German organs. Not even ÚŠB was performing any real security policy.

It was actually exclusively in the hands of the Germans and the informational department of HG.<sup>109</sup> Masses of people did not show big interest in cooperation with the regime even though a large number of

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, pp. 24–25.

<sup>106</sup> SNA, f. 604, 604 – 54 – 3. Order of HVHG No 14 from 25/9/1944.

<sup>107</sup> For given issue see NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard – BAKA, Igor – KAMENEC, Ivan (eds.): *Holokaust na Slovensku 5. Židovské pracovné tábory a strediská na Slovensku 1938–1944. Dokumenty. (Holocaust in Slovakia 5. Jewish labor and centres in Slovakia 1938–1944. Documents.)* Bratislava 2004.

<sup>108</sup> PODOLEC, Ondrej: *Až do poslednej chvíle. (Činnosť vlády Štefana Tisu) (Until the last moment. (Activities of the Government of Štefan Tiso).* In: ŠMIGEL, Michal – MIČKO, Peter (eds.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov V. (The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians V.).* Banská Bystrica 2006, p. 31.

<sup>109</sup> MEDVECKÝ, Matej: *Ústredňa štátnej bezpečnosti a prípravy SNP (State Security Headquarters and preparations of SNP).* In: ŠMIGEL, Michal – MIČKO, Peter (eds.): *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov V. (The Slovak Republic through the eyes of young historians V.).* Banská Bystrica 2006, p. 62.



citizens were afraid of the consequences of the war conflict as well as of the future arrangement of Slovakia. Support of the regime among the people was rapidly falling.

The regime ceased to exist after the arrival of the Red Army and resignation of the Slovak government in the Austrian exile at the end of May 1945. According to the decree no. 33 of the Slovak National Council from 15th May 1945<sup>110</sup> numerous important representatives of the regime were tried by the retributive court.<sup>111</sup> Its activity is restricted by the years shortly after WW II when the new regime was dealing with the representatives of the former establishment, some cases were heard also later.<sup>112</sup> More high representatives were sentenced to death or to long prison term, however, some others avoid their punishments by fleeing abroad. Slovakia created again the common state with the Czechs that lasted until 1993. At that time there was not any possibility of getting an unbiased approach to the interpretation of the history of the Slovak Republic between 1939–1945. Therefore it is more necessary to write about the Slovak Republic in the most possible unbiased way without superfluous ideologization, with admitting both positive and negative aspects. The Slovak Republic was not black-and-white, even at

<sup>110</sup> *Sbierka nariadení Slovenskej národnej rady (Collection of Decrees of the Slovak National Council)*, 1945. Decree no. 33 from 15/5/1945 on punishment for Fascist criminals, occupants, traitors and collaborationists and on establishment of people's justice.

<sup>111</sup> On the basis of the decree the retributive justice was divided into National Court, District people's courts and Local people's courts.

<sup>112</sup> The competence of retributive justice terminated on 31st December 1947. Since not all cases had been dealt until the mentioned date, the open cases were supposed to continue at regular courts. The retributive justice was renewed after the February 1948. It was supposed to deal with the open cases, but it dealt also with lawfully closed cases. For more about the topic see for example PETRÁŠKÝ, Ivan: *Ludové súdnictvo na Slovensku v roku 1948*. In: PEJČOCH, Ivo – PLACHÝ, Jiří and col.: *Okupace, kolaborace, retribuice (Occupation, collaboration, retribution)*. Praha 2010, pp. 238–252; KLUBERT, Tomáš: *Vznik a špecifika ľudového (retribučného) súdництва na Slovensku (The origin and specifics of people's/retributive/justice in Slovakia)*. In: PEJČOCH, Ivo – PLACHÝ, Jiří and col.: *Okupace, kolaborace, retribuice (Occupation, collaboration, retribution)*. Praha 2010, pp. 233–137; SYRNÝ, Marek: *Retribúcia ako mocensko-politický činiteľ v povojnovom Slovensku (Retribution as a power-political factor in the post-war Slovakia)*. In: KOŽIAK, Rastislav – NAGY, Imrich – VARINSKÝ, Vladimír (eds.): *Acta historica Neoliensia*, tomus 6. Banská Bystrica 2003, pp. 137–147; RAŠLA, Anton: *Ludové súdy v Českoslovenku po II. svetovej vojne ako forma mimoriadneho súdnictva (People's justice in Czechoslovakia after World War II. as a form of extraordinary justice)*. Bratislava 1939; SOKOLOVIČ, Peter: *Politické pozadie procesu s členmi Hlinkovej gardy v roku 1958. (Political background of Trial with Members of Emergency Units of the Hlinka Guard in 1958)*. In: PETRÁŠ, Jiří – SVOBODA, Libor (eds.): *Československo v letech 1954–1962*. České Budějovice 2015, pp. 491–513.



that time people were living and creating and the regime was developing. However, a complex evaluation of the regime will take more time and effort.

## SUMMARY

*THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC 1939–1945.*

*THE NATURE AND MAJOR MILESTONES OF THE REGIME.*

The presented study deals with the period of 1938–1945 in Slovakia and the regime, which was governed in this territory. A regime of one state party – Hlinka's Slovak People's party was established 6th of October 1938, when Slovakia was still in a joint state with the Czechs. The regime survived until the end of the war and renewal of Czechoslovakia in 1945. The Slovak territory, respectively separate Slovak republic since March 1939, underwent several evolutionary stages in the period, especially in the intentions of establishing a relationship with Nazi politics. The first period of the regime was characteristic with the fight of two groups over the shape and the course of the state. After the Nazi intervention in the year 1940, the regime started to follow the Nazi politics more. A Slovak variation of national socialism was supposed to be put into practise. Nazi consultants from Germany were sent to Slovakia and the state was gradually under the German influence. The culmination of the phase was especially the tragic Final Solution to the Jewish Question. Preparation of armed uprising in Slovakia started when the German army started to be unsuccessful. The uprising burst out on 29th of August 1944 and it also commenced the last phase of the regime which was characteristic by a factual occupation of Slovakia by Germany. This part lasted until April 1945, when they evacuated last German units from Slovakia and Czechoslovakia was renewed.

**Keywords:** 2WW, Slovak Republic, regime, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, Hlinka Guard

## RESUMÉ

### *SLOVENSKÁ REPUBLIKA 1939–1945. PODSTATA A HLAVNÍ PILÍŘE REŽIMU*

Predkladaná štúdia sa zaoberá obdobím rokov 1938–1945 na Slovensku a režimom, ktorý na tomto území vládol. V ešte spoločnom štáte s Čechmi sa po vyhlásení slovenskej autonómie 6. októbra 1938 etabloval režim jednej štátostrany – Hlinkovej slovenskej ľudovej strany, ktorý pretrval až do ukončenia vojny a obnovenia Československa v roku 1945. V tomto období autonómna Slovenská krajina, resp. od marca 1939 samostatná Slovenská republika, prešla viacerými vývinovými fázami, najmä v intenciách naviazania na nacistickú politiku. Prvé obdobie etablovania režimu bolo charakteristické bojom dvoch skupín o charakter a smerovanie štátu. Po nacistickom zásahu v lete 1940 sa režim začal čoraz viac nacistifikovať. Do praxe sa mal uviesť slovenský variant národného socializmu, na Slovensko boli poslaní nemeckí poradcovia a štát sa čoraz viac dostával pod nemecký vplyv. Vyvrcholením tejto fázy bolo najmä tragické „riešenie židovskej otázky“. Idúc ruka v ruke s neúspechmi nemeckej armády sa aj na Slovensku začali robiť prípravy na ozbrojené povstanie proti Nemcom. Jeho vypuknutie 29. augusta 1944 je tiež začiatkom poslednej fázy režimu charakteristického faktickou nemeckou okupáciou Slovenska. Tá trvala až do apríla 1945, kedy boli zo Slovenska evakuované posledné nemecké jednotky a bola obnovená Československá republika.

**Kľúčov slová:** 2. svetová vojna, Slovenská republika, režim, Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, Hlinkova garda

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