| Chapter 8 |

The Slovak Theorists of Central European Integration

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on four Slovak thinkers and politicians who were involved in various forms of Central European cooperation during the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of the Slovak concepts of integration, which did not start from Slavic solidarity alone and had a broader European context, focused on Central Europe. Therefore, the ideas of Central European and European cooperation have traditionally coincided in Slovakia. The theorists considered were either practising politicians who held high governmental or ministerial positions (Milan Hodža, Milan Rastislav Štefánik), professional diplomats (Štefan Osuský), and those who were active only in the field of political journalism and national movement organisation (Ján Palárik). The majority of these thinkers also had emigrational experiences during the two world wars. The paper first describes their familial, social and religious backgrounds, before discussing their political views and specific actions. It concludes by outlining their common and divergent features, as well as their practical achievements and impact on Slovak public life.

KEYWORDS

Central Europe, confession, cooperation, integration, nation, politics

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Slovak thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries who developed political concepts that sought to consistently place the Slovaks and Slovakia on the European map. The concept of Europe was mainly understood in the broad sense of its western and central parts. Therefore, these thinkers wished to link the fate of Slovaks to this entity, because they envisioned it as the only alternative for Slovakia's political future and modernisation. However, this aspiration was not always dominant in Slovak public thinking.

Although the Slovaks are essentially a Central European nation, whose everyday image was shaped by factors such as Rome-centred Christianity, German-inspired Reformation and later French-born Enlightenment, strong alternative ideas also

Halász, I. (2023) 'The Slovak Theorists of Central European Integration' in Gedeon, M. (ed.) *Great Theorists of Central European Integration*. Miskolc-Budapest: Central European Academic Publishing. pp. 313–355. https://doi.org/10.54171/2023.mg.gtocei_9

influenced the birth of modern Slovak nationalism in the early 19th century. In the first half of the 19th century, the Slovak national ideology of the was deeply rooted in Slavic ideology that had a strong Eastern vector. Although pan-Slavism was born under the influence of German pan-Germanism and its first pioneers were Slovak Lutheran students at German universities, it succeeded in turning the gaze of Slovak thinkers towards Orthodox Eastern Europe.

This turn simultaneously led to a kind of precocious Western scepticism and anti-western criticism. The traditional Slovak conservativism also played an important role in this process, despite its Western Christian origins. Many Slovak thinkers in the old Hungarian Kingdom, fearing national death, developed an idealisation of Russia and a strong love of Serbia. Rationalist and Western ideas had less emotional appeal. These events occured in a context wherein Slovaks had always lived within the Central European framework, prior to 1945.

The present chapter deals with the portraits of Slovak thinkers who opposed this Eastern vector of thought, and theoretically preferred a Western or Central European orientation for the Slovaks. These two orientations often coincided. For Slovaks, presently, but in the past as well, the path to a Western orientation led through Central Europe. Moreover, the Slovak geographical self-image includes not only mountains but also the Danube. For them, the idea of Central Europe has therefore often coincided with their identity along the Danube.

The activities of the four historical figures considered in this chapter span around a hundred years. They are united not only by their Central European characteristics and Western ideals, but also by their commitment to democratic ones. Yet they were all fundamentally realistic. This is important to emphasise, considering that most of them were also practical politicians. True, in different circumstances. The Catholic priest Ján Palárik, who was perhaps the first to attempt to establish the theoretical foundations of realist Slovak liberalism, operated in very different circumstances from the cosmopolitan and adventurer Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Štefan Osuský was a classical elite diplomat – a role that required from him a completely different set of skills than intellectualism and visionary thinking. Milan Hodža managed to stay active at the top for the longest time. He proved to be a true homo politicus, despite his failures at the end of his life, which were essentially not due to his faults. He was perhaps the person who best combined the qualities of a realistic politician, thinking intellectual, high public office, and the time available to implement his ideas.

Of course, the chosen personalities were also socially and mentally different in many respects. Hodža, Osuský and Štefánik were Protestants, while Palárik remained a disciplined Catholic priest his entire life. The families of Hodža and Štefánik were more intellectual than the other two. Their language skills, education, travel opportunities and even health conditions were different. However, they were united by their open minds, sense of realism and commitment to the future of their nation. For the most part, they were integrative rather than divisive individuals. At the same time, they lived in an era when intellectuals played

an important role in shaping events and building states and nations. Despite their many problems, achievements, successes and failures, they enjoyed the era in which they worked, because it provided them greater opportunities, both personally and for their nation. Many of their ideas are still worth considering today.

As mentioned above, the period covered in this chapter spans a hundred years. It is framed by two main events: the 1848 revolution and the communist takeover of 1948, which was partly the result of the Second World War. During these decades, of course, other important Slovak political and social thinkers emerged who sought to place their nation on a broader regional, European or universal map (e.g. Ján Lajčiak, Ján Maliarik, Dušan Makovický etc.). However, their concepts were either not fully developed, had a weaker political dimension or did not have a major impact later on. The concepts of other Slovak politicians with bigger political impact did not have a strong Central-European dimension (e.g. those of Jozef Miloslav Hurban, Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, Andrej Hlinka, Vavro Šrobár etc.) The study also does not consider ideas that focused only on Slavic solidarity, Czechoslovak orientation and internal Slovak discussions.

The end of the Second World War and the communist take-over are selected as the boundaries of the period, because Slovakia then became part of the Soviet bloc for many decades (1948–1989). As such, the various alternative integration ideas and concepts became dangerous for their authors. The best way to develop them was in emigration or in samizdat. However, the Slovak exile was divided along authoritarian (the protagonists of former Hlinka Slovak People's Party) and democratic (pro-Czechoslovak) lines. Discourse at home in the academic circles focused mainly on literary and historical issues. Dominik Tatarka, Ľubomír Lipták and Vladimír Mináč were the important participants in the intellectual discussions on the Slovaks' place in history and Europe. However, these authors did not clearly conceptualise regional or European integration. The situation changed after 1989, when Slovakia had to redefine itself as an independent country. During these years, several ambitious authors— Ján Čarnogurský, Rudolf Chmel, Milan Zemko, Pavol Lukáč, Svetozár Bombík, Boris Zala etc—engaged in this process, of which the discussions are ongoing. Therefore, the period of the last three decades does not yet represent a history, but a present time.

1. Ján Palárik – the integrative Catholic priest and Slovak liberal politician (1822–1870)[1]

Ján Palárik had several important identities in his life that complemented each other well. He always remained, first and foremost, a Catholic priest, but was also intensively involved in Slovak politics as a representative of its liberal wing. For many years he worked as an editor of various Slovak Catholic press organs in Hungary, but later devoted himself to political journalism. In his mature age, he also began to devote himself to fiction and especially drama. In the 19th century Palárik was one of the most active Slovak dramatists. He spent most of his life trying to unite people rather than divide them, which also led him to promote ecumenism within the Christian churches; he also formulated the democratic concept of Pan-Slavism.

Palárik was born in the Slovak north of the old Hungarian Kingdom into a teacher-peasant family, which was able to provide him with a grammar school education.[2] He first studied at the grammar school (gymnasium) in Žilina, and then improved his Hungarian language in Kecskemét in the central Hungary. Later, he trained as a Catholic priest in Ostrihom (Esztergom), Bratislava and Trnava. Along with his friends,[3] he established here the Slovak student circle.

Following his ordination as a parish priest (1847), he began his work as a priest first in Starý Tekov, and then in the villages around Banská Štiavnica (Vindšacht), where he later became an assistant priest (chaplain). From 1851 to 1862 he lived and worked as a Catholic priest in Budapest. Although he was a German Catholic priest, he also maintained good contacts with local Croats, Serbs, Rusyns, and soon became one of the main figures in local Slovak social and political life. At that time Budapest was still a multiethnic city with several thousand Slovaks living there. It was one of the most politically and literary active periods of Palárik's life.[4]

1 Ján Palárik, Slovak Catholic priest, writer, playwright and publicist, Josef Rupert Maria Přecechtěl (1821–1897). Lithography probably by Roland Weibezahl (1817–1871), signed on sheet 2 of the same series, bottom left. – Výtečníci slovenskí, digitized by National Library in Prague, source of the picture: https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q1102385#/media/File:Jan_Palarik_1863.jpg.

2 Vavrovič, 1993, p. 7.

3 Zlatý fond SME: Jozef Viktorin, Martin Hattala, count Rudolf Nyáry [Online]. See: https://zlatyfond.sme.sk/autor/1/Jan-Palarik (Accessed: 12 May 2023).

4 Demmel, 2016, pp. 35–36.

In 1948/49, young Palárik had not yet exposed himself politically, although this does not mean that he had no political opinions at all. There is an interesting reference in his autobiography to these years. In his memoirs, he is said to have been accused by Slovak renegade and Hungarian circles before General Arthur Görgey, for which he was threatened with prosecution. He was eventually rescued through the intercession of General Józef Wysocki, who commanded the Polish Legion. There is no other written record of this incident,[5] but Palárik always sympathised with the Poles in later years, and proved them to be right against the Russians. This was not common in the Slovak nationalist movement, which traditionally had a strong Russophile streak.

In the 1850s, he was preoccupied with his struggles within the church and with playwriting. Palárik's political career therefore took off mainly in the freer 1860s. These years also marked the peak of Slovak constitutional thinking and long-term conceptualisation before 1918. In both respects, Palárik was also a pioneer. In the early 1860s, the Slovak national movement was also trying to rethink its aims and define the basis of its politics. The general assembly held on 6–7 June 1861 in Turčiansky sv. Martin. One of the key elements of the Memorandum adopted there was the idea of the Slovak District of Upper Hungary. This was a plan for territorial autonomy on a national basis.[6]

Although Palárik lived in the country's dynamically developing capital, he nevertheless felt separated from the Slovak regions of the country. In 1862, with the help of a prominent Russian-origin aristocrat (Helena Eszterházy-Bezobrazova), he made his way to the village of Majcichov near Trnava, where he lived out the rest of his relatively short life. Palárik was always an active and original personality who tried to overcome stereotypes and integrate people of different backgrounds. His organisational talent was already evident in the first period of his work in the Slovak regions. For instance, he founded an anti-alcohol association in his first workplace. Later he actively engaged in Slovak journalism.

He was also one of the founders of the first Slovak Catholic magazines. Particularly important was the magazine *Cyrill and Method*, which followed an ecumenical approach; however, this Slovak journal came at a difficult time. Central Europe was emerging from the defeated revolution of 1848/1849, sometimes referred to as the 'Spring of Nations'. As a result, the Slovak national movement formulated its concrete demands. In fact, 1848 saw the first independent armed uprising, with the support of Czechs, Croats and Serbs, which focused only on Slovak national goals.[7] However, the uprising that broke out in September did not really mobilise large crowds and was mainly concentrated in the region near the Hungarian-Moravian border; it ended in failure. In the civil war that was beginning, Slovak national activists, who had liberal-democratic demands but

5 Ibid. pp. 26–28.
6 Podrimavský, 1988, pp. 36–37.
7 Butvin, 1971, pp. 85–87.

feared Hungarian national dominance, finally decided in favour of the Habsburg dynasty, hoping this would protect them from the Hungarians. From then on, Slovak volunteers fought under the banner of the dynasty. It was hoped that Slovaks would be given an independent crown province, directly subordinate to the Emperor.[8]

Although this plan did not materialise, the young Emperor and King Franz Joseph issued an octroi constitution in March 1849, of which Slovaks also had high hopes. However, it only came into effect in 1851, when neo-abolitionism began and lasted until 1859. At this time Slovak activists fighting on the side of the Habsburgs were given certain posts in the reorganised administration, where Slovak was allowed to be used in some places.

The Slovak language was also given a better status in some grammar schools, and it was possible to found an independent Slovak newspaper. It is therefore no coincidence that the first independent Catholic magazine in Slovak was published at this time. The journal, founded by Andrej Radlinský and edited by Ján Palárik, only existed until 1851.[9] During its publication, it provided a forum for the young Palárik to express his views. The politically more liberal Palárik accepted the favourable situation for the Slovaks, which he wanted to use to further strengthen them. He was aware of how important it was for the Slovak movement to support the other Slavic nations within Austria. However, the Czechs, Croats, Serbs, Rusyns and Slovaks were often divided by religious and confessional issues. Resolving these would have been beneficial. The idea of reconciliation and Christian-based reunification was close to the heart of the young editor who was familiar with the work of Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (Bishop of Meaux) (1627–1704) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) 150 years earlier.[10]

Palárik, like many Slovak thinkers of his time who were influenced by Johann G. Herder's prophecy of the future role of the Slavs, wished for the Slavs to play a role in ecumenism. Palárik was mainly concerned with Catholic–Protestant reconciliation, but also looked at the Orthodox world from a longer-term perspective. Naturally, he had the interests of the organisationally strong Catholic Church at heart, but his views did not always please church leaders. In fact, Palárik also had concrete proposals for church reform, which exceeded his authority as a young priest. One of these plans was to create a Slovak archbishopric in Nitra, under which the three bishoprics (bishops) covering the Slovak ethnic areas would be assigned. This structure was to be an independent unit inside of the Hungarian ecclesiastical hierarchy.[11] With this ecclesiastical administrative structure, Palárik wanted to supplement the secular Slovak administrative framework, which he believed had been established early in the 1850s.[12]

8 Ibid. pp. 95–97.
9 Vavrovič, 1993, pp. 27–29.
10 Ibid. p. 47.
11 Ibid. p. 36, 74–76.
12 Ibid. p. 36.

At that time, Palárik was not radically anti-Hungarian. In his articles he wrote about the 1848 rebellion against the ruler, but he saw its cause not in the intolerance of the Hungarian extremists and their plans for supremacy, but mainly in the weakening of Christian faith among the population, the spread of irreligion and moral corruption.

The Protestant and Catholic reception of his ecumenical plans was interesting. Some Slovak Lutherans at the time were more afraid of union with Hungarian Calvinists, and were therefore more inclined to consider Palárik's proposals. Others, however, rejected them for fear of a realistic Catholic predominance.[13] However, the response of the lower Catholic clergy of Slovak origin was more positive.

The situation with the church hierarchy was more complicated. The journal featured some critical articles that were not received well by the bishops. Several articles also touched on the economic and property situation within the Church. The Church authorities finally took legal action against Palárik, who was forced to retire to a monastery for three weeks and was given special ecclesiastical orders. The young Slovak priest, who had always sought to integrate opposites, was finally at a crossroads. One option was to stand his ground and enter into open conflict with his church, which could have resulted in his excommunication. The other was to retreat, exercise self-criticism and remain within the church he loved. Palárik chose the latter.[14]

A consequence of the proceedings against him was that in 1852 he was transferred to Pest, then a German-majority city. He served as a parish priest to the German Catholics in Pest. At the same time, other nationalities were represented in the capital, including Slovaks and Serbs who were close to them. Palárik maintained active relations with both communities, and was very close to the Slovak Lutheran intellectuals there.

Traditionally, Slovak Catholics and Lutherans were suspicious of each other and were not usually on good terms. However, Palárik's acceptance by Slovak protestants was facilitated by his adoption, in the early 1850s, of a literary language codified by young Slovak lutherans, based on the Central Slovak dialect. Therefore, he did not insist on the Slovakised Czech language, or the Catholic Slovak literary language based on the West Slovak dialect, which had been established by Anton Bernolák in the end of 18th century.[15]

This, despite the fact that his favourite classicist Slovak poet Ján Hollý also used this language. The title of his newspaper, which had been discontinued in the meantime, referred to the two Slavic missionaries, and was also popular among Protestants. In fact, when Slovak activists set up a journal called *Sokol (Falcon)* in 1862, Palárik argued with several Catholic priests that the choice of editor-in-chief should not take denominational considerations into account. Taking his

13 Ibid. pp. 69–71.
14 Ibid. pp. 71–79.
15 Demmel, 2016, pp. 33–37.

own example, he saw that Protestant clergymen had more leeway than priests of Catholics in a strict hierarchy.[16]

Palárik's stint in Pest saw two important changes in his life. He became more active in literature and gradually became one of the most famous Slovak playwrights. The second change was linked to the freer socio-cultural climate after 1859. Palárik could also begin to engage in open politics. A realist-minded Catholic priest, who always sought to unite people rather than divide them for selfish ends, he thought through the political situation and possibilities of Slovaks during this time, and then became politically active.

The Slovak national movement, which was reactivated after 1859, coincided with the most active years of the Paláriks' political life. It was the hopeful decade of the 1860s during which most of Palárik's constitutional and geopolitical concepts were born. Palárik, like other active Slovaks, was disappointed by the promises of Vienna, but preferred to endeavour for a Hungarian-Slovak reconciliation and compromise. He was not alone in his thinking at the time; the *New Slovak School* (*Nová škola slovenská*) was born in this decade of 19th century as an alternative liberal movement. This wing of Slovak political movement in the Hungarian Kingdom organised the alternative network for Slovak cooperation in the form of Slovak National Democratic Society. Budapest was a centrum of this movement, but it had also a basis in Liptov and in several other northern regions. Under Palárik's intellectual impact, the Slovak liberals preferred the compromise with Hungarian liberals and democrats instead Vienna. Catholics had a predominant position inside this wing of Slovak political life. The achievement of Slovak territorial autonomy in Hungary was also important goal of their program, but only as a long-time ambitions. First, the effective using of municipal autonomous framework in Hungary was an important goal for this wing. They believed in the gradual development and moderate policy, realised step-by-step. Their attitude towards the Russian Empire was a more critical that of conservative Slovak protestants. For a long time, Palárik was one of the most important publicists and leaders of this national liberal Slovak movement, directly and indirectly influencing its programme and concrete policies.[17]

His position was made easier by his acceptance of the Hungarian constitutional platform of 1848, embodied in the so-called April Laws. (These liberal reform laws were adopted by the Hungarian parliament in March 1848 and were signed by the King in April. Hungarian historians used the term April Laws, whereas the Slovak historians called them March Laws.) For the Hungarian liberal elites, these laws formed the basis on which they could imagine an Austro-Hungarian compromise. Palárik's sensitivity to modern constitutional ideas and the Hungarian public law framework stemmed from three sources. While still a deacon at the seminary, he became secretly acquainted with the constitutional ideas of the

16 Vavrovič, 1993, p. 112.
17 Martinkovič, 2013.

French Enlightenment, and was particularly attracted by the ideas of Charles Montesquieu.[18] As a nationally active Slovak Catholic priest, he was strongly attached to the spiritual heritage of the Slovak language reformer Anton Bernolák. Bernolák thought was born in the late 18th century under the influence of the enlightened ideas of Joseph II. The third factor was Palárik's recognition the importance of the Hungarian liberal reform laws adopted in 1848, which he considered a good starting point.[19]

This mainly concerned the idea of territorial autonomy. It was one of the most important elements of the Slovak Memorandum of 1861, which was intended by its authors to be a long-term conceptual document. Its main author was the Slovak jurist Štefan Marko Daxner, who argued that long-term concepts should not take into account the reality of individual claims.[20]

Daxner's opinion was accepted by the majority of Lutheran leaders of the Slovak movement of 1848/1849, who formed the national-conservative wing of Slovak politics at the time. In contrast, Palárik stressed the need to set realistic goals that would not provoke the Hungarian liberal elites. He did not reject territorial autonomy in principle, but considered it too radical a goal in the short term. Instead, he called for the strengthening of municipal autonomy. He wanted to strengthen the Slovak position there first, in order to formulate larger goals later. During the Memorandum-meeting in the Turčiansky sv. Martin, he remained in the minority; the only achievement of the meeting was that the Memorandum was first addressed not to the King but to the Hungarian Parliament. The lawyer Daxner, who was the legal professional in the Hungarian constitutional law and politics, was of the same opinion.[21]

Palárik's attitude came under fire from Slovak critics. Paralelly, he became the main conceptional leader of the Slovak liberal oppositional politics during this time. The bipolar Slovak political life with two main wings (the dominant national conservative and reform-liberal) was first born in this time. The national democrat circles (clubs) and *Slovenské noviny* newspaper became the main organs of opposition. Palárik actively participated in the process of organisation of these institutions.

At this time, he formulated his own concept of democratic Slavic cooperation. For Slovaks, cooperation with other Slavic nations, both within Hungary and the Habsburg Empire as a whole, was always important. They also received considerable support from both of these nations. In June 1848, Slovak politicians attended the Slavic congress in Prague, which was convened by Czech liberals in the spirit of Austro-Slavic concepts. The Slovaks had a special relationship with the Czechs. In fact, during these years they tried to reach a decision on whether Slovaks were to

18 Pichler, 1998, p. 78.
19 Demmel, 2016, pp. 41–42.
20 Mésároš, 1988, pp. 44–45.
21 Memorandum národa slovenského, 1988, pp. 257–262.

belong to a separate nation or be part of the united Czechoslovak nation. The pan-Slavic poet Ján Kollár was still advocating the latter alternative, but the younger Romantic generation was already thinking in terms of an independent Slovak nation. Palárik was one of them.

Slovaks living in Northern Hungary sought cooperation with the Ruthenians. For example, during his stay in Pest, Palárik was also thinking of a joint Slovak-Russian Matica with scientific and cultural aims (like the academic institutions). Eventually, in 1863, a separate *Matica slovenská* was created, but it was open to cooperation with other Slavonic nations. Incidentally, Slovaks had stood together with Rusyns, represented by Adolf Dobriansky in the 1861 parliamentary elections.[22]

Finally, it should not be forgotten that Slovak Lutheran students at German universities had been among the main advocates of Slav solidarity and pan-Slavism for several decades. This ideology was partly born under the influence of and in reaction to pan-Germanism. These concepts were already being considered in a broader framework, i.e. they also took into account Russia and the Balkan Slavs. Among them, the Serbs still living in the Ottoman Empire, were particularly popular. In 1848/1849, most Slovak politicians were on the Austro-Slavic platform. They did not want to or dare disturb the existing external imperial framework. The most Slavic leaders eventually ended up in the Habsburg camp. However, Vienna did not reward pro-Austrian Slovak politicians much later on, as no independent Slovak province was created, and only small concessions and official positions were granted to them in the new regime. This was a disappointment to the Slovaks after 1849.

As a result, their main leader, Ľudovít Štúr, took on a Russophile orientation. Before his death in 1856, he wrote *Slavism and the World of the Future* in German language (*Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft, 1851*). In this book Štúr rejected Austro-Slavism and democratic-federal pan-Slavism. He saw defending Russia and uniting with it as the real solution. To this end, he was prepared to make great concessions in the area of language and religion. He could imagine, for example, accepting the Orthodox religion and Russian language as a common literarian language and state religion. In return, all he really expected from Tsarist Russia was some democratisation, greater self-government and a solution to the agrarian (peasant) question.[23] This work was firstly published in Russia in the Russian language. It was published in full, in Slovak, only after 1990. Autor included some anti-communist sentences in his book.

By writing this book, Štúr reoriented the Slovak national movement from its Austro-Slavian orientation towards a more pro-Russian direction. The leading figures of the Slovak movement (e.g. Jozef Miloslav Hurban, Viliam Paulíny-Tóth etc.) were politicians and writers, most of them evangelicals, who after 1860 had been members of the so-called Old Slovak School. Later on this platform was born

22 Vavrovič, 1993, p. 130.
23 Štúr, 1993, pp. 90–91.

the Slovak National Party, which was the dominant political party among active Slovaks before the First World War.

However, the new Slovak Russophilism did not mean a complete turn away from Vienna. Despite all their disappointments, the Slovak leaders of the time still had more faith in the Emperor than in the Hungarian-Slovak reconciliation. Palárik was not only the main proponent of the Hungarian-Slavic dialogue, but also outlined an alternative Slavic concept in his 1862 paper on Slavic reciprocity. Its key elements were democratism and federalism. In this article, he wanted to go beyond the older Slavic concept of Ján Kollár, which was based on a total of four Slavic nations (Russians, Poles, Czechoslovaks, Southern Slavs) and limited cooperation to the field of literature.

According to Palárik, this division is both outdated and such minimalist goals are not accepted by other nations (e.g. Germans, Hungarians or Western Europeans). Instead, he believes, it should be recognised that the aim of broad cooperation among Slavic nations is to gradually strengthen these nations and improve their position in the multi-ethnic states in which they live. It is the duty of all Slavic nations to take advantage of the existing legal framework and achieve the maximum possible benefits for themselves, and must help each other to do the same. In the longer term, he did not rule out the eventual creation of a federation of free and independent Slavic states, but this would have to be based on consent. In contrast, Palárik rejected the creation of a centralised Slavic empire.[24] Paralelly he was also sceptical of Austro-Slavism, because this concept later served as an instrument in the hands of Habsburg dynasty.[25]

The largest and most powerful Slavonic state (Russia) was considered an absolutist and despotic state. Palárik always separated the Russian state and nation. He did not wish to place the undemocratic Russian state – which was therefore distant from the other Slavs – in an integrative role, but felt a great solidarity with the Russian nation and culture.[26] According to him, it should also be remembered that the Slavic nations were characterised by many internal tensions and conflicts. He saw the reasons for this partly in religious differences, in the different languages, and in the centrifugal character and separatism that characterised the Slavs in general. He also regretted the Polish-Russian conflict, in which he himself had sided with the Poles. He did not view them as blameless either, but ascribed greater responsibility to the side of Russian tsarism, which also suppressed the legitimate demands of the Poles. In Slovak public life at the time, this was a strongly minority view. The majority of the leaders of the Slovak national movement sympathised with the Russians, from whom they expected both the liberation of the Balkan Slavs and pressure on the Habsburgs. Without Poles sceptical of Slavic ideas, it was difficult to envision a serious Slavic coalition. Moreover, anti-Polish and

24 Vavrovič, 1993, p. 142.
25 Demmel, 2016, p. 40.
26 Ibid. p. 148.

anti-Russian sentiment frightened democratic public opinion in Western Europe, which turned against pan-Slavic ideas. Furthermore, it is not good politics to go against the opinion of civilised Europe. The Russians tended to believe that they are 'gens electa'.[27] Rather than this supremacy, Palarik prefered the national equality of Slavonic nations and free cooperations inside the Slavonic framework.

Palárik considered a Polish–Russian reconciliation important for a better Slavic future, and propagated the same in his plays. In his drama *Self-proclaimed Dimitri*, he drew inspiration from the early 17th century Russian history. The play centres on the Polish intervention of the time and the disguised tsars. Unconventionally, he saw in the Polish-backed False Dimitry an opportunity for reconciliation. He saw the common enemy of the Slavic nations rather in the Turks, against whom Christians should unite. In Palarik's case, ecumenism was once again brought up here, alongside pan-Slavism. This 'political' drama, however, did not appeal to the Slovak public in 1865, as the public opinion, at that time, was divided by the issue of the forthcoming anti-Russian Polish uprising (1863/1864).[28]

Palárik wanted to assert equality not only among the Slavic nations through the principle of free association and democratism, but also within the then-multi-ethnic Hungary. As mentioned earlier, he accepted Hungary as a common homeland and the 1848 constitutional platform as a starting point. He regarded the Slovak nation as a constituent part of the Hungarian state, but demanded equal status for it and the other nationalities.[29]

As a realist, Palárik knew that no solution could be expected only from the great powers and their capitals. This applied equally to St Petersburg, Vienna and Budapest. He was also aware that the Slovak nation had to be strengthened first, before it could be taken seriously. He knew that in politics, everyone is only as strong as they are. Therefore, he supported the idea that the Slovak literary language should be based on a living dialect (here Central Slovak), as well as the idea that Slovaks should be active in politics, first at the municipal level, and then at the national level. At these levels, they should be united with the other nationalities in Hungary. Instead of national strengthening, he did not want to immediately set unrealistic goals that might prevent him from seeking alliances with the more open-minded politicians of the dominant Hungarian nation. He also had a more federalist and autonomist outlook, but as a constitutional democrat, he first considered it important to make use of the framework already provided by law. Palárik wanted to fight alongside the Hungarians and for the ideals of a Hungarian nationality against German centralism; however, he also rejected centralism within Hungary. In his view, the idea of a Hungarian nation-state was contrary to the ancient Hungarian constitution and the legacy of St. Stephen. The Hungarian elites' opposition to this heritage led to their defeat in 1849.

27 Ibid. pp. 146–147.
28 Ibid. p. 156.
29 Ibid. pp. 160–161.

Palárik did not consider the Austro-Hungarian dualism of 1867 to be a good solution. A better solution, in his opinion, was the federalisation of the Habsburg Empire and within it the Kingdom of Hungary. In such a case, he would have preferred a personal union to Austro-Hungarian dualism.[30] The Slovenes would remain in the German part, but Galicia, Lodomeria and Bukovina would be annexed to the Kingdom of Hungary, while retaining Polish-Rusyn (Ukrainian) national autonomy.[31]

Palárik was not satisfied with the Hungarian Nationality Act of 1868. According to him, this law and the debate surrounding it further deepened the differences between Hungarians and national minorities. He dismissed Hungarian accusations that Slavic politicians were attempting to tear Hungary apart and then sell the country to Russia. In his view, Hungarian patriotism aimed at assimilating non-Hungarians did not serve Hungary's interests.[32] Towards the end of his life, Palárik also took an increasingly dim view of Hungarian–Slovak relations. He saw the national selfishness of the Hungarian elites as the main problem, and the fact that anyone accused of pan-Slavism was considered existentially impossible. The situation is similar with the membership of the Matica slovenská, in which he observed very strong tendencies. In one of his last serious newspaper articles, which dealt comprehensively with these issues a year before his death, he once again formulated the minimalist Slovak demands. These included Slovak-language grammar schools, cathedrals and county school inspectors of Slovak nationality, Slovak ministerial departments in the ministries of justice and education, and the acceptance of Slovak criteria for church appointments.[33] It revealed much about future trends. The national conservative camp, which had traditionally been critical of Palárik's willingness to compromise, justified its own, more radical attitude.

Palárik had always warned the leaders of contemporary Hungary against trying to turn a multi-ethnic country into a Hungarian nation-state. In his view, this could only lead to tragedy in the long run. He expected Hungarian leaders not to repeat the mistakes of the centralist Austrians. He also wanted to dispel their fears of pan-Slavism, a threat he believed to be greatly exaggerated. At the same time, he felt that Slav solidarity was important, especially in the case of the weaker Slav nations without independent public law frameworks. The Slovak nation was one of these. He saw the Czechs as a very close nation, but was unwilling to sacrifice Slovak independence on the altar of Czechoslovak unity, even if the same promised short-term benefits.

Palárik, who died relatively early, was an integrative personality, but he always saw the fate of his nation in a broader context and framework, preferring cooperative solutions to violence. His integrative tendencies were manifested in Christian

30 Palárik, 1868, p. 1.
31 Palárik, 1956, pp. 134–135.
32 Vavrovič, 1993, pp. 160–161.
33 Demmel, 2016, p. 199.

ecumenism, democratic pan-Slavism and Hungarian constitutional patriotism. It was not his fault that these ideals progressed in a different direction. He spent the rest of his life trying to propagate his own ideas and find political allies to put them into practice. His life was marked by more failures than successes. However, his intellectual legacy always reinforced the democratic and humanist dimension of the Slovak political tradition of the 19th century.

2. Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880–1919)[34] – dreamer scientist, globetrotter adventurer and diplomat with real political results

Milan Rastislav Štefánik is one of the three founding politicians of Czechoslovakia. His statues, which are symbolic of the new statehood have remained in the many cities and towns in Slovakia. Along with the Czech Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, he was a Slovak member of the emigrant Czechoslovak National Council, which worked very effectively as state-building triumvirate during the First World War. Later, following his tragic death, the new Czechoslovak Republic built his memorial on Bradlo Hill. Sometimes officially celebrated his birthday in the interwar period.[35] At present, the Slovak Military Academy and Bratislava airport are named after him. The Czechoslovak and Slovak parliament also adopted special laws in his memory.[36]

As a Slovak Lutheran Protestant, Štefánik was always close to the idea of Czechoslovak national unity, but did not give up his independent Slovak identity. In the founding triumvirate, he was responsible for military affairs and at the end of the war became first Minister of War in the provisional Czechoslovak government. Less well known is his role in laying the diplomatic foundations for Czechoslovak

34 Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Slovak politician, diplomat, aviator and astronomer, unknown author, in: Medek, Rudolf and Bonnaud, R. K. vítězné svobodě 1914– 1918–1928. V Praze: Péčí a nákladem Památníku Odboje, 1928. S. 3, source of the picture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_Rastislav_%C5%A0tef%C3%A1nik#/media/File:Milan_Rastislav_%C5%A0tef%C3%A1nik.jpg.

35 Hájková, Horák, Kessler and Michela, 2018, pp. 34–36, 114.

36 The Czechoslovak federal parliament adopted the first memorial law in 1990. The independent Slovak parliament adopted his law (Lex Štefánik) in 2000.

independence and promoting the idea of a new state internationally.[37] Štefánik is also permanent symbol of democratic Czechoslovak statehood in the Slovak context.[38]

Although Edvard Beneš is regared as the first Czechoslovak foreign minister in posterity, it was Štefánik who did much to push the cause of Czechoslovak independence in Paris and then Rome, during the heavy months of emigration. Štefánik greatly benefited by the fact that he had been living in France since 1904 and had started the First World War as a French air force officier. For a long time, he acted as a link between France at the time and nascent Czechoslovakia.[39] Within the Czechoslovak foreign mission, he was the 'diplomatic connecting man'.[40] Beneš workes rather than talented administrator with huge work-capacity.

Štefánik was born into a Slovak Protestant clergy family. His father as well as grandfather were Lutheran pastors. His family traditionally lived in the Western Slovak region near the old Hungarian-Moravian border, where the first independent Slovak uprising broke out in 1848. The main aim of this uprisng was to achieve Slovak autonomy within the Hungarian Kingdom. The tradition of the Slovak anti-Hungarian uprising of 1848 was strong in Štefánik family. Two brothers of his grandmother were officers in the pro-Habsburg Slovak Volunteers Corps of the time, and one of her relatives was executed by the Hungarian authorities during the revolution 1848/1849.[41]

Slovak lutheran protestantism was quite conservative, with strong German religional and cultural ties. Many of its representatives in the 19th century identified with Slovak romantic and realist literature. In many respects, this literature created modern Slovak nationalism, which defined itself fundamentally against the Kingdom of Hungary changing to the Hungarian nation-state. In nation-building, the main allies were the Czechs and the non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary (i.e. Croats, Serbs, Romanians and Ruthenians). Czech-Slovak cultural relations were very important for this group. Against this background, it was not surprising that young Štefánik decided to study in Prague after graduation.

The Štefánik family was not well-off and faced serious financial difficulties, which was one of Štefánik's constant problems.[42] The young Štefánik completed his secondary school education in Hungary, but then, like many Slovaks with nationalist sentiments, began his university studies in Prague.[43] At firsr, he was an engineer, but soon gained admission to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Prague, where he studied astronomy. His father was unhappy with this change,

37 Michálek, 2018a, p. 518.
38 Macho, 2004, pp. 1–3.
39 Lajčák, 2018, p. 12.
40 Musil, 2010, pp. 151–162.
41 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 257–260.
42 Ibid. pp. 20–21.
43 Demmel, 2021, pp. 1–2.

because engineering provided a more secure career.[44] However, astronomy was a more international profession, which appealed to an ambitious pastor's son from a small Slovak village.[45]

Slovak student life was bustling in Prague at the time. Štefánik also became a member of the famous *Detvan Student Association*, which brought together Slovak university youth studying in the Czech lands. During this period, he attended lectures by Professor Masaryk, and was influenced by the then-professor and later-President of the Republic.[46] His relationship with Masaryk was severed for many years, and was revived during the years of the First World War, now within the Czechoslovak independence emigration. Štefánik had a deep respect for his old teacher, whom he sometimes called 'daddy', but the elderly professor did not return his admiration. Štefánik was well aware of the importance of his French and Italian political connections for the Czechoslovak cause, but his fellow fighter's overly sensationalist, romantic and sometimes dreamy nature was far removed from the Czech Realist Party founder's habitus. Masaryk remained, until the end, rather reserved about Štefanik.[47]

Štefanik also made his way to France thanks to his astronomy contacts. Through this science he made his first important French contacts. Traditionally, political, cultural and political life in France were closely intertwined. The educated and ambitious Štefánik benefited from this, all the more so because the astronomical profession had become rather small.[48] He recognised the advantages of this early on.

Young Štefanik had a surprisingly successful career in France. His rather elitist profession and engaging manner brought him into contact, relatively early on, with some of the most influential families of the French academic elite, who supported his ambitions. The ladies who usually admired him also played an important role in his success. Some of his technical inventions, his interest in meteorology and radio communications introduced him to French naval, military and diplomatic circles.[49]

He arrived in Paris in 1904, applied for a permanent residence permit in 1910, and became a French citizen through naturalisation in 1912. Prior to this, he had been part of several exotic scientific expeditions where, in addition to his scientific duties, he served French diplomatic, commercial and communication interests. This was particularly true of his mission to the Galapagos Islands, during which he also came into close contact with Ecuadorian government circles. His efficiency,

44 Kuzmíková, 2010, pp. 87–88.
45 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 20–21.
46 Ibid. pp. 260–263.
47 Ibid. pp. 303–304.
48 Kuzmíková, 2010, pp. 88–89.
49 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 44–50, 59–61.

communication skills and discretion were highly appreciated by French diplomats active in the region.[50]

At the beginning of the First World War, Štefanik enlisted in the French army, where his social connections quickly led him to join the nascent air force. His career here also progressed very quickly. Within three years he went from enlisted man to brigadier general. His subsequent promotion was often pushed by the French Foreign Ministry, which wanted to increase his rank.[51] As a pilot, Štefanik also took part in combat missions and tried to organise a military meteorological service. At the same time, he toyed with the idea of a separate Slovak and then Czechoslovak flying unit, which he hoped would raise the profile of the Czechoslovak cause in France.[52] Later, he was one of the main authors of the idea of Czechoslovak legions abroad. This idea held paralell practical and symbolic importance during the war.[53]

Štefánik had always excelled in propaganda and communication. This applied as much to the causes he championed as to his own career and image-building. In fact, he had already built up his own cult during his lifetime – which was confirmed by his tragic death. In 1918, Štefánik was appointed Minister of War in the Czechoslovak provisional government. He asked the French authorities for permission take up this position, since, unlike the other founding fathers, he was a French citizen. He regarded France as his second homeland and stated, repeatedly and pathetically, that he was as ready to die for it as for his Czechoslovak homeland. In his political activities and during official trips abroad, he sought to harmonise French and Czechoslovak interests. He was convinced that he could best serve the Czechoslovak cause by closely linking it to the ideas of the Entente powers (especially France).

During the last period of his life, Štefanik began to move closer to Italy. His last fiancée was the Marquise Giuliana Benzoni, through whom he became close to members of the Italian royal family and some of the political elite in Rome. At one point, he even acted as a virtual intermediary in Franco-Italian relations, on certain issues and at his own level. He considered his mission to Italy, during which he succeeded in establishing Czechoslovak legions in Italy and in gaining recognition for his nascent homeland, to be one of his most successful ventures. He certainly did not (and could not) forget his French connections.[54] However, at the end of the First World War, he would have preferred for Czechoslovakia to become a monarchy, rather than a republic, with a monarch from the House of Savoy at its head.[55] This was a new element in his concept.

50 Ibid. pp. 128–132.
51 Ibid. pp. 145–147.
52 Ibid. p. 162.
53 Ragač-Panis, 2018, pp. 1–3.
54 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 243–251.
55 Ibid. p. 312.

Although, like most Slovak nationalist Protestant intellectuals of the time, he was influenced by the ideas of Slavic solidarity, he was not particularly attracted to Russia and his 1918 trip to Siberia was not one of his most successful ventures. However, it should also be noted that he had arrived in a Russia that was already in the throes of civil war, where violence was rampant and Bolshevism was on the rise; Štefanik was extremely disgusted by this. The power of the Romanov dynasty was a thing of the past.[56] But 'westernized' Štefánik always recognised the importance and role of Russia in the European context.

Štefánik had a stronger sympathy for the southern Slavs, which was also characteristic of the Czech and Slovak intelligentsia of the time. However, he never placed Serb and Yugoslav interests before those of the French and Italians. On the contrary, as a man well acquainted with the political situation in Rome, his advice tended to dampen tensions between the South Slavs and Italians.[57]

Štefánik was Slovak, was able to accept the idea of Czechoslovak national unity, which was never far from Slovak Protestants. This is not to say that he did not treat Slovaks as a separate entity, but as someone well-acquainted with the political salons of the West, he was aware of how little they knew about Czechs, and did not want to complicate Czechoslovak independence propaganda. When he put his contacts in service of the Czechoslovak cause, he was not bothered by his associates' talk regarding the Czech cause and National Committee. The Czechoslovak epithet was preferred by the Slovak Americans, and the Czech émigré politicians eventually complied with this preference.[58]

Apparently Štefánik was not against this either. He also had an interesting policy for the large Siberian legions.[59] For practical reasons, he insisted that the language of command should be Czech, but he also made sure that more Slovak officers were given positions and that a separate Slovak regiment of Slovak prisoners of war was organised. Although he was not particularly autonomist, he could see himself as vice-president in charge of Slovakia once the new state was in place.[60]

Štefánik never questioned Masaryk's authority, but his relationship with Beneš deteriorated over time. While they cooperated well during the earlier period of emigration (1915–1916), but the situation worsened later on.[61] He was disturbed about not being appointed head of the Czechoslovak Peace Delegation in Paris. Even more disturbing to him was that in 1919 his two companions did not count on him as a functionary at home, but wanted to appoint him as ambassador to London or Paris, which was not in keeping with his ambitions.[62]

56 Harbuľová, 2010, pp. 179–180.
57 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 206–210.
58 Ibid. pp. 271–276.
59 Harbuľová, 2010, pp. 178–180.
60 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 274–276.
61 Ragač and Panis, 2018, pp. 1–3.
62 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 238–239.

An independent Czechoslovakia was not Štefanik's idea. On the one hand, the idea of Czechoslovak unity had already existed, and on the other, the most conceptual politician of the independence emigration was Professor Masaryk, whose authority was clearly accepted by the two remaining members of the founding triumvirate. In both cases, the politicians were in their thirties and had different responsibilities. Beneš gradually became a main Czechoslovak expert in foreign affairs, while Štefánik chose the military field. At the same time, he was just as capable at foreign affairs as Beneš, but possessed greater stamina and administrative skills. Štefánik was more of a visionary intellectual, with an instinctive flair for subtile diplomacy and for winning over partners. His diplomatic work ethic was not less than administrative-organisational capacity of Beneš.[63]

This does not mean that Štefánik did not have his own political views and ideas. However, he fully linked them to the aspirations of the Western Entente powers. Paris, and later Rome, was a milieu he knew well, and where he felt at home.[64] The Slavic ideology was not far away, but as a worldly man of vision, he realised that the really big issues would not be decided at the level of small and medium-sized nations. He did, however, link the Czechoslovak cause as closely as possible with the aspirations of the French and, in part, the Italians, while remaining hostile to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Štefánik also viewed the future of the Slovaks in secession from the Hungarians. In a conversation with a Slovak politician in 1916, he outlined four alternatives to the Slovak question, of which he believed only one to be realistic. Remaining in the old Hungary would have meant national death for the Slovaks. Joining Russia would not have been permitted by the Western powers. He did not see a small independent Slovak state as a viable alternative, because the world of international relations does not like states that are too small. For this reason, he also believed that the Czechoslovak option was the most favourable for Slovaks. However, it was not only Slovaks who needed more developed Czechs, but vice versa as well, because without the Slovak territories, the Czech lands would have been weak and could not have served as an eastern barrier against the Germans; this was exactly the Western powers' expection of the new state.[65]

Thinking in terms of the Danube basin was not entirely alien to Štefánik. He was also aware of the long-term prospects for economic integration in the region.[66] In particular, he considered the port of Trieste to be important, because through it Czechoslovak products could also reach world markets. Germany was another possibility, but he had little confidence in it. He would have preferred to see the important port in Italian hands and would have preferred a Czechoslovak–Italian rail link that avoided Yugoslav territory altogether.[67]

63 Ibid. pp. 238–240.
64 Musil, 2010, pp. 153–155.
65 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 272–273.
66 Musil, 2010, pp. 152–153.
67 Kšiňan, 2021, pp. 243–245.

Štefánik considered it vital for Yugoslav–Italian tensions to not escalate. In such an eventuality, he proposed neutrality for Czechoslovakia. In 1918, he perceived the need to establish a network of trade treaties between Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy and possibly Hungary. He would also have remedied Franco-Italian tensions with a treaty in order to jointly guarantee the interests of the Czechoslovak and South Slav states. This was to avoid a frustrated Italy getting too close to the revisionist states (i.e. Bulgaria and Hungary) and Poland.[68]

Štefánik also recognised that the Czechoslovak-Polish relationship, which had become strained as a result of territorial disputes, should also be put right as soon as possible. He saw much potential in the newly formed League of Nations. The main aim of the treaties and bilateral reconciliations he had just outlined was to create a viable alternative to German hegemony in this intermediate region of Europe, and a barrier to the chaos emanating from revolutionary Russia.[69] However, this would have required a real reconciliation with France and Italy, which Štefánik believed was in the interests of Czechoslovakia above all else. However, Beneš, who was in charge of foreign affairs, clearly viewed the French as the key to Czechoslovakia's future.

Štefánik was more conservative on domestic issues. He claimed that French political realities had cured him of his republican illusions, and that he preferred to place his trust in aristocratic monarchism.[70] Although he hailed from a poor Protestant clergyman's family, he possessed an aristocratic air. In fact, one of his French bosses, General Maurice Janin described Štefanik asone of the most aristocratic men he had ever met. Štefanik's aristocratic behaviour probably came not from the fact that his family had noble roots, but from his own nature and life experience. He was generous not only in his ideas and visions, but also in his poetry. In this respect he was mentally quite different from the thrifty teachers Masaryk and Beneš. He himself attributed this partly to his upbringing in Hungary, which he was otherwise generally critical of. Indeed, his contemporaries thought that his thinking and behaviour had many Hungarian aristocratic traits.[71]

Štefanik's attitude towards the Masonic movement of his time is still unclear. As mentioned earlier, for a foreigner, his career progressed very quickly in France, where Freemasonry was very strong at that time. One of the very first French patron families was also Masonic. The Internationales *Freimauerlexikon,* published in Germany in 1932, also listed the first Czechoslovak Minister of War as a Freemason. Indeed, one of the current lodges in Slovakia bears his name. However, his most thorough biographer (Michal Kšiňan) has found no other evidence of this. Nor have the French lodges he interviewed confirmed any such links to Štefánik. However, no written record of this is present, and when he died the Masonic press remained silent. His rapid rise in France could ultimately have been linked to other

68 Ibid. pp. 244–245.
69 Ibid. pp. 244–246.
70 Ibid. pp. 312–313.
71 Ibid. p. 268.

affiliations – mostly to the services he had already rendered to the French state prior to the outbreak of the Great War.[72]

Štefánik's political and social views were not really French Masonic either. He had never been an atheist, and rejected the separation of church and state on principle, viewing an aristocratic monarchy as a better solution to a democratic republic. Despite bein a great admirer of women, he rejected their right to vote. He also did not consider revolutions to a good solution; he believed not so much in the masses as in strong personalities.[73]

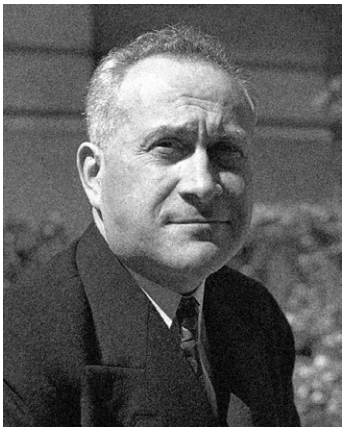
His indignation at the Washington Declaration from October 1918, drafted by Professor Masaryk, is evidence of this. This declaration was the very first founding document of the new republic. It was drafted by Masaryk and designed to win the approval of American political opinion and that of President Woodrow Wilson. Štefánik was outraged both by the fact that his name was included in the document without his consent, and by the content of the declaration itself. The General, who was in Japan at the time, sent a telegram protesting against the document, albeit only among the inner circle. According to him, the form of government of the new state should be decided by the citizens at home. For this reason he rejected the republican form of government. He also feared that his associates were much too influenced by socialist ideas. This was not particularly true, although two members of the Czech triumvirate that founded the state were to the left of Štefánik.[74]

In many respects, Štefánik was already considered a legend during his lifetime, at least among his own national community. He became an even greater one after his death on 4 May 1919, which was caused by was an air disaster. Štefánik, always a stickler for style, wanted to return to his homeland by airplane. He flew home in a plane with the Italian flag, which was fired upon by Czechoslovak units stationed near Bratislava. To this day, the events that occurred and reason for the plane crash remain unclear. This has led to many conspiracy theories about his death, often attributed by Slovak nationalists to Czech intrigue, and by others to French or Italian intrigue. Others also suspected suicide.[75]

However, the possibility of a genuine accidental misfortune and bad weather cannot be ruled out. In any case, the circumstances of his death only added to the legend. It is also true that he had a considerable cult following in the new Czechoslovakia. Even though he was not given a serious state position, at least many public statues have been erected in his memory. For the last hundred years, apart from the foreign invaders, only the communist regime has been unable to do anything about his memory. Following the 1989 regime change, Štefánik became one of the most popular Slovak historical figures, along with Alexander Dubček. In many ways, he became one of the main symbols of Slovakia's ties with the West and democracy.

72 Ibid. pp. 309–311.
73 Ibid. pp. 312–314.
74 Ibid. pp. 302–303.
75 Ibid. pp. 291–307.

3. Štefan Osuský (1889–1973)[76] – professional diplomat and double political emigrant



Štefan Osuský was the highest-ranking Czechoslovak diplomat with Slovak origins between the two world wars. His professional career was at once eventful and impressive, although his plebeian origins did not exactly predispose him to this career. Not only was he a good diplomat in technical terms, but was also able to formulate foreign policy concepts on his own. All this at a time when very few Slovaks were able to assert themselves in Czechoslovak diplomacy, which was characterised by a clear Czech dominance. He also made his mark in the history of the League of Nations, where he also represented his country. His portrait in the Palace of Nations bears witness to this.[77]

Osuský was born into a Slovak Lutheran family. Like many of his peers, he began his secondary education at the famous Lutheran Lyceum in Bratislava. At that time, Slovakia was still part of the Kingdom of Hungary, where the Slovak nation of over two million people did not have a single secondary grammar school. Young active Slovaks therefore either went to Czech grammar schools or stayed at home and continued their studies in Hungarian language. At this time, the Hungarian secondary grammar schools with good educational quality served as factories for assimilation. However, a declaration of Slovak national commitment could quickly arouse suspicion among students. This was the case with Osuský, who, during a school discussion, came into conflict with the Hungarian Minister of Education and Religion, Count Albert Apponyi.

> In spring of 1905 the minister of education, Count Apponyi, came to the lyceum to pay an inspection visit. He came to our class when we had Latin. Latin was my favorite subject and I was very good in it. […] After the exam Count Apponyi called me and asked me in Hungarian, 'What is your name, young lad?' I answered, 'My name is Osuský.' 'Where are you from?' 'From Brezová.' He replied: 'Brezová, isn't it the nest that breeds all the revolts against Hungarians? You, however, are going to be a good Hungarian!' He

76 Štefan Osuský, Slovak diplomat, politician, Willem van de Poll – Nationaal Archief, public domain, Creative Commons 0 1.0, source of the picture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%A0tefan_Osusk%C3%BD#/media/File:Stefan_Osusky_(1939).jpg.
Králik, 2003, pp. 229–230.
77 Ibid. pp. 229–230.

> didn't ask me whether I'd be a good Hungarian citizen, but simply if I'd be a good Hungarian. I remembered the words of my father's not to mix into politics. [...] I paused a little to think about the best answer. Obviously, I could not agree to be a good Hungarian, I could not even force myself to say anything like that, so I remained silent.[78]

The case ended with the young student being expelled from all schools in Hungary. Young Osuský then decided to emigrate to the US, where one of his sisters was already living. He had already finished his secondary grammar school studies and he continuied his university studies in theology, natural science (geology) and law in America. First, he studied theology at Concordia College in Springfield (Illinois), and later focused on the natural sciences (geology). Finally, he received a law degree from the University of Chicago. He graduated in 1915, but was already an active publicist for the Slovak press in the United States. On receiving his law degree, Osuský became a co-owner of the company Sinden, Hassal, and Osuský Law Firm in Chicago. He was also active in many Slovak causes. This time he founded and edited the newspapers *Slovenské slovo* and *Slovenský týždenník* in America.[79]

Since Slovak Lutherans were close to the Czechs, he first began his American public activities through Czech associations, but soon joined the main organisation of Slovak diaspora – the Slovak League. The First World War meant a large challenge for Slovak diaspora in USA. The American Slovaks hoped for a better position for their nation in Europe, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A pro-Hungarian orientation was extremely limited amoung the Slovak diaspora in America. However, the position of the Slovak League regarding the orientation in future was not very clear. One part of organisation supported the pro-Russian orientation, whereas the majority of the Slovak League supported a Czechoslovak (pro-Western) one. Osuský belonged to this latter camp.

In 1916, as a young lawyer with good connections in the protestant social circles, Osuský was elected vice-president of the Slovak League and sent to Europe to join Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in the fight against Austria-Hungary for the liberation of Czechs and Slovaks.He first lived in London, and then Paris. Later, in Protestant Geneva, he founded and ran a small but active Czechoslovak Press Agency, which worked for the emigrant Czechoslovak National Council based in Paris, and closely cooperated with George D. Herron– a confidant of American president Woodrow Wilson, who favoured self-determination for the peoples of Central Europe.[80]

Osuský's knowledge of German and Hungarian proved significant in the collection of information and organisation of pro-Czechoslovak propaganda in the

78 Biography, pp. 1–2.
79 Ibid.
80 Olach, 2020, p. 41; Musil, 2011, p. 86.

diplomaticly very important (and neutral) Geneva. He informed also the American diplomats about the Czechoslovak ambitions and political goals. Paralelly, he organised very effective anti-Austro-Hungarian press-propaganda. At the beginning of 1918 Osuský also helped organize the Czechoslovak legions in Italy. In 1918 he participated together with general Milan Rastislav Štefánik on the Congress of Nations of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Rome.[81]

After the proclamation of independent Czechoslovak Republic in 28 October 1918, Osuský was appointed Czechoslovak envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This was one of the first leading diplomatic positions inside the borning Czechoslovak regular diplomacy. Here, Osuský met his future wife, Pavlína Vachková.[82]

At the same time, as secretary general of the Czechoslovak peace delegation, he attended the Paris Peace Conference, but was not active in the negotiation of the peace treaties with Austria and Germany. His main task was the negotiation of the treaty from Trianon, because Karel Kramář prime-minister had resigned during this time, and as minister of foreign affairs, Beneš returned to Prague. President Masaryk appointed Osuský as plenipotentiary delegate for negotiation with Hungary. On 4 June 1920, Edvard Beneš and Štefan Osuský signed the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary. This development was very important in Osuský's political life in Czechoslovakia.[83]

He also played an important role in creating the Little Entente, a protectionist alliance of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania with anti-Hungarian goals. Previously, he was active in the field of cooperation between these countries in Geneva. Beginning 1919, he represented Czechoslovakia in the Reparations Commission of the League of Nations, which decided postwar reparations to be made by Germany and its allies. For four years he also represented Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and Greece at the commission. The Assembly of the League of Nations elected him chair of the Control Commission– a position he held for 14 years (1922–1937).[84]

In January 1921, Osuský was appointed as the Czechoslovak envoy and minister plenipotentiary to France, where he remained until France fell in 1940. This position was extremly important for a young Czechoslovak diplomacy. The Paris Legation was important for the Czechoslovak foreign policy as well. France guaranted the Czechoslovak international security and the French armee had strong influence in the new Czechoslovak armed forces. The economic relationship was also strong. The post of Czechoslovak envoy in Paris had key importance. Personal privilege of Osuský in Paris was his good relationship with Aristid Briand and Philipe Berthelot. This position meant a special role in the Czechoslovak foreign

81 Olach, 2020, pp. 45–46.
82 Musil, 2011, p. 87.
83 Michálek, 2018, pp. 110–114.
84 Ibid. p. 114.

policy. However, then-minister, and later President Beneš, who played crucial role in the dipomacy of new republic, took a dislike to Osuský, attributed to jealousy. The personal relationship of these two important men in the Czechoslovak diplomacy was traditionally complicated, and was, more or less, common knowledge in the diplomatic circles.[85]

Paralell to his role in Paris, Osuský was also very active in Geneva as the main delegate of new democratic republic in this international organisation (1921–1937). During his diplomatic mission, Osuský participated in a number of international conferences, becoming an experienced and well-informed Czechoslovak diplomat who maintained close personal contacts with political leaders at home and abroad. Osuský's real field was multilateral diplomacy. It could be said that he was the first multilateral diplomat of Slovak origin.[86]

Within the League of Nations, Osuský represented the Czechoslovakia in different comissions, such as the influential Deliminatory Comission and Budgetory Comission. These positions served as a good instrument for the realization of Czechoslovak foreign policy and to arrive at compromises. As chairman, Osuský participated personally in the peace mission between Bolivia and Paraguay. The border conflict between these states regarding Gran Chaco began in 1932 and continued until 1935. This mission drew prestige for Osuský as peacemaker. He had always good relations with Sir Eric Drummond, the Secretary-General of League of Nations.[87]

Osuský was predestined for these two important diplomatic posts. In the period between the two world wars, Paris and Geneva were considered diplomatic powerhouses. Osuský was good at combining his diplomatic identities. He used the fact that he represented Romania and the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenia, in addition to his own country, on the above-mentioned League of Nations reparations committee, for example, to support the creation of the Little Entente. It is not surprising, therefore, that Czechoslovak diplomacy sought to institutionalise this form of cooperation. In 1933, an organisational pact was signed, which provided not only for a joint secretariat, but also for a permanent council and an economic council of economic experts. Once again, Osuský was one of the driving forces behind this forward-looking initiative.[88] However, this project was ultimately not succesfull. The situation in 1930s was not optimal for Czechoslovak ideas of internatinal institu-building.

Osuský was always aware that the fate of the newly formed Czechoslovakia depended heavily on the great powers. Nevertheless, he tried to link Czechoslovak political and diplomatic aspirations to larger European trends and influential movements. He supported the idea of European unity, but only across the building

85 Musil, 2011, pp. 93–94.
86 Králik, 2003, pp. 230–231.
87 Musil, 2011, pp. 89–90.
88 Ibid. pp. 91–92.

of regional partnerships, alliances (like Little Entent) or regional cooperations or federation (mainly in Central Europe and Danube Basin).[89]

In 1937, Osuský published an interesting essay about Europe and Central Europe on this subject, in the American journal *Foreign Affairs*. Here, he also expressed his views on the Czechoslovak question, European national movements and League of Nations. At this time, he still had great feelings for the Little Entente:

> Until February 16, 1933, the Little Entente was simply a dike raised against the recrudescence of an evil past which had been definitely condemned by the World War. Its transformation step by step into something more positive and general was due solely to the fact that the League of Nations did not take the position which the New Europe had expected. The League's failure has had more immediate political consequences for Central Europe than for most other parts of Europe. Czechoslovakia, for example, knows as a result of the experience I have already described how painful it is to choose or not to choose between the West and the East. For her the League of Nations offered the ideal solution. By choosing the League, she politically chose the West without thereby – as had been necessary in the tenth century – surrendering to her powerful western neighbor, Germany. On the contrary, she could collaborate with Germany to the full extent that her geography and her economic interests dictated. But since the League has not yet proved itself a decisive force in the affairs of Europe, the Little Entente is trying with all its soul to organize joint forces in order that its component states may not become again an instrument of national and imperialist policy in the hands of some Great Power. Due to their geographi cal position, the Little Entente states simply cannot side with one Great Power without siding against others.[90]

The Slovak diplomat was most interested in the future of Central Europe and the Danube basin, where the majority of his nation's population was located:

> Now that the Danubian nations no longer felt threatened politically from without, they quickly for got the deep-rooted and remote cause of their past difficulties and misfortunes. They lived in a state of beatitude, believing that the victory which had crowned their efforts in the World War would suffice for everything, that it had removed forever their political misfortunes – misfortunes due in fact to something quite different, namely their geographical situation. The creation of the League of Nations confirmed this state of mind. They regarded the League both as a product of the New Europe and as some thing less than a necessity for Central Europe in view

89 Ibid. pp. 92–93.
90 Osuský, 1937, pp. 466–467.

> of the fact that the World War had settled once and for all the historic conflicts which formerly had troubled them. In reality, of course, the League was a vital necessity for Central Europe. [...] The League of Nations was there precisely for the purpose of clearing the atmosphere – morally, and in personal and political terms. It was neither humiliating nor dishonorable for either side to meet the other on the neutral territory of Geneva. Unfortunately, few statesmen were found at Geneva, just as there had been few at the Peace Conference, who be lieved that the organization of Central Europe presented a major task and a major opportunity. The accepted idea was that the problem had been settled by the mere fact that the various national states had come into being. [...] In the case of Central Europe there are three sorts of ideas. There are ideas which history has proved a failure. There are others which can be practised only if one is resigned to living dangerously. Finally, as tar as we are concerned, there are healthy ideas. The great healthy idea for us Czechoslovaks is that a country like ours should identify its interests with the general interests of Europe. Mr. Baldwin, the British Prime Minister, has stated that the Rhine is the frontier of England – that is to say, that England cannot be de fended at all unless she defends herself on the Rhine. History would indicate that as a result of her geographical situation Czechoslovakia runs great risks if she does not choose between the East and the West, and that, whichever she chooses, she must resign herself to living dangerously. But, fortunately, there is an escape from this dilemma, which is simply for Czechoslovakia to take the over-riding choice of identifying her interest with the general European interest. She must cling unshakably to the interests, the ideas, and the general aspirations of Europe. To these ideas, these interests, these aspirations, she must help attract all those who love Europe sufficiently to accept the sacrifices necessary in order that the Continent shall continue to breathe and live.[91]

The period between 1920 and 1938 was the star period in the Osuský's life, but the most complicated diplomatic aims only followed. The Munich Agreement of 1938 – negotiated between Neville Chamberlain, Eduard Daladier, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler – and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Hitler's Nazis in March 1939, resulted in the collapse of the first Czechoslovak Republic. In 1928, Edvard Beneš abdicated and emigrated to UK and then USA.

Osuský, however, refused to surrender the Czechoslovak Legation in Paris to the Nazi Germany and, having maintained his position as Czechoslovak envoy and minister, began organising the Czechoslovak diplomatic resistance movement. Osuský represented the position, according that the Czechoslovak diplomatic and consular missions abroad emboded the continuity of democratic Czechoslovak

91 Ibid. pp. 470–471.

statehood also after the occupation of country. His main goal was the organisation of the autonomous Czechoslovak armed force in France (under the French military command) from emigrants and members of diaspora. The idea was similar to the concept of Czechoslovak legions during the First World War. However, before September 1939 the French government was careful and sceptical.[92] The tensions between Beneš and Osuský further complicated this situation. The former president prefered the own person as symbol of Czechoslovak resistance abroad. Osuský preferred as symbol of Czechoslovak continuity the network of diplomatic missions and later the government in emigré.[93]

In October 1939 (after the German attack against Poland) Osuský signed a treaty with the French government regarding the formation (oficially: reconstruction) of the Czechoslovak army in France (Daladier-Osuský Agreemant). This treaty was the first bilateral agreement signed by Czechoslovakia with a great anti-fascist power.[94] In November 1939 Osuský mobilized Czechoslovak expatriates into a national army in France. After the fall of France to the Germans in June 1940, he arranged for the troops to be transferred to the United Kingdom.[95]

With the support of the French government, Osuský hoped to act as the leader of the Czechoslovak exile movement, but his ambitions clashed with those of Edvard Beneš, who considered himself the leader of the liberation struggle in London. In November 1939, Beneš appointed Osuský as a member of the Czechoslovak National Committee in Paris and, in July 1940, minister to the Czechoslovak government in exile and member of the State Council in London; however, their relationship was slowly deteriorating.

They disagreed completely regarding the organisation and management of the Czechoslovak exile movement, the position of the Slovaks in the future democratic Czechoslovakia, and Beneš's pro-Soviet political orientation.[96] Consequently, Osuský represented the pro-Western orientation of Czechoslovakia, whereas Beneš prefered a compromise between the Western and Soviet orientation.

These tensions culminated in March 1942, when Beneš stripped Osuský of his official posts and excluded him from the Czechoslovak resistance. Osuský wrote a series of articles on Beneš and the Provisional Government; however, he ended up in political isolation ('dirigent without orchestra').[97] Before the end of Second World War Osuský lived in England, but as a private person. He worked as contractual lecturer at the universities in Cambridge and Oxford. He maintained a good connect with Milan Hodža, but the expremier lived in USA. His relationship with Czechoslovak government in emigré was poor.

92 Michálek, 2018b, pp. 114–117.
93 Ibid. pp. 118–121.
94 Musil, 2011 p. 94.
95 Michálek, 2018b, pp. 129–130.
96 Ibid. p. 132.
97 Ibid.

The Slovak question gradually became more important to Osuský. As a Slovak Lutheran, he sincerely accepted and supported the idea of a Czechoslovak state. He was at odds with the autonomism of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, as he had always been a member of the central administration in Prague. At the same time, he saw the two nations as separate entities. This position represented also very early during the First World War as a reprsentant of Slovak League in USA. In the Treaty of Trnianon, which he practically drafted, the official name of the new country was Czecho-Slovakia (not Czechoslovakia). However, this term later disappeared from official use. Osuský also observed how Slovaks were under-represented in diplomacy and central administration. These issues further complicated his relations with Beneš, who was never willing to accept Slovak national autonomy and was resentful of all Slovak politicians. During the years of emigration, Osuský was therefore not coincidentally close to Slovak circles critical of Beneš, which meant no sympathy for the pro-Nazi regime of Jozef Tiso. He preferred a democratic Czechoslovakia, as a country of two equal Slavic nations.

Thus, after almost 30 years, Osuský returned to the United States in 1945 to become a professor of modern European history at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. Not until the communist putsch in February 1948, however, did he join the political activities of his fellow Slovaks. In 1949 he co-founded and later served on the Executive Board of the *Council of Free Czechoslovakia* in the USA and held important posts in the *Association of Captive European Nations.* He supported the Radio Free Europe, where his son was employed.[98]

However, the so-called third (anti-Communist) Czechoslovak resistance[99] was not succesful. Although Osuský never returned to Czechoslovakia, he followed its development closely. Besides his educational work, he studied and taught Czechoslovak politics and international relations. He wrote many articles, essays, and studies. His study of the ideological and spiritual conflict between the East and West, titled *The Way of the Free*, was published in New York, London, Hong Kong and Milan. Osuský died in Washington, in 1973.[100]

98 Musil, 2011, p. 96.
99 The first resistance had an anti-monarchist character. The main enemy of the second resistance was Hitler.
100 Hoover Institution Archives, 2007.

4. Milan Hodža (1878–1944) – the realistic prime-minister with fantastic concepts[101]

Milan Hodža was one of the most original and conceptual Slovak politicians of the 20th century. He was also the first politician of Slovak descent to reach one of the highest positions possible for a democratic politician, and become Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia (1935–1938). During his life he theorised many important political concepts about Slovak nation and its place in Europe.

Hodža was born into a typical Slovak intellectual family. His father Ondrej Hodža was an evangelical pastor. His father's brother was Michal Miloslav Hodža, who, together with Ľudovít Štúr and Jozef Miloslav Hurban, were key figures in the Slovak national movement of the 19th century. Hodža was thus brought up in a family where Slovak national commitment and strictly puritan (conservative) Protestantism were extremely important.[102]

The consequences of this upbringing were also felt relatively early in his life. His letters in Slovak had already brought him into conflict with one of his teachers during his secondary school years in Banská Bystrica. For two years during his secondary school years in Sopron, he refused to sing the Hungarian national anthem on the occasion of 15 March, which forced him to leave the institution. The young Hodža continued his studies at the Faculty of Law in Budapest, despite never being attracted to classical legal careers. Rather, he was more interested in public law, political science, sociology and economics. He began his studies in Budapest in 1896, but took his first state examination at the Law Faculty in Cluj-Napoca. He later continued his studies in Vienna, where he studied philosophy.[103]

Hodža became one of the most linguistically skilled Slovak politicians. In addition to his mother tongue, he spoke Hungarian and German and learned English, French, Romanian and Russian. The other Slavic languages were not far behind. From a young age, Hodža displayed an affinity for journalism, which also became a very important asset at the dawn of the age of mass society. The first

101 Milan Hodža, Slovak politician and journalist, Seton-Watson, R. W. - Scanned from Seton-Watson, R. W. "Racial problems in Hungary" (1908), public domain, source of the picture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_Hod%C5%BEa#/media/File:Mil%C3%A1n_Hod%C5%BEa.jpg.
102 Horná, 2002, p. 24.
103 Ibid. pp. 24–25.

Slovak-language newspaper he edited was the *Slovenský denník* from 1900 to 1901. In 1903, he was able to launch a much more successful weekly, *Slovenský týždenník*.[104]

Young, ambitious, talented and not particularly interested in practical law, Hodža was never in any doubt that he would make his mark as a Slovak. This was evident from his background, education and character. At the same time, he was quite sceptical about the state and potential of Slovak national conservative politics of the time. The passivity of the Slovak national conservatives of the time, their expectation of miracles and openness to Russian messianism were completely alien to Hodža. He was much closer to the modernist, reformist and progressive Slovak intellectuals grouped around the Slovak journal *Hlas* (Voice), which had formed under the influence of the Czech professor and realist politician Tomáš G. Masaryk in the last two decades of the 19th century. The ideas of Marx and Lassalle influenced him during his youth.[105]

Hodža was looking for the social stratum on which the Slovak national movement could really rely. He had little faith in the salutary power of conservatism, liberalism or socialism. His starting point was that conservatism, with its aristocratic roots, had nothing to preserve in a Slovak society without an aristocracy.[106] Hodža did not believe in political liberalism because he considered it to be the antithesis of conservatism, which, once in power, behaved in the same way as its original opponent. Furthermore, economic liberalism, based on serving and enforcing commercial and industrial interests, had no basis in the Slovak milieu at the beginning of the 20th century. As far as socialism was concerned, Hodža felt that Slovakia was not yet at the stage of national development to enter the world of internationalism identified with socialism.[107]

As such, Hodža found the political tendency best suited to Slovak circumstances in democratic agrarianism or, to put it another way, agrarian democracy. He was obviously not the inventor of this ideology, as various small peasant movements had already begun to emerge in various places. However, it was Hodža who localised it among Slovaks and then, for almost forty years, represented its values to a high standard. A realist and pragmatist, he did not believe in revolutions and other grand gestures, but that the so-called 'small work', which aimed at the gradual enrichment of the nation and society, was all the more important.[108]

Hodža also wanted to reform dualist Hungary, mainly by democratising the electoral law. He first won a parliamentary seat in 1905, when he was only twenty-seven. In 1906, he had to stand for elections again. Both times, he was a candidate in the mixed Serbian-Slovak electoral district (Kulpín) in the Southern Hungary.[109] Here, the Serbian and Slovak community lived together peacefully. The members

104 Machala, 2002, p. 41.
105 Pavlů, 1930, p. 36.
106 Machala, 2002, p. 41.
107 Kollár, 2002, p. 48.
108 Ibid. p. 50–51.
109 Kopčok, 2002, pp. 80–81.

of these communities were critical towards the Hungarian minority policy, and cooperated in the electoral process for a long time. Concretely, they supported common candidates (e. g. a Slovak-origin candidate during one election, and then Serbian-origin one in the next). This policy was relatively succesfull for Slovak movement in Southern Hungary (currently Voivodina in Serbia).

Hodža was elected to the Hungarian parliament in Budapest at the height of the political and social crisis; there was a chance that sooner or later serious political changes would take place. Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand was already preparing for the task. One of his main aims was to reform dualism in a centralist direction, but to do so he would have had to weaken the political weight of the Hungarians. To achieve this, he needed the support of the nationalities in Hungary. Ferdinand was the first to contact Romanian politicians in Transylvania, above all the Budapest deputy Alexander Vaida-Voevoda, who in a speech in parliament spoke out against the division and partial Hungarianisation of the common army. Through him, the Crown Prince's military office also contacted Milan Hodža. All these events took place in 1907.[110]

Milan Hodža thus became a member of the group of experts and politicians that later became known as the Belvederian circle, and in time became increasingly close to the Crown Prince. This was probably not only due to his education and training, but also to the fact that he did not usually communicate with the Crown Prince by exposing the Slovak aspects, but always put the 'Austrian' aspects of the Empire first in his arguments, which pleased Franz Ferdinand. During this period, they had several personal conversations and Hodža sent at least 30 letters and analyses to the Crown Prince. Eventually, Hodža, who was mostly Slovak in his thinking but argued in Austrian terms, was inducted into the Crown Prince's inner circle of trust, no mean feat for a politician of his background.

Together with the Romanian Iuliu Maniu, Hodža drafted a memorandum for the Crown Prince, in which they argued that small states had no real future and that the Monarchy's position as a great power should be strengthened. To ensure this, Austro-Hungarian dualism needed to be abolished wither by means of a change of state (through the new king's overturn) or gradually (constitutionally), and universal suffrage would have had to be introduced in Hungary. This would put the nationalities in a position. Furthermore, the autonomy of the counties should have been broken. This would have been supplemented by extending the powers of the joint delegations. As mentioned above, Hodža was ultimately included in the Crown Prince's narrowest circle of trust. It was no coincidence that the Slovak politician was very disappointed when Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, considering him the last man in the entire Monarchy who could have kept the empire together, albeit at the cost of very serious reforms.[111]

110 Galandauer, 2002, p. 89.
111 Ibid. pp. 90–92.

Hodža spent most of the First World War in Vienna. Before that, he had been a military officer in Veszprém and Trenčín, but in 1915 he became first a member of the staff of the military censorship office for Croatian affairs, and then its head. This office was based in Vienna. In 1916, Hodža became one of the editors of the Austrian Press Office in Vienna. The aforementioned posts in Vienna were probably due to his good military and political connections there, dating back to the 'Belvedere' period. However, by the end of the war Hodža became active in Slovak national politics once again.[112]

Before the First World War, Hodža had already established his profile as an agrarian politician, but had not yet organised a separate party. Instead, he politicised on the platform of the Slovak National Party. At the beginning of the war, he had to be careful in Hungary, partly because of his Slovak activism as well as his 'Belvedrian' past. Hodža was very reluctant to go to war because he was very sceptical about the chances of victory for the ailing Monarchy. However, after the outbreak of war, his newspaper also called on its readers to loyalty and obedience. The Slovak National Party reacted in a similar way, but then voluntarily suspended its political activities instead.[113]

At the beginning of the war, Hodža believed that '*the best way to demonstrate our silence is to remain silent.*'[114] He actually became more active in 1915. He arrived in Vienna, where an informal group of Slovak politicians, led by Kornel Stodola, was operating, and who, because of the passivity of the National Party and its many contacts in the capital, began to play an increasingly important role in Slovak politics.

The active period in his Hodža's began in early 1918. By then, Czech-Slovak cooperation, which at first was not a generally accepted alternative, had taken on more realistic contours. Hodža did not shy away from the idea, but was cautious and did not want to rush into anything.[115] He soon recognised that Vavro Šrobár was one of the most actionable Slovak politicians, and became Slovakia's full competent minister at the end of 1918. Hodža had already relaunched the weekly newspaper *Slovenský týždenník* in the spring of 1918. In it's pages on 31 May 1918, he called for the creation of a representative Slovak National Council, based mainly on cooperation between Slovak nationalists and social democrats.[116]

This Council was not formed until 30 October 1918, two days after the proclamation of the Czechoslovak state in Prague (28th October 1918). Its most important declaration was that the Slovaks also wanted to join the new state. Hodža was not present at the crucial meeting, having arrived in Túrócszentmárton only at night. A few amendments to his proposal were carried over in the text awaiting publication. Two weeks later, however, he travelled to Prague, where he became a member

112 Horá, 2002, p. 26.
113 Pekník, 2002, p. 143.
114 Ibid. p. 145.
115 Hronský, 2002, p. 159.
116 Ibid. p. 161.

of the Provisional Czechoslovak National Assembly and was appointed chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Slovak Deputies' Club. His stay in Prague was short, as he was appointed Czechoslovakia's representative in Budapest at the suggestion of the Slovak Club. There, he had to negotiate with the Entente mission and the government of count Mihály Károlyi.[117]

His mission in Budapest has long been considered controversial in Czechoslovak political circles, and there were several attempts to use it to discredit him. Hodža was sent to Budapest by the Prague government without the agreement of the official foreign minister of the Czechoslovak government, Edvard Beneš, who was in Paris. At that time, the newly-formed Czechoslovakia did not have much of an army to occupy the Slovak parts of the new state. Hodža was well aware of this. His absolute priority, therefore, was to stall and buy time until the Czechoslovak legions in Italy could appear in Central Europe, or even to achieve a temporary demarcation line behind which the consolidation of at least part of Slovakia (which was descending into chaos) could begin under Czechoslovak colours. This motivation, together with the confused circumstances and his personal political habits, led him to act independently in his negotiations on more than one occasion, and to merely inform Prague of his moves. On 6 December 1919, Hodža did indeed agree with the Budapest government's Minister of War on a temporary demarcation line north of the present Hungarian-Slovak border,[118] mainly in Slovak-majority areas.[119] He remained in Budapest until early January 1919, when he returned to Czechoslovakia. Although the demarcation line he had negotiated included less territory than the leadership of the nascent state wanted, it allowed the Hungarian military to evacuate most of nascent Slovakia and occupy it without a fight by Czechoslovak legionnaires.

When Czechoslovakia came into being, Milan Hodža, just 40 years old, was already one of the most prepared and experienced Slovak politicians, and as such, was destined for a great career in the new state. However, he had to adapt quickly to the new circumstances. The first Czechoslovak Republic was a modern state based on competition between large and organised mass political parties. Such Slovak parties, however, did not really exist. Hodža had already realised before the First World War that the Slovak National Party was an excessively outdated and ossified political institution. The Slovak public lacked an adequate number of organised workers to make social democracy a resounding success. Hlinka Slovak Popular Party initiatives were distant from it because of their Catholic character. Nor did he see much chance for Slovak economic and social liberalism. Rationally, he saw the main potential base for Slovak democratic politics in the peasantry and in agrarian movement.

As early as January 1919 he began to organise a network of Slovak peasant professional associations. And in August he led the creation of the National Republican

117 Ibid. pp. 161–162.
118 Ibid. pp. 174.
119 Szarka, 1995, pp. 216–219.

Peasant Party. Just before the 1920 National Assembly elections, the party managed to unite with the National Party, resulting in the formation of the Slovak National and Peasant Party. However, the coexistence did not last long, as the autonomist nationalists became independent again in the spring of 1921. The Peasant Party, in turn, began to disintegrate. The complete crisis of Slovak agrarianism was finally averted by the intervention of the much more organised Czech agrarians in 1922, who integrated the Slovak agrarian initiatives into the national Agrarian Party.[120]

This was the most important and influential party in interwar Czechoslovakia, giving the state several prime ministers, numerous ministers and even more officials. Its chairman was the always-ready-to -ompromise Antonín Švehla and its vice-president for many years was Milan Hodža. With this move, Hodža secured himself a stable place in Czechoslovak national politics. For 20 years the agrarianists were members of every Czechoslovak government.

Hodža thus entered national politics for good and gained considerable influence in public administration. In 1919 he was first State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, then Minister of Legal Unification twice (1919–1920 and 1926–1927), Minister of Agriculture twice (1922–1926, 1932–1935), Minister of Education once (1926–1929) and Minister of Foreign Affairs once (1935). He also served once as Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia (1935–1938). He was the first Slovak to hold this high post.[121]

At that time, Slovak politics was tripartite. The largest bloc was made up of the Catholic People's Party autonomists. The Communists were in perpetual opposition. The state positions and orders, however, were mostly given to those who, as Slovaks, were politically active in parties of a national (i.e. Czechoslovak) nature. Typical of such parties were the Agrarian Party and Czechoslovak Social Democracy.

For this reason, Hodža had to clarify his relationship with the increasingly sensitive Czechoslovak question, including the ideology of Slovak autonomy and Czechoslovakism (i.e. Czech and Slovak national unity). Although he did not advocate immediate Slovak autonomy at the end of 1918; he did, however, propose an administration that would have been based on the idea of a limited Slovak admistrative autonomy. Later as a leading politician of Agrarian Party he preposed the regionalism for Slovakia.[122]

After 1919, Hodža tried to tie his own political fate to the parties of national importance. This meant that he practically joined the Czechoslovak Centralists. He was never a centralist in principle, however, and in the 1930s, as tensions between Czechs and Slovaks increased, he tried to find a particular regionalist compromise between centralism and autonomism. Hodža did not accept the ideology of official Czechoslovakism on ethnic grounds, but only as a means to modernise Slovaks. For

120 Krajčovičová, 2002, pp. 219–220.
121 Horná, 2002, p. 26.
122 Hronský, 2002, p. 161.

this reason, he saw the Czechoslovak nation more as a political entity.[123] But he also opposed the idea of autonomy propagated by the Slovak People's Party. According to Slovak historian Pavol Lukáč, he did so because a strong autonomy would have given Slovaks no influence over the politics of the Czechoslovak state as a whole. Instead, Hodža sought to maximise the representation of Slovaks in Prague, and his well-known slogan in political circles was 'All good Slovaks have a place in government'.[124]

Hodža followed this strategy and it paid off – in 1935 he became the first prime minister of Slovak origin in Czechoslovakia, and held this post until the Munich Dictate in 1938. In his centrist politics, he did not follow the right wing of the Agrarian Party, which wanted to gradually adapt to the ideas and interests of Germany. Instead, he sought solutions in Central Europe and the Danube Basin.[125]

Hodža was an early observer of the dangers arising from the extreme division of the Central and Eastern European region after 1918. In the 1920s, the region split into two major political blocs – the Little Entent, which comprised the regional winners, as well as Poland, and the Roma Protocol countries, which comprised the war losers and had begun to move closer to fascist Italy and later to revisionist Germany. Hodža was traditionally well-connected among South Slav and Romanian agrarian politicians. Most of them socialised with him in the Budapest parliament or in the Belvedere circle in Vienna. He was obviously not opposed to cooperation within the Little Entente, but quickly recognised its inadequacy and the dangers of a policy of winners marginalising or blocking losers. He held these beliefs in the 1930s as well.[126]

At that time, the Czechoslovak state faced two major challenges – the consequences of the Great Depression, and threat of Nazi Germany. Although the management of Czechoslovak foreign policy was clearly the domain of Edvard Beneš, the conceptual Hodža, who spoke seven languages, was not about to be sidelined. In 1935, he briefly became foreign minister, before quickly serving his country as prime minister. It was then that his Danube Plan was born, mainly concerning quotas, tariffs on agricultural products, and regulation of production and credit. He also wanted to better coordinate the region's technical and administrative infrastructure, as well as make gestures to the large number of national minorities living in the region in order to improve cooperation and build trust. His plan's long-term goal was to create a single Central European economic area. The region could even form a customs union in the future. However, this famous plan did not have real support among the states of two blocs ('winners of war and revisionists'). Germany attacked these plans and built its own economical and political contacts in region.[127]

123 Lukáč, 2004, p. 28.
124 Ibid. p. 31.
125 Zemko, 2002, pp. 328–329.
126 Čurda, 2002, pp. 293–295.
127 Zemko, 2002, pp. 328–329.

This plan was based on the agenda of the various interstate negotiations until 1937, but was never implemented. As Germany also began to increase its economic presence and political pressure in the region, Czechoslovakia was isolated. Hodža was prime minister until September 1938. During the Munich Crisis he was replaced by General Syrový. The former prime minister retired and went to Switzerland. Hodža became particularly active in émigré politics after the German invasion of Poland, when Britain and France officially entered the war. He became active in emigrant politics in 1939 in Paris, which was then a meeting place for various European emigrants and center for international policy in Europe.

Hodža was critical of the earlier unilateral foreign and centralist domestic policies of the resigned and also exiled former president Edvard Beneš. These two leading Czechoslovak politicians' personal relationship was not good. At the time, Hodža already viewed Slovakia as in real need of public autonomy; It was therefore logical that he accepted the autonomy proclaimed by the Slovak autonomists on 6 October 1938. Not only the majority of Slovak democratic politicians, but also the Czechoslovak government in Prague at the time took note of this. He with other Slovak politicians-emigrants organised the Slovak National Council in in Paris (November 1939).[128] It included, among others (democrats), some moderate autonomist People's Party émigrés. According to the former Czechoslovak Prime Minister, this wing could not be left out of the organisation of the democratic Slovak emigration. It did not take a position against Czechoslovak statehood, but it saw the place of Slovaks in a future reorganised state in a very different way from the group around Beneš. Later on, Czechoslovak groups that were dissatisfied with Beneš's political orientation joined the organisation. The entire effor thus began to take on a Czechoslovak face and dimension.[129]

This led to a serious struggle between the two leading politicians in emigré. At first there was a geographical distance between them, but when Hodža arrived in London the situation became even more complicated. Although Beneš could not completely ignore Hodža, who was the second most important former public figure in the emigration, he only appointed him vice-president of the parliamentary representative body in the emigration (the State Council). However, this body was very lightweight. Hodža accepted this post but did not actually participate in the work of the State Council.[130]

Nevertheless, he remained in Britain until 1941, when he first attempted to promote his foreign policy concepts. However, with the stabilisation of the Czechoslovak émigré organs under Beneš and their recognition by the anti-fascist allies, he gradually lost his room for manoeuvre. Eventually he left for the USA, where he lived until his death in 1944. He was not politically passive, but here, he was no longer backed by an influential and representative political group. In the US State

128 Jablonický, 2002, p. 351.
129 Ibid. pp. 352–353.
130 Ibid. p. 352.

Department, he was supported mainly by more conservative diplomats distrustful of pro-Soviet policies. He also maintained good relations with politicians interested in Central European cooperation and integration, for instance, Richard Nicolas Coudenhove-Kalergie, who became Czechoslovakia's representative on the Pan-European Commission that organised the Fifth Pan-European Congress in New York.[131]

Hodža considered an integrated Central Europe to be an intermediate step on the road to European integration. He remained concerned with three main issues: a just solution to the Czech-Slovak relationship that was better for Slovaks (e.g. a federal type); fear of Nazi Germany and the increasingly influential Soviet Union encroaching on Central Europe; and finally, the development of plans for federalist unification of Central Europe to counteract this. In Paris in 1939, his inaugural address argued for the preservation of democratic principles in crisis and warned against fascist and Bolshevik-based anti-democratic threats.[132]

Hodža also rejected the theory of class struggle and notion of 'democracy' that was being projected from Moscow. Meanwhile, his main emigration rival, Edvard Beneš, again sought strong allies for Czechoslovakia outside Central Europe. In practice, this meant courting Western democratic states and the Soviet Union. The President was increasingly willing to base Czechoslovak security on Soviet support.[133] Hodža, however, drawing from Munich's negative experience and counting on the vacillations of the great powers, was sceptical that the newborn republic should base its security policy solely on the support of the great power allies.[134]

Hodža's concept was based on the solidarity of the Central European nations and a federative type of cooperation. This idea initially made him popular in like-minded Central European émigré circles, as well as in the more conservative American, British and French diplomatic circles fearful of the Soviet Union's growing influence in Europe. However, the German attack on the Soviet Union led to many cracks in such concepts.[135]

Hodža's marginalisation after 1941 was therefore probably not just the result of the intrigues in Beneš, but the same was not a coincidence either. The Czechoslovak emigration in London led by Beneš constantly attacked Hodža.[136] This did not change during his stay in the USA. Among other things, he was accused of collaborating with Otto Habsburg and preparing the reorganisation and restoration of Habsburg-led Central Europe. This was of course not true.[137] The confusion here was because of the plans for Central Europe of the former Czechoslovak Prime Minister and the heir to the Habsburg throne. Obviously, the Soviet Union did not

131 Lukáč, 2002b, p. 340.
132 Ibid. pp. 340–342.
133 Zemko, 2002, pp. 322–327.
134 Lukáč, 2002b, pp. 338–339.
135 Ibid. pp. 341–342.
136 Zemko, 2002, pp. 319–321.
137 Lukáč, 2002a.

like the actions of Hodža, who, even in the last year of his life, wrote a Memorandum to the US State Department entitled *Europe at the Crossroads*. In it, he warned American diplomats against Stalin's growing influence in Europe. Meanwhile, he continued his second major work, *Federation in Central Europe. Reflections and Reminiscences*.[138] It was here that he published (1942) the bulk of his views on the past and future of cooperation between the peoples of Central Europe.

This book provided a bulwark not only against a predominantly Germany but also the Soviet Union. Hodža saw Central Europe as a distinct cultural entity within European civilisation. He also drew up a draft constitution for a Central European Comonwealth, which would have achieved deeper integration than the British model. The federation he envisioned be headed by a federal president elected by a conference of national prime ministers and a federal congress. He would appoint the federal chancellor and members of the government, as well as the army commander. The federation of eight member states (Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) would form a customs union, have a common currency, and federal laws. It would cover only defense and foreign policy, but also finance and trade policy. A common postal and telecommunications system would be important, as well as a justice minister. In his vision, each member state would have been represented in government by a minister without portfolio. The federal congress would control the common budget and legislation. Its members would be elected by national parliaments with a two-thirds majority, with at least one representative per million inhabitants. The mandate of the members would be linked to the terms of national parliaments. The common language would be decided by a two-thirds majority, but each member would be able to use their own language, which would be interpreted. The federation, which would only be dissolved in the event of a constitutional amendment, would have its own Supreme Court and a superstructure citizenship. Every citizen of the federation would have to learn at least one world language, preferably one on which the federation would agree.[139] This concept was the most inellectual and concrete plan of Central European cooperation in the history of Slovak political thinking. Hodža's impact was relatively great, but only after 1989.

Milan Hodža died on 27 June 1944 in Clearwater, USA. He was buried with official honours in Chicago as a state funeral, but his remains were repatriated in 2004, when Slovakia was already independent and democratic. Here, he was reburied in the presence of the state's most important leaders. The second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda saw in Hodža the symbol of pro-Western and democratic politician. They needed this symbol in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration of Slovak Republic.

138 In English see: Hodža, 2004.
139 Hodža, 1997, pp. 231–239. Cited also in Halász, 2022, p. 190.

Conclusion

The Slovak political thinkers analysed in this chapter represented the more liberal and relatively realistic wing of the Slovak national policy during its formation, in the period between the 1848 civic revolution and end of second world war. They represented, at several times, a minority position within Slovak ideological and political life. Their sentiment towards Slavic solidarity was more limited than the pan-Slavic sentiment of dominant conservative political groups in 19th century. They also looked for alternative solutions for Slovaks in Central and Eastern Europe, who were observed by these thinkers from a more or less European perspective.

Despite of their minority position, their personal intellectual and political achievements had a strong impact on Slovak public life. This is especially true for Štefánik, who helped establish the new Czechoslovak state framework, which was very fruitful for Slovaks after the intensive assimilation and discrimination during the period of Hungarian monarchy. The political careers of Hodža and Osuský represented the new possibilities for Slovaks within the framework of Czechoslovak Republic. The positions of prime-minister in Prague and envoy in Paris provide different perspectives than those of the Catholic priest in the province or journalist in the capital.

Every presented thinker had deep contact with the Slovak national movement and a strong national identity. For a long time, the general attitude of the Slovak movement was protective and reactive. This was especially true for the old Hungarian period, as well as for a modern Czechoslovakia. Slovakia firstly achieved an independent state status only in 1939 under Nazi-German patronage, which relativized this fact. During this time the Slovaks lived as minorities in multi-ethnic countries. This fact strongly impacted their point of view and plans for a future.

Palárik, Štefánik, Osuský and Hodža supported rather the existence of Slovaks inside the bigger state frameworks, but with a constitutional and democratic political system (e. g. liberal and federalised Hungary, later the democratic Czechoslovakia). This form of political systems is usually better for a minority groups and smaller nations, than autocracy and dictatorships. A majority of analysed figures also experiences from their emigration abroad. This fact is important for the understanding of their positions and more open opinions. Despite these facts (mainly the moderate position in the issue of independency), they played very important roles in the process of Slovak national and political emancipation in the last two centuries. They helped to prepare Slovakia for an independent and democratic existence several decades later. This is a reason for their popularity after 1989.

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