

Resume

Slovakia and the World in the 20th Century

The chapters of the 20th century history creating this book deal with the important moments from the history of modern Slovakia in the changing world. The authors – friends and disciples of PhDr. Valerián Bystrický, DrSc. – are presenting here the newest results of their research and its critical evaluation. What they all have in common with Valerián Bystrický is the conviction that the 20th century Slovakia kept the same developing rhythm as the rest of the world. They agree with his opinion that the Slovak history of this period has to be studied and interpreted from a global perspective. The detailed knowledge of internal changes in Slovakia following its separation from Hungary, of amalgamating the Czechs and Slovaks in the common Czechoslovak state with all its internal and international problems and with its Central European political, economical and cultural context, enables to understand also the contemporary shape of the Slovak Republic – a sovereign state and a member of the European Union.

The 20th century world had been changing as well as the Slovak historiography that reflected those changes. And as it is shown in the first chapter of this book, the scientific achievements of Valerián Bystrický are important and integral part of it. They deal with international affairs between the two world wars, with the interwar problems of the Balkans and in the same time with the history of Slovakia. In not so distant period the regime pressure on a creative individuality was hardly bearable. Not every scientist was able to resist it in the same way even on the ground of one academic institution. But Valerián Bystrický succeeded to preserve the clean shield in clash with this period as an author of historical writings and after 1989 as a manager of science. In 1998 – 2006, being a director of the Institute of History of the SAS, he had helped to create the healthy conditions for a free scientific research, where no methods of one historical school would prevail over the others. He should be respected for that.

This book intentionally begins with the chapter on demographic development of Bratislava. In the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries, protagonists of the Slovak national movement often regretted that Slovakia did not had a significantly Slovak, city-like national and administrative center. In 1919 it was Vavro Šrobár, the minister for Slovakia, who insisted on the Slovak character of

Bratislava. Milan Zemko begins his chapter with the statement that the development of every capital of each state, the progressing of its social and national structure, indicates a lot about the development of the whole country. In the 20th century, Bratislava was officially the capital of an independent state only in 1939 – 1945 and then again from 1993. But already in 1919 it started the career of an informal political-administrative, economical and step-by-step also cultural centre of Slovakia – a country with 3 million inhabitants that was part of a newborn Czechoslovak state. This new situation strengthened by internal and external political factors, had caused great changes in “the city upon Danube”, including the changes of its ethnical structure. And Milan Zemko concentrates mainly – using the statistics from the first half of the 20th century – on the transformation of the Bratislava multiethnic character and its gradual “Slovakization”.

The following three chapters deal with the history of the Czechoslovak and Slovak political parties in interwar period. Natália Krajčovičová examines the history of the Slovak agrarian political movement – the formation of the Agrarian Party in Slovakia, its unification with the Czechoslovak agrarians and the following development of the party, which significantly influenced the Slovak and the Czechoslovak political scene until the turbulent year 1938. Jaroslava Roguľová focuses on the autonomist program of the Slovak National Party and its significant theoretical ideas and deals also with the standpoints of this party towards reforms of the political administration. The result of her analysis is the characteristic of the four periods of the Slovak National Party autonomist program from 1918 to 1938. In the chapter written by Alena Bartlová the Czechoslovak agrarianism crosses the borders of the republic. In the focus of it is the participation of Dr. Milan Hodža on the international cooperation of agrarian political parties in the Eastern-Central Europe in the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. The text shows Hodža’s efforts to cooperate with the politicians from Polish and Bulgarian Agrarian Parties and also its limits: the agrarian politicians were not able to consider the broad spectrum of their societies and the crucial specific problems of other classes.

After the World War I Europe hoped for everlasting peace, social justice, stability and prosperity. But this optimism of citizens failed. Instead of it there had risen fear of the countries, which were not satisfied by the peace treaties and wanted to revise them. Czechoslovakia tried to face it by building and strengthening its armed forces. Miloslav Čaplovič in his chapter writes about the specific and important theme – organization and activities of the Czechoslovak military intelligence service in 1919 – 1939.

In another chapter Bohumila Ferenčuhová focuses on problems of regional and European security from the perspective of diplomacy. She examines the negotiations that had led to the treaty between Romania and France in 1926 and analyzes the role of this treaty in the Versailles peace treaties system. Even in the period of European pacifism, Central and South-Eastern Europe from the Adriatic to the Baltic had to consider interests, positions and the territorial claims of the two for this once returning powers – Germany and the U.S.S.R.

Not long ago the objective analysis of the great power policy of Russia and the U.S.S.R. towards Central Europe and the Balkans was a theme that belonged to less frequently researched and almost taboo themes in the Soviet block historiography. Lubica Harbuľová in her chapter brings a detailed analysis of contemporary results of the Russian historiography dealing with the Czechoslovak history, which are based upon the materials from the former inaccessible archival funds.

The Munich of 1938 represents one of the key and dark moments in the Czechoslovak history. The chapter written by Jindřich Dejmek follows less known aspect of this problem. He analyses the permanent and persistent diplomatic activities of Dr. Edvard Beneš that led in 1942 to the declaration of the Munich Agreement for not valid. His success helped to restore the postwar Czechoslovakia in the borders from 1938 (without Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia).

The part prepared by Ondrej Podelec deals with the Slovak Republic in 1939 – 1945. It is a thorough analysis of the trials in which the Slovak courts of justice tried in absence the members of political exile and the author examines their legislative background and judgment practices. Due to long lasting procedures of the tribunals some cases were not concluded till the decline of the state in 1945, as it was the trial with Štefan Osuský and co. This analysis also shows, that since autumn 1944 the Slovak judicature was not able to resist political pressure of the regime and the German occupation forces.

The chapter written by Slavomír Michálek bridges the war and postwar periods from the perspective of the U. S. – Czechoslovak economic relations. Projects like *lend – lease* and UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) were part of a specific U. S. help for the countries that had suffered under the German occupation and expansion. Among them was also Czechoslovakia. Her citizens understood very well that the massive UNRRA activities were an American project. Therefore the Czechoslovak communists played down its importance and trivialized its economic effect, because the help from the capitalist country did not fit to their schemes and political goals.

After World War II, the limited parliamentary democracy was restored in Czechoslovakia. But this regime differed from the parliamentary system of the first Czechoslovak Republic. The so-called people's democracy considered the Czechoslovak citizens (except German and Hungarian minorities) as a special kind of plurality and democracy. But it had not been an idea only of the communists who saw in it a transitional step towards their own regime. The democratic parts of domestic and exile resistance contributed to its birth, too. Michal Barnovský in his text compares Polish and Czechoslovak road to one party regime. The specifics and differences between them had not been so significant for establishing a communist regime, but they played an important role in the following development.

The attempts to change the Stalinist regimes in Poland and Hungary in 1956 had many-sided influence on the neighboring countries. Dagmar Čierna-Lantayová in her chapter describes the rise of opposition moods among students and intellectuals in Slovakia. But in contrast to Hungary, the socio-political tension was not eruptive enough for mass protests. This was one of the causes why the support for the events in Hungary had been so minimal. Half-hearted attempts of the press to express other than official opinion, were played down prevented by "watchful" censorship. In December 1956, the Czechoslovak communist party officially condemned "*the attempt of counter-revolutionary coup d'état in Hungary*". The communist control over the Slovak society had even deepened.

Events in Central Europe in 1956 were overshadowed by a global clash of the great powers. Karol Sorby's chapter shows that the failure of the British and French "Suez adventure" made it easier for USA to take over the leading role in the region. According to the *Eisenhower doctrine* "power vacuum" in the Middle East had to be filled in by the United States in order to stop the communist – especially Soviet – infiltration of this part of the world. But in the eyes of Arabic nationalists the Suez crisis destroyed the myth of Soviet threat to the security of the region. They viewed the Soviet Middle East policy as more sensitive towards their interests. Sorby analyzes and compares politics of different Arabic states after the formation of *Eisenhower doctrine* and evaluates its global consequences.

For some independent Slovak intellectuals it was difficult to let themselves tie down by the communist regime. Jozef Leikert in his chapter deals with the case of journalist and writer Ladislav Mňačko, whose emigration to Israel in the late 1960s was an act of opposition to the anti-Israeli politics of Czechoslovakia. Through the interviews of Jozef Leikert with Ladislav Mňačko, various authors of *Kultúrny život* (journal Cultural Life) and members of the Union of Slovak writers we may be

involved not only in the atmosphere of this period, but we will meet oppositionists and conformists among the Slovak intelligentsia, too.

So-called normalization in 1970 – 1989 almost returned Slovakia to the stuffy atmosphere of the 1950s. That is why we decided to close this book not with the independent and proud attitude of Ladislav Mňačko, but we return back to the phenomenon typical for the whole period of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. In the years 1948 – 1989 it was very important for communists to control churches, because they considered them potential opposition in Slovakia. Jan Pešek examines in his text the institutional instruments of this control: legislation, activities of the Slovak Office for Church Affairs as a highest state authority for regulation and control of churches (which actually did not change during the whole 40 years of the communist regime), church policy of the communist Party and the (mal-)practices of the State security towards churches. Despite protests from domestic and foreign Church authorities – especially Roman-Catholic – the regime did not modify either the spirit or the letter of the so-called Church Acts from 1949. The fundamental change came only with the “velvet revolution” in 1989: the communist regime collapsed and the apparatus for the control of churches has gone to the history.

Matej Hanula