Momentous historical events in the modern Czechoslovak history and their place in the ideological framework of pre-war Czechoslovakia

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The article is a summary of celebration of the 28th October 1918 and Pittsburg agreement in Slovakia in epoch of the Pre-Munich Czechoslovakia republic.

Czechoslovakian republic. 28 October 1918. Pittsburgh Agreement. Autonomy.

28 October 1918 – establishment of Czechoslovak Republic

Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) was one of the states, which came to existence as a result of geopolitical changes after World War I. The biggest challenge to newly formed state was its ethnic diversity – almost a half of population (if we count Slovaks separately) was not Czech. The next largest ethnic community was German. Majority of three million Germans considered their inclusion into CSR as an act of injustice. A similar situation existed in Slovakia, where approximately seven hundred thousand ethnic Hungarians (Magyars) were included into Czechoslovakian state. There were other ethnic minorities – Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Jews, Poles and others, who became part of complex ethnic structure of CSR.

The ethnic core community – Czechs – utilized all possible means available to their disposal to alleviate existing situation and to establish working framework of government in sphere of politics, economics and ideology. Mainly for this reason, an emphasis was paid to ideology supportive to unity of state. In that sense, singularly important was to weld Czechs and Slovaks together and create unified nation. Unity would place Czechs and Slovaks in a majority position in CSR and give them an edge against so called non-Slavic ethnic communities. So, a thesis of Czechoslovak nation was born and strenuously pursued. Its main protagonist was Eduard Beneš, one of the leading politicians. He, in spite of numerous objections and critics of this concept never swerved from it. Because it was politically so desirable, it was even anchored in the preamble of Czechoslovak Constitution, which starts with words „We the Czechoslovak nation“. In strong opposition to theory of unified Czechoslovakian nation were Slovak nationalists, who struggled for more independent status of Slovakia in frame of CSR. Also, although for different reasons, members of non-Slavic ethnic minorities in an overwhelming majority stayed in opposition to Czechoslovak Republic.

CSR was also criticized for differed reasons. As a bourgeois state, communist refuted the whole political establishment of Czechoslovakia and vowed to replace it with „proletarian dictate“ type of state in a Soviet style. In this situation, leaders of so called state forming political parties1 viewed opposition parties as a threat to the Republic. This had political and

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1 The core of political establishment, which held, though with certain alterations, a dominant position in Czechoslovakia during the whole existence of Republic consisted of the Republican Party of Agricultural and Small Farming People (the Agrarian Party), the Social Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party, the Czech Populist Party and the Small Traders Party, the National Democratic Party.
ideological consequences. Sharing the political power with opposition was practically impossible lest a very existence of CSR would be threatened, or at least her political structure profoundly changed. A great emphasis was placed upon ideological propaganda supportive of unity of Republic. Czechoslovakia was viewed as a state in which Czechs and Slovaks found a fulfillment of their national aspirations, but they can defend their liberty only in close cooperation.

28 October 1918, the day of establishment of CSR, became a holiday celebrated every year with active participation and massive support of all government agencies. Its significance was enhanced by assertion, that it was a day of renewal of freedom after centuries of subjugation of Czechs and Slovaks. As periodical Slovenský denník pointed at the first anniversary of inception of CSR, on this day „stopped the historical development, which was leading to suppression and was threatening especially us Slovaks to erase from the surface of earth“.

The establishment of Czechoslovak Republic was valued as sine qua non condition for free development of Slovak Nation.

The Minister with full powers for the administration of Slovakia (MPAS) Vavro Šrobár, during commemoration of first anniversary of CSR in Slovak capital Bratislava declared that „for first time since millennium we felt to be a free nation, we have a right to live in the same way as other free nations.“

Beside accentuation of singular importance of establishment of Czechoslovakia in regard to gaining of freedom for Czechs and Slovaks, a positive impact of common state was emphasized as a base for deepening of unity of both communities and this way creating conditions for forming a true Czechoslovak Nation. The Minister for foreign relations, Edvard Beneš, called attention to this goal in his speech during the celebration of 28 October 1919, when he said, „...we will work for the aim to foster the Czechoslovak unity, without which there is impossible to hold our place in our Republic.“

In following years the commemoration of 28 October was elaborated and regulated by state institutions in great detail. It was mandatory for government agencies to provide all necessary support to secure proper course of celebrations, because, 28 October was proclaimed a state holiday on 14 of October 1919. For example, V. Šrobár, on October 19 1921, instructed all county offices in Slovakia to secure that „...this memorable day will be celebrated without disturbing interferences, which could diminish its significance.“ As documents, deposited in various Slovak archives indicate, government agencies paid especially attention to dignified course of 28 October celebrations. Even „priests of all religious denominations“ should celebrate state holiday by performing masses.

Exceptionally elaborated set of measures was enacted during the celebration of tenth anniversary of 28 October. In Slovakia an organization Slovenská liga (Slovak League) formed Slovenský jubilárny výbor (Slovak Jubilee Committee), which prepared detailed program of activities focused on commemoration of 28 October. It consisted of cycle of

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2 Slovenský denník, 28. 10. 1919, Article Prvý rok slobody (First year of freedom).
3 Slovenský denník, 30. 10. 1919, Article Oslava Národného sviatku v Bratislave (Celebration of National Holiday in Bratislava).
4 Slovenský denník, 4. 11. 1938, Article Slováci na pražských slávnostiach (Slovaks in Prague Celebrations).
5 The Law, no. 555. The control of state institutions in regard to celebrations of 28 October was précised by Law no. 65 issued on April 3 1925.
6 Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archiv - SNA), fund (f.) Minister s plnou mocou pre správu Slovenska 1919 – 1927 (Minister with full powers for administration of Slovakia), box (b.) 402, no. 402/697.
7 State Archive (Štátny archív - SA) in Banská bystrica, branch (br.) Kremnica, f. Okresný úrad – OÚ (District office) Nová Baňa (1923 – 1945), b. 1, no. 1815/23. In preparation of 28 October Holiday in year 1923 County Office in city of Zvolen instructed subordinate offices to secure, that celebrations „...will be carried out in a solemn and dignified course adequate to significance of this day and did not decay into a noisy marry-making (dance entertainment etc.).“
lectures dealing with history of liberation of Slovakia and accentuate flowering of Slovak culture during last ten years. The local branches of Slovak League organized various lectures of patriotic content. Periodical Slovenský ľud (Slovak people) characterized celebrations of tenth anniversary as „...a chain of great commemorations, during which each and every member of our nation will remember year 1918, when to our great luck – and actually to our rescue – a holy idea of rightness, truth and justice...was victorious.“

In Slovakia, celebrations of 28 October were concentrated in City of Bratislava. The city dwellers, as was demanded in circular of Police Directory in Bratislava (PDB), were obliged to embellish their houses by state flags. Czechoslovak flags were to be hoisted on all public buildings. PDB also called attention to strict prohibition of any activities, which could impair course of celebration, including of work of any kind. Violation of this decree could be punished by fine of ten thousand crowns or incarceration up to one month. Police Directory in Bratislava even directly participated on precise schedule of individual festivities during 26 – 28 of October 1928. Meticulous attention was paid also to lighting of important public buildings, fireworks and description of duties of PDB employees.

There were other social and cultural institutions, which participated on preparation of festivities, such as Rada mesta (City Council), Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko (Cultural Union for Slovakia), Slovenské Národné Divadlo (Slovak National Theatre) and all cultural associations of City of Bratislava.

Not everybody, however, participated on holiday of 28 October with euphoria. In some localities, namely in southern regions, where majority of members of Hungarian minority lived, festivities were met with indifference. According to report of Custom Agency in City of Šahy, celebrations attended only „very small portion of Hungarian minority, only several pensioners and shopkeepers of Jewish nationality. The Hungarian intelligentsia celebrations ignored“. Similarly, branch of Police Directory in City of Rimavská Sobota, where a majority of population consisted of members of Hungarian community, reported, that „On all celebrations participated local Czechoslovakian minority in full numbers, Hungarian population, especially Hungarian intelligentsia, excluding small exceptions, behaved utterly passive and celebrations ignored.“

However, not all members of Hungarian community ignored state holiday. As periodical Slovenská liga reported, on celebrations in Bratislava took part also members of Union of Hungarian farmers, who hailed President Masaryk and Republic with „roaring applause“. Also, according to Slovenská liga, in the second largest city in Slovakia – Košice, „population regardless of ethnic adherence exhibited a great euphoria.“ However, in light of generally reserved attitude to Czechoslovak state held by a considerable segment of Hungarian minority members, these reports could be exaggerated.

An added significance gained commemorations of 28 October after international situation in the second half of thirties worsened as a consequence of Nazi victory in Germany. New

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9 For example cycle of lectures named Práca prof. Dr. Masaryka počas svetovej vojny za hranicami (Work of prof. dr. Masaryk during the world war abroad), Dr. Milan R. Štefánik, jeho práca za oslobodenie svojho národa (Dr. Milan R. Štefánik, his work for liberation of his nation), O vzniku a praci v borbe za našu slobodu (About beginnings and work of fight for our freedom) et ceter.

10 Slovenský ľud, 2. 1. 1928.

11 SNA, f. Krajinský úrad - KÚ (Land Office), b. 6.

12 SNA, f. KÚ, b. 6.

13 SNA, f. KÚ, b. 6.


15 SNA, f. PR, b. 825, no. 2431/28.

16 The periodical published by organization Slovenská liga under the same name.

aggressive policy of Nazi Germany was perceived as a direct threat to Czechoslovakia. In this situation, all activities which fostered firmness and resilience of state, including celebrations of state holidays, were pursued with growing vigor. On the other side, persons who were demonstratively passive during these celebrations and, consequently, could be suspected of disloyalty to the Republic, became a subject of attention of security agencies. Such attention was focused especially toward ethnic minority members (German and Hungarian) and toward communists. During the preparations on celebrations of 28 October 1935, Presidium of Land Office in Bratislava instructed all security agencies in Slovakia to „pay a special attention to activities of Communist Party and Sudetendeutsche/Karpatedeutsche Partei during commemoration of 28 October.“ Anxiety flowing from possible aggression against CSR led to endeavors to manifest unity and loyalty of all citizens, which could be manifested during state holiday of 28 October. Consequently, state institution labored to make festivities as elaborate and attended as possible. For example, District Office (DO) in Gelnica instructed all notary offices and gendarmeries to make sure, that „all citizens regardless of their ethnic origin, religious adherence or political conviction“ could participate on celebrations of 28 October 1936. The participation of state employees was mandatory and DO in Gelnica ordered all subordinate institutions to advise owners of private buildings to embellish them with Czechoslovak flags. Land Office in Bratislava issued on October 7 1936 a measure in which asked „all church authorities“ to make sure, that priests after mass stay in church playing a state hymn, which was ordered to be played after religious services. 

The growing influence of Nazi Germany and open acts of hostilities toward Czechoslovakia impacted festivities of 28 October in year 1937. By weekly Politika noted deterioration of international situation when wrote that „International situation – constantly exhibiting tendency to rather worsening than to improving – demanded great moral and material sacrifices to national security…The national security is progressing in spirit of times and increased demands, induced by general insecurity and growing danger of unprovoked attacks and undeclared wars. This jubilee, than, is celebrated in one of the gloomiest years since end of world war…“ 

The rise of Nazi Germany, which could imperil the very existence of Czechoslovakia, led to change of political course on part of communists. Previous condemnations of CSR as a bourgeois state were superseded by expressions of support. Communist realized that if democratic Czechoslovakia, in which, in spite of certain degree of persecution, they are allowed to be politically active, will be destroyed, they will perish with her. One of the foremost members of Communist party, Vladimír Clementis, succinctly characterized this chilling possibility in his allusion to celebrations of 28 October – „28 October 1937 we are celebrating in times which are marked by fight of international fascism against small nations, against democratic states and, consequently against Czechoslovakian Republic…The Czechoslovakian Republic is blocking imperialistic goals of Hitler.“ Changed attitude demonstrated communists also in their approach to state holiday. As communist daily Slovenské zvesti (Slovak tidings) wrote, the festivities in Bratislava were attended also by „official participation of party members and its red flags“.

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18 SA Levoča, br. Spišská Nová Ves, f. OÚ Gelnica, b. 39. Sudetendeutsche/Karpatedeutsche Partei was a political party which during the thirties gradually integrated a decisive majority of German minority members in its ranks and initially clandestinely, but in year 1938 openly inclined to Nazi ideology and by demanding unification, with Germany gave an excuse of Adolf Hitler aggression against Czechoslovakia.
19 SA Levoča, br. Spišská Nová Ves, f. OÚ Gelnica, b. 56.
20 SA Levoča, br. Poprad, f. OÚ Poprad, b. 15.
21 28 October.
22 Politika, 1. 11. 1937, Article Jubileum republiky (Anniversary of Republic).
23 Slovenské zvesti, 28. 10. 1938, Article Na obranu demokracie republiky (Defense of Republic democracy).
As political developments in Europe confirmed, worries in regard to existence of Czechoslovakia were justified. Blackmailing tactics of A. Hitler broke will to resist on part of France and England and these states agreed to occupation of Sudeten territory by Germany. The Munich Agreement signed by German, Italy, France and England on September 30 1938, sealed the fate of democratic CSR and throw truncated state at the mercy of German dictator. The venerated day of 28 October was celebrated in mournful atmosphere and only in Czech part of the Republic. Slovak autonomists, represented by the Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party (HSPP), who utilized weakened status of central government in Prague and became a leading political force in Slovakia, the state holiday ignored.

In changed political situation 28 October ceased to be an official holiday – it became ordinary working day. In Slovakia this abrupt turnover was met with contrary reactions. All who stood on pro-Czechoslovakia side of political specter mourned. Periodical of Social Democratic Party – *Robotnické noviny*, with unhidden sorrow commented – „If twenty years ago 28 October and days which followed were joyous, today as if nothing from this joy remained.“

Contrary sentiments toward 28 October was expressed by *Slovák*, an official newspaper of HSPP, – „28 October, if it would be celebrated today, would be a celebration of twenty years of negativism, twenty years of voracity of Freemason cliques, twenty years of deceit of people telling them that future of state is secured, it would be celebrations of disorder and distraction, foundations on which there is impossible build a state lastingly.“

During years 1939 – 1944 Czechoslovakia did not existed as a political unit. Czech and Moravian part of Republic became The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Slovakia gained quasi independence under strict control and exploitation by Nazi Germany. The defeat of Germany enabled renewal of Czechoslovakia and return to veneration of 28 October. This, however, was again suppressed by communists who usurped power in February 1948.

„Bourgeois“ holidays, such as 28 October, were not acceptable and were replaced by „proletarian“ holidays. The return to commemoration of establishment of Czechoslovak Republic was possible only after demission of communist regime in November 1989.

**The Pittsburgh Agreement**

The birth of Czechoslovakia and her whole existence was affected by constantly contested issue, so called Slovak question – that is – status of Slovaks in the Republic and nature of „Czecho-Slovakian nation“. There was a strong motivation to „create“ a construct of Czechoslovak nation due to complicated ethnic structure of CSR. Only united Czechs and Slovaks could have a comfortable majority face to face to Germans, Magyars and members of other ethnic communities living in various places in Czechoslovakia. This however meant, that Slovaks, as self-sustaining nation were somewhat „melted” into this fictitious construct. On Czech side, the most outspoken defender of this thesis was Edvard Beneš, on Slovak side so called Czechoslovakists.

This seemingly theoretical construct had, however, deep repercussions upon the status of Slovaks in the CSR. If Slovaks were only a branch of Czechoslovak nation as Czechoslovakists asserted, then a unitary state with central government in Prague was utterly sufficient and satisfactory. But, if Slovaks constituted an independent nation with all attributes which such a community should have, than, unquestionably, there was a need to adjust state organization to this fact and give Slovaks some form of autonomy. The defenders of this political requirement – autonomists, argued that this was actually agreed upon during the visit of later President T. G. Masaryk in USA, where in City of Pittsburgh between representatives of Slovak League and T. G. Masaryk was

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25 *Robotnické noviny*, 28. 10. 1938, Article 20 rokov (Twenty years).
26 *Slovák*, 28. 10. 1938, Article Sviatok, ktorý sa nesvätí. (A holiday, which is not celebrated).
27 The most venerated were Bolshevik victory in November 1917, Mayday and victory over Nazi Germany
28 Among others Ivan Dérer, Milan Ivánka et cet.
signed so called Pittsburgh Agreement on May 1918. As both parties agreed, in Czechoslovakia Slovaks should have an autonomous diet, independent courts and Slovak schools. Consequently, for Slovak autonomists politically organized in HSPP and Slovak National Party (SNP), signing of Pittsburgh Agreements became a Holy Grail in their quest for greater political independence of Slovakia.

Because of precarious nature of T. G. Masaryk signature, it was indispensable, that he explain his position in this matter. T. G. Masaryk did this in his letter to Czechoslovak Prime minister Vlastimil Tusar, when he wrote that Pittsburg Agreement „is one of the numerous pre-revolutionary programs conceived abroad. It has its historical value.“ T. G. Masaryk added „In the Agreement at the end is stated, that detailed arrangements in regard to structure of Czechoslovakian state is to left to free Czechs and Slovaks and their legal representatives; this was expressed with understanding that Czechs and Slovaks presented in Pittsburgh meeting, especially citizens of USA have no right to make decisions in regard to definitive organization of Czechoslovakian state.“

This was unequivocal refuting of bounding relevancy of the Pittsburgh Agreement on part of President Masaryk. But also on Slovak side there were politicians who denied that Pittsburgh Agreement can be a legal base for establishment of any kind of autonomy of Slovakia. Illustrative example of this approach is stand of Ivan Dérer, a chairman of Social Democratic Party in Slovakia, who asserted that „The whole question hidden under slogan of Slovak autonomy is nothing else as struggle of clericals to hold their power of Slovak people, power which was secured by old Hungarian regime.“

Political representatives of autonomy movement held strictly different approach to this issue. One of deputies of Parliament for HSPP, Štefan Onderčo, declared – „We have enough honesty and also resolution to openly say: we expect nothing from you Czechs, than implement the Pittsburgh Agreement into constitutional laws of our state and there will be a holy peace between us.“

The significance and legal validity of Pittsburgh Agreement accentuated also members of Slovak National Party (SNP). The SNS daily Národnie noviny wrote, that „In Pittsburgh, which was and will be a historical place of the Slovak nation, performed our American brothers a heroic deed in the struggle for Slovak self government...We, who here in our motherland are fighting for the same ideals, got from Pittsburgh a moral support of immense significance.“

Because possibly negative impact upon the unity of state, central government agencies during the existence of Czechoslovak Republic kept low profile in regard to veneration of historical meeting in Pittsburgh. On the contrary, representatives of autonomy movement used every opportunity to request implementation of Pittsburgh Agreement into legislative and HSPP conditioned its cooperation with the political parties who composed ruling coalition upon fulfillment of this request. The leader of HSPP, Andrej Hlinka, formulated this condition during the meeting of HSPP members of parliament in City of Trnava in November 1925.

According to report from meeting, which Police Directory in Bratislava got from „trustworthy source“ A. Hlinka declared „We will join ruling coalition only when this government include in its program primarily Slovak autonomy, which belongs to us on the basis of agreement concluded in America.“

As with other holidays, the round anniversaries became a special opportunities to commemorate events held important for political or ideological reasons. This was true also for

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30 Poslanecká sněmovna N.S.R.Č 1922. I. volební období 6. zasedání.
32 Národnie noviny, 27. 7. 1922.
celebrations of Pittsburg Agreement in its tenth anniversary in year 1928. A number of public meetings were organized by HSPP where representatives of party vowed to struggle for fulfillment of autonomy of Slovakia as was agreed upon in Pittsburgh ten years ago. For example, as was reported by Slovák, during the public gathering in city of Trenčín, representatives of HSPP adopted resolution in which expressed thanks to those who brought „great sacrifices in labor, property, blood and lives for liberation of Slovak nation‖. The participants of the gathering in Trenčín also adopted a proclamation – Slovak National Manifest, containing among other grievances, criticism of unsatisfactory situation in Slovakia, where „Slovakia in spite of conclusion of Pittsburgh Agreement is lacking own administrative, its own diet and its own courts! The use of Slovak language is omitted in schools, in offices and in the public live at all! Even though detailed elaborations in regard to establishment of Czecho-Slovak state were left to work-out by liberated Czechs and Slovaks and their authorized representatives, till present day these causes were not elaborated.‖

A new vigor injected into issue of Slovak autonomy members of young intelligentsia, who received their education during the first ten years of existence of CSR. Many of them vainly searched for jobs in state administrative, where a large segment of various positions was occupied by Czechs. This, besides others real or alleged blunders committed central government, fueled aversion against existing conditions in Slovakia. A voice of dissent became periodical Nástup, which was sharply critical about ruling political establishment and clamored for change. In that sense the Pittsburgh Agreement was an irrefutable proof, that Slovakia is rightfully entitled to autonomy. In regard of its relevancy Nástup expressed conviction, that „the Pittsburg Agreement is a revolutionary norm as is our Constitution. Czechs and Slovaks, who concluded it abroad, acted with the same right as members of Revolutionary National Assembly.‖

Autonomists criticized not only indifference of government agencies toward veneration of Pittsburg Agreement but pointed to cases when state institutions took steps to hinder its commemoration. On April 1 1934 Nástup published an article in which informed about refusal of Police Directory in City of Košice to allow a public celebration of Pittsburgh Agreement. The Police Directory justified the prohibition on the grounds that “that regarding of events happening lately there is a reasonable expectation of interference into public peace and order.” The prohibition of Pittsburgh Agreement commemoration by Police Directory in Košice was, however, not a capricious act of this security institution. Already on May 26 1934 Presidium of Land Office issued a circular in which instructed all police organs to take a rigorous approach to petitions to celebrate Pittsburgh Agreement.

During twenties and first half of thirties the political developments in Slovakia did not led to the need to change political arrangement on part of central government. Autonomist, though became a constant and influential factor in Slovak politics, had not enough power to assert their agenda in form of any significant transformation of status of Slovakia in CSR. The basic

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34 Slovák, 30. 5. 1928.
35 Slovák, 30. 5.1928.
36 Nástup, 1. 6. 1933, Article Pittsburghská dohoda (Pittsburgh Agreement) (Italics in original text).
37 Nástup, 1. 6. 1933, Article Pittsburghská dohoda.
38 Presidium of Land Office informed subordinate offices that „According to received information autonomist political parties (Hlinka’ Slovak Populist Party and Slovak National Party) intend to commemorate anniversary of signature of so called Pittsburgh Agreement due to 30 May 1934 in form of public lectures, gatherings etc. Considering fact that political leadership of Hlinkas’ Slovak Populist Party carried out lately various speeches dealing with question of so called Pittsburgh Agreement, which have character of criminal acts, it is possible to expect that during public speeches and lectures, which could be realized in commemoration of mentioned agreement, can happen instances of violation of public order. Accordingly, representatives of security organs should from this point of view evaluate requests to carry public speeches and lectures focused upon Pittsburgh Agreement.‖ SA Levoča, br. Spišská Nová Ves, b. 46, no. 25.366/1934 pres.
political setting of state was stabile. Also international situation, as President T. G. Masaryk and Prime Minister E. Beneš numerously accentuated, was devoid of any dangerous elements. The alliance with France and security agreements which established a Little Entente offered proof of this optimistic evaluation.

Placid situation in Europe, however, unexpectedly ended as a consequence of Great Depression. Economic downturn aggravates by protectionist policies of European countries resulted in growth of unemployment and political instability. Beside other reasons, economic malaise unquestionably contributed to victory of Nazi Party in Germany in January 1933. Take-over of Germany by Nazis had a catastrophic impact upon situation in Europe. Germany led by A. Hitler, who became a supreme leader – *führer*, started only thinly veiled policy of remilitarization. Under A. Hitler leadership Germany repeatedly broke clauses of Trianon Treaty and its aggressive course became biggest threat to existence of Czechoslovakia. A. Hitler, with growing impudence, claimed his determination to include all regions inhabited by Germans to Germany, even if that means outright occupation of sovereign states. In that sense, Czechoslovakia, where over three million German minority members lived, became a natural target. Parallel to increasing pressure, political situation in CSR deteriorated. Majority of Germans in CSR sympathized with Nazi ideology. This resulted in creation of a new political subject – Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront\(^3^9\), which became a tool of A. Hitler in his conquest of Czechoslovakia. The situation of CSR worsened after German Army occupied Austria. External threat had inevitably impact upon domestic political developments. Besides German minority members, also ethnic Hungarians became agitated and voiced their dissatisfaction. In dense atmosphere intensified their political activities representatives of HSPP too. With growing intensity autonomists clamored for a reform of political structure and implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement. An influential member of younger autonomist generation, one of the leading politicians of HSPP, Jozef Tiso, in his speech in Parliament declared right of Slovaks to have their own Slovak life\(^4^0\). Chairman of HSPP A. Hlinka during the public meeting in City of Ružomberok declared that HSPP is willing to join ruling coalition only on condition of implementation of Pittsburgh Agreement.\(^4^1\)

In tense political atmosphere, caused by growing demands for autonomy by leaders Sudeten German party and threats to CSR by Nazi Germany, twentieth anniversary of Pittsburgh Agreement was approaching. Celebrations were expected to by exceptionally festive by visit of American Slovak League. Periodical *Slovák týždenník* reported, that “Thousands of Slovaks from adjacent other counties are notifying the ir participation on Bratislava Pittsburgh festivities. Already from present reactions we can say, that organizers will have exhilarating but a big work to do, because truly great masses will attend not seen in Bratislava in long time.\(^4^2\)

HSPP viewed anniversary of Pittsburgh Agreement and arrival of American delegation as welcomed opportunity to foster its political agenda. *A-Zet*, a daily of National Socialist Party, criticized this approach – “It is deplorable, that Ludaks\(^4^3\) are making from arrival of American

\(^3^9\) Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront was transformed to Sudetendeutsche Partei and became largest political organization representing German minority members in CSR.

\(^4^0\) *Slovák týždenník*, 27. 2. 1938, Article Za splnenie Pittsburgskej dohody (For realization of Pittsburgh Agreement).

\(^4^1\) *Slovák týždenník*, 6. 3. 1938, Article Ak dajú do ústavy, čo tu celý národ žiada, ak uzákonia Pittsburgskú dohodu, pôjdeme do vláy. (If they insert into Constitution what the whole nation is demanding, if they legalize Pittsburgh agreement, we will join government).

\(^4^2\) *Slovák týždenník*, 29. 5. 1938, Article Celé Slovensko sa oduševňuje za oslavy Pittsburgskej dohod. (The whole Slovakia is excited about celebration of Pittsburgh Agreement).

\(^4^3\) Frequently used abbreviate name for SHPP.
delegation their party celebration, which due to well known approach of HSPP is preventing other citizens to join.”

Increased belligerency of HSPP in combination with preparations of massive demonstration in Bratislava worried government institutions of possible break-up of disturbances. With intention to prevent such occurrences Presidium of Land Office in Bratislava on May 30 1938 issued a circular in which ordered District offices to report approximately how large attendance they expect and if only individuals and delegations will come to Bratislava or if a massive attendance can be expected. District offices should also submit reports if any rumors or irregular behavior occurred during preparations and generally what a attitude in regard to prepared festivities is observable among population. Because there were unconfirmed rumors circulating that some of peasants will come to Bratislava carrying scythes, picks and hatches, Presidium ordered, that in eventuality of such occurrences, these is necessary „unconditionally to eliminate them“.

American delegation of Slovak league led by Peter Hletko, by nature of its mission – bringing an original of Pittsburgh Agreement to Slovakia – was supportive of autonomist movement and its claims. This was underlined when P. Hletko and A. Hlinka stayed side-by-side on tribune during the HSPP manifestations in Bratislava. The cordial relations between both sides confirmed also presence of members of Slovak League on congress of HSPP on June 4 1938. Though P. Hletko declared that „Slovaks from American Slovak League do not want to break-up Republic“, at the same time he asserted that „…they insist on autonomy and on realization of the Agreement.“

Festivities organized by HSPP during June 4. – 5. 1938 in Bratislava were portrayed by Ludaks as an unprecedented triumph. According to Slovák týždenník on celebrations participated over hundred thousand persons, which proved that „the whole Slovakia resolutely manifested for her rights.“

Festivities organized by HSPP in Bratislava aroused reaction of political parties forming the ruling coalition. Already a day after manifestation organized by Ludaks, anti-autonomists led by the Agrarian Party manifested on June 6 1938 in streets of Bratislava with slogans supporting the unity of Czechoslovakia.

In reality anniversary of the Pittsburgh Agreement and visit of delegation of American Slovak League did not resulted in any political change. Prime minister Milan Hodža in talks with members of delegation unequivocally refused to include the Pittsburgh Agreement into Czechoslovakian Constitution.

Slovak autonomist became victorious after all, but due to external factors. With advent of autumn 1938 A. Hitler gradate his attacks on Czechoslovakia, demanding that either Czechoslovakia relinquish the Sudeten territory inhabited by Germans, or Germany will occupy these lands by force. Western powers – France and England, were unable to resist threats and with aim to avert war signed in Munich on 30 September 1938 a document so called Munich Agreement. In line with this deplorable act Czechoslovakia was, in form of an ultimatum, coerced to agree with occupation of Sudeten regions. This way a whole line of fortifications on western border was relinquished to Germany and CSR was left without possibility to defend itself. The Munich Agreement had profound repercussions upon situation in Czechoslovakia. Political establishment, which in frame of democratic Constitution

46 A-Zet, 5. 6. 1938, Article Ludáci trvajú na autonómii (Ludaks are insisting on autonomy).
47 Slovák týždenník, 12. 6. 1938, Article Toto je vôľa národa (This is will of the nation).
functioned for past twenty years successfully, was shaken to the ground. Nazi Germany
came a towering power in Central Europe and truncated CSR had no choice, that to be
accommodating to wishes of her totalitarian neighbor. Internally the political situation in state
changed dramatically. The central government in Prague, weakened by violated integrity of
state and subsequent resignation of President E. Beneš, was willing to solve issue of Slovak
autonomy based on the Pittsburgh Agreement. National Assembly adopted on November 22
1938 a constitutional law proclaiming Slovak autonomy. Already during October 1938 the
leading political force in Slovakia became HSPP. HSPP absorbed political parties with
exception Communist Party and Social Democratic Party, which were prohibited. HSPP
gradually usurped all political power in Slovakia. Czechoslovakia, which in spite of
promises was unable to obtain guarantees from France and England, was exposed to growing
pressure from Nazi Germany.
However, in plans of A. Hitler, even subservient Czechoslovakia had no place. After
contemplating several options, A. Hitler decided to break-up C-SR and occupy western part of
Republic entirely. Slovak political representatives, led by J. Tiso, were coerced to proclaim
Slovak Republic as a sovereign state. Though formally independent, Slovakia became a
German satellite and under close scrutiny of German advisers was changing to totalitarian
state.

Významné historické udalosti v modernej histórii Československa a ich miesto v
ideologickom systéme predvojnového Československa
Predstavitelia Československej republiky kládli dôraz na upevnenie postavenia štátu. Popri
bezpečnostných a hospodárskych faktoroch zohrávalo významnú úlohu i ideové zdôvodnenie
štátu tak v myšliach jeho obyvateľov, ako aj za hranicami. Nezastupiteľnú úlohu zohrávali
v tomto procese významné historické udalosti, ktoré mali určujúci význam pre vznik
Československa. V tomto kontexte to bol predovšetkým 28. október 1918 – deň vyhlásenia
Československej republiky. K významným udalostiam, formujúcim proces vzniku republiky
patril tiež dohovor medzi predstaviteľmi českého politického exilu na čele s T. G. Masarykom
a vedúcim činiteľmi Slovenskej ligy v USA, podpísaný v Pittsburgu v máji 1918. Jedným zo
signatárov bol T.G. Masaryk, ktorý sa stal prvým prezidentom republiky. Keďže v súlade so
znením dokumentu mal byť na Slovensku zriadený nezávislý snem, legislatíva a slovenské
školstvo, autonomistický prúd v slovenskej politickej scéne apeloval na implementáciu
Pittsburgskej dohody. Príspevok prináša stručnú históriu komemorácie oboch udalostí na
Slovensku.

49 After establishment of Slovak autonomy, name of state changed to Czecho-slovakia.