

TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES
ON THE SLOVAK QUESTION, 1914-1948

by

MICHAEL ROBERT CUDE

B.A., Texas State University-San Marcos, 2006

M.A., University of Liverpool, 2007

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
2012

This thesis entitled:
Transatlantic Perspectives on the Slovak Question, 1914-1948
written by Michael Robert Cude
has been approved for the Department of History

Thomas Zeiler
(Committee chair)

John Hatch
(Committee member)

Date Nov 4, 2013

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Cude, Michael Robert (Ph.D., History)

Transatlantic Perspectives on the Slovak Question, 1914-1948

Thesis directed by Professor Thomas W. Zeiler

This dissertation examines the debate over the ‘Slovak Question’ from a transatlantic perspective, through the relationship between Slovaks, Americans of Slovak heritage, and United States and Czechoslovak policymakers. It shows how Slovak national activism in America helped establish among the Slovaks a sense of independent identity and national political assertion through a transatlantic exchange of ideas and transatlantic political and culture organization. This transatlantic national activism provided a disruptive influence that helped sabotage Magyarization before World War I and then Czechoslovakization afterwards.

Relatedly, this dissertation considers questions of United States diplomacy. The American influences on Slovak national identity transmitted by the Slovak-Americans led Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic to perceive the United States and Slovakia as natural allies. This dissertation shows, however, how anti-democratic mentalities and negative stereotypes about the Slovaks led the American foreign policy establishment to ignore a valuable source of input among Slovaks and Slovak-Americans and to overlook Slovakia in the framework of larger events. It uses the Slovak case to illustrate how U.S. policymakers left themselves with fewer options in altering the direction of the major European conflicts of the 20th century by overlooking conditions in the smaller states of Central and Eastern Europe.

Acknowledgements

I must first offer my sincere thanks to my advisor, Thomas Zeiler for his aid to my doctoral studies. Since I arrived in Boulder in fall 2008, he has never been hesitant to offer me his support and guidance, of which I am extremely appreciative. I am also unequivocally grateful that he gave me the freedom to pursue my own interests and that he actively encouraged the directions I chose. He contributed greatly to this dissertation through his careful and challenging commentary and oversight during the research and writing process.

I am also very grateful for the rest of my dissertation committee, John Hatch and William Wei from the History Department, Sarah Sohkey from Political Science, and John O'Loughlin from Geography, who took the time to read this dissertation and to provide their helpful commentary. I likewise received useful advice in the early stages of the dissertation from Robert Schulzinger and Ralph Mann in the History Department. I also need to thank Mark Stolarik at the University of Ottawa for being willing to answer many questions, as well as Gunter Bischof at the University of New Orleans for his general comments on my research.

I owe many thanks to the CU History Department, which supported my dissertation research through Pile and Lefforge Fellowships as well as a Joan L. Coffey Fellowship. I am also appreciative of the broader faculty and my graduate colleagues in the History Department for always being very cordial and supportive during my time in Boulder. I am likewise indebted to the History Department's graduate assistant Scott Miller who has always been willing to offer a helping hand in dealing with the administrative process.

Many people aided me with logistical and informational support during my research. I am extremely appreciative of Joe Hornak and Andrew Hudak at the Slovak Institute in Cleveland, Ohio for encouraging my research and for giving me open access to their archival material, as well as the monks at the St. Andrews Abbey in Cleveland, who graciously hosted me during my research trip there. I am also indebted to Ross Marine, Slovak Consul in Kansas City, for providing much motivational, informational, and logistical support for my study of the Slovaks

before and during the dissertation. Daniel Necas at the Immigration History Research Center offered much helpful advice on my research. I also received early advice and information from Joe Senko in Pittsburgh as well as logistical support from Barbara and Richard Pivnicka during my trip to the Hoover Institute Archives. My colleague Nikolas Georgacarakos and his family were also very kind in offering logistical support in both Minneapolis and Northern California. I likewise owe gratitude to the many archivists who aided my research at the IHRC, Hoover Institute, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman Libraries, and the American Heritage Center, as well as the many librarians at the CU Norlin Library.

I am also extremely appreciative of the SLI program at the University of Pittsburgh, which helped me improve my Slovak language skills, and aided this process by offering me a FLAS fellowship. I also received an ACLS Eastern European Language Training Grant to help fund my language training. I also owe much gratitude to my Slovak instructors at various stages, including Marika Mando-Fedorcová, Emilia Sorensen-Pavlikova, Marcela Micháľková, Martin Michálek, and Vlasta Štofová.

My past advisors, Dennis Dunn at Texas State University and Michael Hughes at the University of Liverpool were both critical in encouraging me to pursue a Ph.D. in history. I am also very appreciative of my friends who helped me get through this process in various ways, including Tamara Johannes, Nancy Ferber, Chris Lay and Jennie Johnson. I also received much support from my family, including my sister and brother-in-law Cathy and Chris Polk, my grandmother Mary Cude, my great aunt Nell Maddox, and my parents-in-law Ion and Eliza Teodorescu. I also owe enormous thanks to my parents Robert and Nancy Cude, who were always available with their support through this three-decade long process of schooling.

Finally, I owe my biggest thanks to my wonderful wife, Simona, who continually put up with me through the rigors of the process and never waned in her support. I could offer no thanks here that would do justice to the appreciation I feel for having her in my life.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation examines the debate over the ‘Slovak question’ from a transnational and diplomatic perspective, through the relationship between Slovaks, Americans of Slovak heritage, and United States and Czechoslovak policymakers. Despite their relatively small population and minor geopolitical influence, the Slovaks were an important, yet heretofore under-examined, factor in the major events in Central Europe in the early twentieth century. The ‘Slovak Question’ played a relevant role in the conflicts over national identity in Central Europe, particularly during the breakup of Austria-Hungary after World War I and during the national crisis in Czechoslovakia leading to the Munich Agreement and World War II. The Slovak Question also played a role in the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, when the Czechs voluntarily elected a communist government while a majority of Slovaks rejected communism.

A transatlantic component also contributed to these events, through relationships between Slovaks in Slovakia and Slovaks in America, as well as in direct diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the United States. This dissertation will show how transatlantic migration was essential to the development of the Slovak Question itself. Slovak national activism in America helped establish among the Slovaks a sense of independent identity and national political assertion through a transatlantic exchange of ideas and transatlantic political and culture organization. Images of American democracy transmitted from Slovaks in the United States also encouraged Slovak leaders to embrace democratic federalism as a component of Slovak identity. This transatlantic national activism provided a disruptive influence that helped sabotage Magyarization before World War I and then Czechoslovakization afterwards, although it also provided, in contrast, a missed opportunity for a more functional Czech-Slovak relationship.

Relatedly, this dissertation will also consider questions of U.S. diplomacy. The American influences on Slovak national identity transmitted by the Slovak-Americans led Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic to perceive the United States and Slovakia as natural allies. This dissertation will show, however, how anti-democratic mentalities and negative stereotypes about the Slovaks led the American foreign policy establishment to ignore a valuable source of input among Slovaks and Slovak-Americans and to overlook Slovakia in the framework of larger events. It will provide examples of how U.S. policymakers limited their options in altering the shape and direction of the major European conflicts of the 20th century by overlooking conditions in the smaller states of East Central Europe, which all started due to conflicts over the region.

By measuring the influence of the Slovaks in America, I will show how a transatlantic perspective affects the general historiographical arguments about the Slovaks and United States-Czechoslovak relations. Examining the Slovak Question from the dual perspectives of immigration and diplomacy offers ways to explore seminal events through different levels of foreign relations, and sheds much light on important issues such as national identity formation, international and transnational relationships, popular influences on international diplomacy, and the significance of small nations in American diplomacy. The Slovak Question is, thus, critical to understanding significant developments in American and European history.

An Introduction to the Slovak Question

The ‘Slovak Question’ (*Slovenská otázka*) had its roots in the national revolutions in East Central Europe in the 19th century that challenged the region’s historical multi-ethnic empires in favor of state organizations based upon particularistic ethno-cultural identities. The territory of modern Slovakia had been a part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the 10th century, but a

growth of a particularistic Slovak national identity in the 18th and 19th centuries spurred increasing Slovak national activism in favor of greater cultural and political autonomy within the kingdom. This development conflicted with a similar experience among the politically dominant nation in Hungary, the Magyars, who, experiencing their own national consolidation, decided to pursue a process of ‘Magyarization’ to pressure Hungary’s non-Magyar minorities, including the Slovaks, to identify as Magyars in order to alleviate national conflict and to assure loyalty to the kingdom. Magyarization policy mandated the use of the Hungarian language, put restrictions on the learning and use of the Slovak language and on the organization of Slovak national institutions, and linked upward social mobility to assimilation. These limitations on Slovak national development spurred Slovak nationalists in Slovakia and abroad, who, unlike the Magyars, were linguistically and ethnically Slavs, to consider alternative state organizations.

With the reorganization of East Central Europe after World War I, Slovak nationalists ultimately joined with counterparts in the neighboring and closely related Czech nation to split from Austria-Hungary and form the new state of Czechoslovakia in 1918. From a strategic and economic point of view, the union of the Czechs and Slovaks made sense for both sides.

Together they maintained greater strength in population and resources than they did independently. Economically, the mix of Slovak agriculture and Czech industry held potential for an effective internal balance that would benefit both sides. Furthermore, where the Slovaks gained access to Czech experience with economic modernization, the Czechs gained access to the important Danube trade network that passed through Slovakia. The Czechs and Slovaks are also very similar ethnically and linguistically, which many Czechs and Slovaks believed would facilitate a natural cooperation between the two nations. Nevertheless, a lack of a common political history prior to 1918 and core differences in their cultural development made the two

peoples in many ways recognizably different. As a result, from 1918 to 1993, the Slovak Question festered as a debate within former Czechoslovakia between proponents of greater Slovak self-determination in a federalized state and those, mostly Czech but also some Slovaks, who supported greater centralization under the federal government in Prague.

Prior to the creation of the new state, most Slovaks had only limited connections with the Czechs, being separated geographically by the Tatra Mountains and existing under different political entities. While most of the Czechs had lived in the independent kingdom of Bohemia until their absorption into the Austrian portion of the Habsburg Empire in the 16th century, Slovakia had remained under the control of Hungary since the 10th century. The social situation of the Czechs in Austria had likewise proven more favorable than that of the Slovaks in Hungary. Whereas the Czechs had experienced extensive industrialization, Hungary was late to economic modernization and poor economic conditions limited Slovaks upward mobility from the peasantry, while the Hungarian state funneled the more profitable opportunities to other nationalities (particularly Magyars, Germans, and Jews). A religious war in the 15th century led by the revolutionary Hussite movement against the Catholic Church also led the Czechs to embrace a high degree of secularization entering the modern era, and the Hussite movement became a symbol of Czech nationalism. Alternatively, most Slovaks remained devout Catholics and village priests were among the few Slovaks who could gain an education while maintaining a Slovak national identity. Accordingly, these priests became the guardians of Slovak culture and Slovak nationalism became linked to Slovak Catholicism. By the start of the twentieth century, the Slovak population therefore consisted largely of poor peasants who were mostly pious Catholics—although with a notable Lutheran minority who were important in codifying the

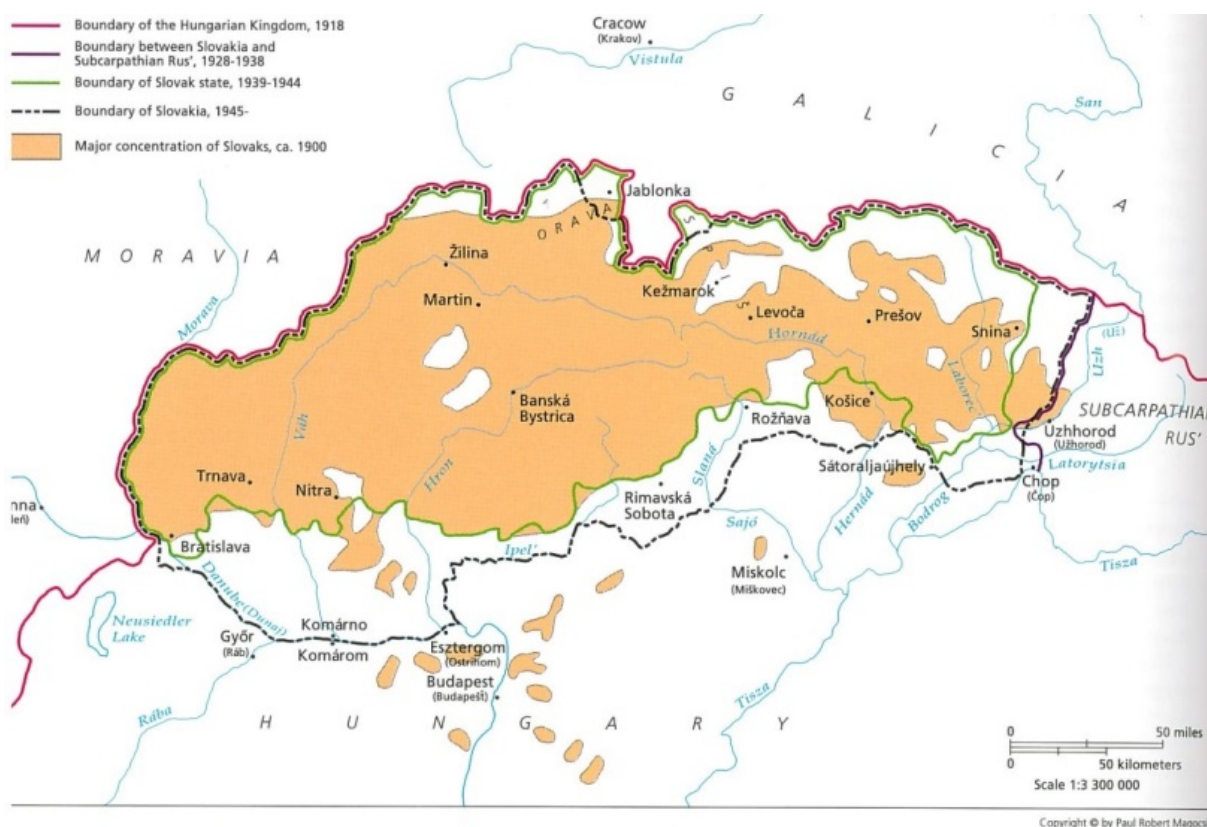
Slovak literary language—compared to the more modern, secular Czechs. The Czech population was also more than triple that of the Slovaks.

These differences set the stage for conflicting visions over the position of the Slovaks in the new state. The Czech nationalist founders of Czechoslovakia hoped to unify the Czechs and Slovaks within an undifferentiating ‘Czechoslovak’ national identity manifested within a centralized state governed from the Czech cultural and political capital of Prague. Many of its supporters believed the Czechs and Slovaks were the same people, identified by their similar languages and ethnicity. The Czechoslovak concept, however, also had hegemonic components. Czech nationalist leaders generally perceived the Slovak peasantry, in its social structure and religiosity, as uneducated, backward, and anti-Modern and, thus, inferior to their own image of the Czechs as the modern jewel of Central Europe. The Czech older brother would take the Slovak under his wing and develop him up to Czech standards of modernity in society, culture and government, and in the process teach him to become Czech or ‘Czechoslovak.’ Czech nationalists received support in this view from a minority of Slovaks, mostly Lutherans and religious seculars who had left Hungary to study in Prague or elsewhere in Czechia. The Czech nationalists and the Slovak centralists legitimized this framework through a state ideology, which this study will refer to as ‘Czechoslovakism.’

While Czechoslovakism gained widespread popular and official support among the Czechs, it remained an elusive concept in Slovakia. Whereas the Czechs framed the joining of the two peoples as the reunion of two long-lost kin, many Slovaks thought that their different historical experience had made them a different people. Slovak nationalists also openly resented the sense of superiority presented by Czech nationalists concerning the Slovaks. The Czechoslovakists thus met ample resistance from Slovak nationalists. Slovak nationalists felt that

they had joined with the Czechs on a basis of partnership, where the two sides recognized one another as separate and equal partners in the state. Accordingly, Slovak nationalists wanted recognition of an independent Slovak identity, with expectations of a federal relationship that acknowledged Slovak cultural uniqueness, and granted the Slovaks civic equality and autonomy over Slovak domestic affairs. So-called Prague centralism (*Pragocentrizmus*) thus became a point of ire for Slovak nationalists, and fermented a general mistrust of the Czechs among many Slovaks, who felt that the Czechs had misled them in the formation of the state. The Slovak Question therefore became both a political debate over regional jurisdiction and an existential one over Slovak identity. It came to haunt the republic from the founding of the state in 1918 until the peaceful ‘velvet divorce’ between the two nationalities in 1993.

20th Century Slovakia¹



¹ Paul Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 144.

Historiography

Given the impact of national identity formation on the modern world, scholars have widely considered the topic. The pervasive ‘modernist’ school of the study of nationalism, conceptualized by scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, attempted to discredit traditional ideas about national identity by showing it as an artificial, modern construction designed to consolidate modern state power. The modernist works are persuasive primarily due to the reality that many world nationalities did not manifest until the 19th century or later and because they provide useful perspectives about the interrelationship between national concepts and state power.² The Slovak case nevertheless challenges the modernist conceptions. Scholars such as Anthony D. Smith, Robert Wiebe, and Azar Gat have shown how national identity has played a legitimate, and important, role in maintaining cultural heritages rooted in earlier ethnic ties and historical memories, and in forging community and solidarity where other modern conceptions failed.³ The Slovak case highlights how the psychological, spiritual, and cultural influences of nationalism are rooted in tangible (albeit often mythologized) components such as cultural tradition, historical memory, and power conflict. Despite ethnic and linguistic similarities between the Czechs and Slovaks, Slovak nationalism formed based on socio-economic and religious qualifications, as well as the limited shared political history between the Czechs and Slovaks prior to the 20th century. The Slovaks likewise faced an alternate, and very persuasive, identity formation, Czechoslovak, that offered clear material and security benefits

² For examples, see: John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983). Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Ed. (London: Verso, 1991). Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, and Reality*, 2nd Ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³ Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1987). Robert Wiebe, *Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2002). Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

and the hegemonic mechanisms of the state clearly behind it. Yet, Slovaks largely rejected Czechoslovak identity in favor of a particularistic Slovak identity, placing a higher value on the potential loss of its distinct spiritual and cultural elements. Accordingly, the Slovak case shows how nationalism is also a cultural defense of the weak as much as a justification for dominance by the strong, as large numbers of Slovaks were willing to sacrifice greater security in favor of local self-rule and the sustainment of an independent national identity.⁴

History on the Slovaks in the English language has been sparse compared to other nations. This is hardly a surprise given the Slovaks are a small nation in a region overshadowed by two powerful ones, Russia and Germany. This reality has also been due to the numerous scholars of Czechoslovakia who overlook the Slovaks in favor of the Czechs, as well as the difficulties in accessing source materials before the fall of Central European communism in 1989. The past two decades have nonetheless seen an increasing number of works dedicated to the Slovaks. Among these histories, questions of Slovak national identity remain at the forefront. The historiography divides largely between those historians treating Slovak particularism as a foregone conclusion and those who present it, in the modernist framework, as arising simply out of circumstance.⁵ While this literature is useful for providing context for the events considered in

⁴ This reality is born out amply in Central and Eastern European, which featured numerous ‘failed’ national constructions, such as ‘Czechoslovak,’ ‘Yugoslav,’ or even ‘Russian’ among many of Russia’s national minorities.

⁵ This dissertation will flesh out some of the historiographical debates in more detail within the study. Among the considerations of the Slovak Question in the European context, see: Stanislav Kirschbaum & Anne Roman, eds. *Reflections on Slovak History* (Toronto: Slovak World Congress, 1987). Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 1994). Joseph A. Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Political and Constitutional History* (Bratislava: Slovak Academic Press, 1995). Peter A. Toma & Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2001). Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Jan Rychlík, “Czech-Slovak Relations in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1939,” in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe, 1918- 1948*, eds. Mark Cornwall, R.J.W. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13-26. Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009). Elisabeth

this dissertation, almost all of it focuses on Slovakia from a domestic point of view. Some of these historians acknowledge the Slovak-Americans in passing, but almost exclusively regarding the First World War. By focusing on the role of American Slovaks, I will provide an expanded, transnational perspective to this literature.

What is immediately noticeable by those examining the topic is that Slovaks in America themselves, either by laymen historians or Slovak academic historians in exile following the Second World War, produced the vast majority of the scholarship on the Slovak-Americans before the 1980s. These works were largely institutional histories designed to maintain a historical memory of Slovak-American organizations and activities.⁶ The past two decades, however, have seen an expanded variety of academic histories on the Slovak-Americans. A few of these works have attempted to update institutional histories of Slovak American organizations, such as Vladimir Baumgarten and Joseph Stefka's history of the National Slovak Society. Other historians have considered broader historical concerns, including Mark Stolarik's study of Slovak immigrant social experiences, June Granatir Alexander's examination of Slovak-American Churches, and Robert M. Zecker's study of Slovak conceptions of 'whiteness.'⁷

Much like the general histories of Slovakia, several works on the Slovak-Americans have dealt with questions of national identity and national activism. Their writers were directly

Bakke, "Czechoslovakism in Slovak History," in *Slovakia in History*, eds. Mikuláš Teich, et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 247-268.

⁶ Among many examples, see: Philip A. Hrobak, "50 Years of the Slovak League of America," *Slovakia*, 7, 2 (June 1957), 10-18. Constantine Čulen, "Slovak Emigration," *Slovakia*, 8, 2 (March 1958), 49-55. Joseph Paučo, ed., *Sixty Years of the Slovak League of America* (Middletown, PA: Slovak League of America, 1967). Jozef Paučo, *Slovenskí Priekopníci v Amerike* (Cleveland: Prvá Katolícka Slovenská Jednota, 1972). Joseph C. Krajsa, ed., *Slovaks in America: A Bicentennial Study* (Middletown, PA: Slovak League of America, 1978).

⁷ R. Vladimir Baumgarten & Joseph Stefka, *The National Slovak Society: 100 Year History, 1890-1990* (Pittsburgh: National Slovak Society, 1990). Thomas J. Shelley, *Slovaks on the Hudson: Most Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, & The Slovak Catholics of the Archdiocese of New York, 1894-2000* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002). Marian Mark Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization: The Slovak Experience, 1870-1918* (New York: AMS Press, 1989). June Granatir Alexander, *The Immigrant Church and Community: Pittsburgh's Slovak Catholics and Lutherans, 1880-1915* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987). Robert M. Zecker, *Race and America's Immigrant Press: How the Slovaks were Taught to Think Like White People* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

involved in the politics of the Slovak Question of the periods I study and wrote these works with the purpose of promoting Slovak-American efforts. Thus, these histories are more suitable as primary sources. They are nonetheless valuable for providing details about Slovak-American political behavior. Among these works, Konštantín Čulen's history remains the standard study on Slovak-American identity and national activism before World War I.⁸ More recent studies have taken a variety of approaches. Gregory Ference has shown how different social conditions led to different experiences in American between Slovak and Czech immigrants, and how the Slovak-American press served as vehicle for national identity formation and national activism. June Alexander in turn released the seminal work on Slovak-Americans and American identity that, by examining the ebb and flow of ethnic activism, showed how Slovak-American identity formed around the goal of retaining Slovak culture while embracing an American civic identity.⁹

Most of these histories are limited to considerations of the Slovak-Americans within the American context. Alexander, for example, devotes little consideration toward Slovak-American efforts to influence events in the homeland. My dissertation expands these viewpoints by showing how Slovak-American nationalists blended American concepts into their ideas of Slovak national identity, and how migration between the United States and Slovakia and the building of transatlantic political and cultural organizations geared toward buttressing Slovak nationalism transferred these concepts to Slovaks in Slovakia. By taking this approach, my

⁸ The Czechoslovak Genealogical Society recently republished Čulen's history in English. Konštantín Čulen, *History of Slovaks in America*, trans. Daniel C. Nečas (St. Paul, MN: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society, 2007). See also: Karol Sidor, "The Slovak League of America and the Slovak Nation's Struggle for Autonomy," *Slovakia* 17, 40 (1967), 29-62. Peter P. Hletko, "The Slovaks and the Pittsburgh Pact," *Slovakia* 18, 41 (1968), 5-54. Joseph Paučo, "American Slovaks and the Beginnings of Czecho-Slovakia," *Slovakia*, 16, 39 (1966), 63-75.

⁹ Gregory C. Ference, "Slovak Immigration to the United States in Light of American, Czech, and Slovak History," *Nebraska History*, 74 (Fall/Winter 1993), 130-135. Gregory Curtis Ference, *Sixteen Months of Indecision: Slovak American Viewpoints Toward Compatriots and the Homeland from 1914 to 1915 as Viewed by the Slovak Language Press in Pennsylvania* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1995). Robert M. Zecker, *Streetcar Parishes: Slovak Immigrants Build their Nonlocal Communities* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010). June Granatir Alexander, *Ethnic Pride, American Patriotism: Slovaks and Other New Immigrants in the Interwar Era* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004).

dissertation will follow trends that have shown the impact of migration and immigrant populations on national identity.

Much of the literature considering transfer of American culture and ideas abroad has nevertheless focused on the transfer of American culture through government policies and economic organizations, largely to present the process as American cultural imperialism.¹⁰ My dissertation challenges this concept, showing how a transfer of American ideas and culture was often voluntary, based on positive images of the United States and a sense of national liberation among Slovak-Americans, and that it occurred in spite of a broad disinterest by Washington.

There has been a wide range of literature examining migration from transnational perspectives, much of which considers migration's impact on national identity. This majority of this literature focuses, however, on how transnational linkages support the sustainment of ethnic identity among ethnic minorities instead of assimilation.¹¹ Much fewer works have examined how migrant communities changed their homelands through the transfer of new conceptions of national identity from abroad. Jani Marjanen emphasizes how general concepts of national identity and language have long travelled across borders and influenced the way individual nations framed their particular identities. Other scholars have examined this phenomenon in particular contexts. Donna Gabaccia and Mark Choate's respective studies on Italian migrants show how emigration served as a catalyst for the creation of an Italian national identity, as Italians from different regions went abroad, they interacted with one another and unified in a common culture in the face of being national minorities. Elise Féron and Brigitte Beauzamy

¹⁰ For example, see: Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "Cultural Transfer," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2nd ed., eds. Michael J. Hogan & Thomas G. Paterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹¹ For example, see: Paul Kennedy & Victor Roudometof, eds. *Communities Across Borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2003). Waltraud Kokot, et al, eds. *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research* (London: Routledge, 2004).

outline how both Irish Nationalists and Irish Unionists built international organizations and appealed to transnational identity concepts to nationalize their respective views on Northern Ireland. Other studies include Nhi T. Lieu's examination of how Vietnamese-American consumer and popular culture challenged traditional and communist prerogatives in Vietnam, and Caroline Hughes' study on how an embrace of western conceptions of the nation state among Cambodian émigrés emboldened efforts to establish a unified 'Kmer Nation.'¹²

Scholars such as Donald Pienkos and Julianna Puskas have studied national activism on behalf of the homeland among Polish- and Hungarian-Americans respectively, but each presents these efforts self-contained within America, and only go so far as to say that the homeland used them as a resource. This approach is similar to the one taken by M. Mark Stolarik in his article on American and Canadian Slovak national activism in the twentieth century. Stolarik overviews American and Canadian Slovak efforts to advance Slovak autonomy, but simply frames this effort parallel to events in Slovakia. My dissertation takes this topic a step further by showing how Slovak-American activism actually influenced Slovak national identity. The closest parallel is an article by Jarosław Rokicki where he argues that the ideas of Polish martyrdom and the "fighting Pole" were a product of Polish-Americans transferred back into Poland.¹³

¹² Jani Marjanen, "Undermining Methodological Nationalism: *Histoire croisée* of Concepts as Transnational History," in *Transnational Political Spaces: Agents-Structures-Encounters*, eds. Mathias Albert, et al (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009), 239-262. Donna Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History*, 86, 3 (Dec 1999), 1115-1134. Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). Elise Féron & Brigitte Beauzamy, "The Internationalization of Community Conflicts and the Construction of Transnational Solitaries: The Northern Irish Case in a Comparative Perspective," in *Transnational*, 89-115. Nhi T. Lieu, *The American Dream in Vietnamese* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Caroline Hughes, "Democracy, Culture, and the Politics of Gate-keeping in Cambodia: The Transnation Goes Home," in *State/Nation/Transnation: Perspectives on Transnationalism in the Asia-Pacific*, eds. Brenda Yeoh & Katie Willis (London: Routledge, 2004), 197-217.

¹³ Donald E. Pienkos, *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863-1991* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991). Julianna Puskas, *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000). M. Mark Stolarik, "The Slovak League of America and the Canadian League in the Struggle for the Self-determination of the Nation, 1907-1992," *Slovakia*, 39, 72 & 73 (2007), 7-35. Stolarik also produced an earlier study of the topic focusing on the First

The broader literature on United States diplomacy with East Central Europe has not attempted to blend transatlantic elements as I pursue in this dissertation. The historiography on the topic also does not fit precisely into the broader revisionist/traditionalist/realist division among diplomatic historians. In general, the broader histories of U.S. foreign policy in Europe treat East Central Europe as little more a pawn in the great power conflicts. There have nonetheless been a handful of studies focused on U.S. diplomacy in the region.¹⁴ The revisionist treatment of the region as vassals of American economic imperialism does not hold up to close scrutiny, given Washington's broad disinterest in the region until the late 20th century. As such, the traditionalist image of the region as a victim of German and the Soviet power ambitions, and not the United States, dominates the literature. A few historians of the region have embraced the realist perspective that U.S. acquiescence of the region was largely justified, subservient to geopolitical concerns and a need to focus on larger, more powerful states. Bennett Kovrig's survey of U.S.-East European relations in the Cold War and Lorainne Lees' study of U.S. support for Yugoslav neutrality both argue that the United States had limited options, but that Washington developed policies over time that allowed for a gradual normalization with the region that contributed to the eventual 1989 revolutions.¹⁵ Other studies have taken an alternate

World War. M. M. Stolarik, "The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia, 1914-1918," *Slovak Studies*, 8, *Historica* 5 (1968), 7-82. Jarosław Rokicki, "National Symbols Restructured: Polish Ethnic Groups in the United States of America," in *The European Emigrant Experience in the USA*, eds. Walter Hölbling and Reinhold Wagnleitner (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1992), pp111-126.

¹⁴ In contrast to the American perspective, studies on Soviet and German relations with East Central Europe have been much more prevalent. For examples, see: Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Eduard Mühle, ed., *Germany and the European East in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berg, 2003). Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939-1953* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). Robert L. Nelson, ed. *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed. *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ For example see: Lynn Etherridge Davis, *The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict over Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1974). Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University, 1991). Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania University, 1997).

view that the United States lacked true interest or understanding of East Central Europe and adopted ineffective long-term policies and reactionary responses to watershed events there. These histories range from Victor Mamatey and Aviel Roshwald's respective histories showing how the national political movements guided American policy during the First World War toward their own power interests at the expense of a working order in region, to Neal Pease's history describing Warsaw's failed attempts to gain American support in the interwar period. Accordingly, many histories show meager American responses to crises points in the Cold War caused by misunderstanding of the region, including Igor Lukes' examination of the Communist Coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Charles Gati's study of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and Gunter Bischof's consideration of the Prague Spring in 1968.¹⁶ My dissertation falls in this latter view, showing how negative stereotypes and misunderstanding of the Slovaks led the United States to overlook where it might have had a positive influence.

My dissertation differs from these more traditional studies in that it considers the influence of Slovak transatlantic activism on American-Czechoslovak diplomatic relations, a topic that historians have yet to broach. Only a few historical works have considered the Slovaks in U.S. diplomacy prior to 1993, with the most literature dealing with either the World War II

¹⁶ For examples see: Victor S. Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe, 1914-1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-policy Towards Eastern Europe, 1943-1947: Universalism in an Area Not of Essential Interest to the United States* (Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1975). Walter Ullmann, *The United States in Prague, 1945-1948* (New York: Columbia, 1978). Jan Karski, *The Great Powers and Poland 1919-1945* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985). Stephen A. Garrett, *From Potsdam to Poland: American Policy toward Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1986). Neal Pease, *Poland, the United States, and the Stabilization of Europe, 1919-1933* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East 1914-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Debra J. Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland, and Germany in the Cold War* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2003). Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2006). Günter Bischof, "'No Action': The Johnson Administration and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968," in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, eds. Günter Bischof, et al (Lanham: Lexington, 2010). Igor Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War: American Diplomats and Spies in Postwar Prague* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Slovak Republic or Slovak exiles during the two world wars and the Cold War.¹⁷ The only exceptions are an early work by Victor S. Mamatey on the role of the Slovak-Americans during World War I diplomacy and Walter Ullman's brief consideration of the Slovaks in his survey of American policy in Czechoslovakia during the early Cold War. Although these studies are limited in scope, each of them reveals American disinterest in the Slovaks, and a favoring of Czech nationalists instead.¹⁸ This dissertation will show this reality in a more complete fashion.

Among similar studies regarding other nationalities from Central and Eastern Europe, only works on Polish-Americans suggest any positive influence. The perspectives on other nationalities reflect either ambivalence or otherwise outright hostility from U.S. policymakers.¹⁹ The general works on U.S. ethnic influence on foreign policy show a similar divide, although most trend toward the view that immigrant lobbying has influenced American foreign policy. Tony Smith, for example, argues that ethnic groups have had a negative influence on foreign policy. He claims that they have held a greater proportional influence than the size of their populations warranted and have influenced policy at the expense of the best interests of the

¹⁷ Štefan Polakovič & František Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu o obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943-1948)* (Lakewood-Hamilton: Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988). Joseph Mikuš, "The Diplomatic Service of the Slovak Republic," *Slovakia*, 2, 2 (Aug 1952), 38-41. František Vnuk, *Slovenská Otázka na Západe v Rokoch 1939-40* (Cleveland: Prvá Katolícka Slovenská Jednota, 1974). František Vnuk, "Prvé kroky Slovenskej diplomacie (Marec 1939 – Február 1940)," in *Tvorcovia Nového Slovenska*, ed. Joseph Stasko (Cambridge, ON, Canada: Friends of Good Books, 1982), 169-199. Milan S. Ďurica, *The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic* (Padova: Edizioni Lint, 1984). Milan Hauner, "Beginnings of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile 1939-1941," in *Exile in and from Czechoslovakia during the 1930s and 1940s*, eds Charmian Brinson & Marian Malet (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 103-132. Jan Rychlík, "The Slovak question and the resistance movement during the Second World War," in *Slovakia in History*, 193-205. Francis Dostál Raška, *Fighting Communism from Afar: The Council of Free Czechoslovakia* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2008). Prokop Tomek, "The Highs and Lows of Czech and Slovak Émigré Activism," in *Anti-Communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, ed. Ieva Zake (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 109-126.

¹⁸ Victor S. Mamatey, "The Slovaks and Carpatho-Ruthenians," in *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies*, ed. Joseph P. O'Grady (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1967), 224-249. Ullman, *United States*.

¹⁹ Pienkos, *For Your Freedom*. Anna D. Jaroszynska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004). Myron B. Kuropas, *The Ukrainian Americans: Roots and Aspirations 1844-1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). Myron B. Kuropas, *Ukrainian-American Citadel: The First One Hundred years of the Ukrainian National Council* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996). Puskas, *Ties*. Lorraine M. Lees, *Yugoslav-Americans and National Security during World War II* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

general population. Alexander Deconde in turn argues that ethnic groups succeeded by providing an impetus for policy and by utilizing electoral politics to build support, and John Radzilowski shows the role that political émigrés played in anti-communist efforts, through intelligence gathering and propaganda organizations such as Radio Free Europe.²⁰ A few works offer counter arguments. Joseph P. O'Grady, examining immigrants during WWI, noted that the Polish and Jews had success where others had little, but he attributed this success to ethnic leaders, such as Ignacy Jan Paderewski for the Poles and Lewis Brandeis for the Jews, who made connections with top-level policymakers. O'Grady argued that popular efforts achieved very little. Albert Mamatey made a similar argument, crediting any influence gained by the Slovaks to Czech leader Jan Masaryk. Stephen Garrett, in his survey of U.S. foreign policy toward Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War, likewise argues that U.S. policymakers mostly disregarded Central European ethnic activists in practice, even while feigning support for votes or using them as an excuse in negotiations with Moscow. In his view, these groups were too widespread geographically and uncoordinated to have influence beyond local congressional representatives, while the foreign policy professionals saw themselves as above such democratic sentiment.²¹

This dissertation falls in line with the view that American policymakers, particularly among the foreign policy establishment, were largely inclined to ignore immigrant lobbying. It will also link Slovak-American lobbying efforts to questions of Slovak-American national

²⁰ Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000). Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy: A History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992). John Radzilowski, "Introduction: Ethnic Anti-Communism in the United States," in *Anti-Communist*, 1-24.

²¹ Joseph P. O'Grady, "Introduction," in *Immigrants*, 1-29. Mamatey, "The Slovaks," in *Immigrants*, 224-249. Garrett, *Potsdam*. A few recent works have shown this picture in reverse. Kristofer Allerfeldt, for example, presents the Treaty of Versailles as a key factor in encouraging American immigration restrictions of the 1920s. Donna Gabaccia also argues that the treatment of immigrants serves as a microcosm of American mentalities in foreign policy, giving the examples of American empire building the late 19th early 20th as spurring openness to immigration, while isolationist sentiment after WWI spurred xenophobia. Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Beyond the Huddled Masses: American Immigration and the Treaty of Versailles* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006). Donna R. Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

identity, to show how these efforts to influence American policy influenced Slovak-American perceptions of their American and Slovak identity, as well, how American foreign policy prerogatives influenced the views among policymakers of the Slovak-Americans. Moreover, by embracing a limited degree of counterfactual analysis, it shows how Washington bypassed a useful source of information that would have benefited its foreign policy.

Chapter 2

Slovak-Americans and the Czech and Slovak independence movements in World War I

The Slovaks were part of the wave of ‘new immigrants’ in the late 19th and early 20th century. Coming to the United States from an environment promoting Slovak denationalization, Slovaks used this opportunity to develop their unique national identity, and regular movement back and forth between Slovakia and the United States allowed a constant transfer of ideas, organizations, and money to bring this development back to the homeland. This process led to an active campaign to assert national rights within Hungary organized from America. With the outbreak of World War I, this activism against the Magyars advanced a step further and linked with the Czech movement led by Thomas Masaryk. The Slovak-Americans served as a vital part of the Czecho-Slovak revolution, although they prioritized Slovak autonomy in the political arrangement. The Slovak-Americans remained fixed on asserting their independence and proving their worth as a nation, while also balancing these expressions with their newly developed identity as Americans. Nevertheless, the Slovak-American’s ability to guide the direction of the Slovaks within the Czecho-Slovak revolutionary movement became more and more limited as their efforts became subsumed by the larger Czech organizations. The Czech nationalist leaders would instead exploit them for their own benefit while keeping Slovak ideals for independent identity and political autonomy at arm’s length in the building of the Czechoslovak state.

The Slovak-Americans before World War I: An Overview

The Slovaks in many respects were emblematic of the ‘new immigrants’ that entered the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century. Coming from Central Europe as citizens of Hungary, they left behind a difficult peasant lifestyle to try to find new opportunities in America,

mostly in the industrial workforce. A large number of these Slovaks were emigrants, who earned and saved money for several years before returning to their families in Slovakia, where they reestablished with a financial cushion from their American earnings. Many travelled back and forth several times. Others, however, embraced their American experience, choosing to stay in their adopted country, bringing their families with them.²²

Broadly speaking, this experience effectively entwined the history of Slovakia with that of the United States. This is in large part due to relatively high number of Slovaks who migrated in proportion to their total population. The Slovaks were most likely the second largest migrant group to enter the United States from East Central Europe during this period, behind the Polish. Most historians place the general estimate for the Slovak population in the United States at over 650 thousand, between a quarter and a third of the population of Slovakia at the time. The majority of these Slovaks went to the industrial belt stretching from New York up through Wisconsin, with the largest populations settling in Pennsylvania and Ohio.²³ Because of this high volume of migration relative to their total population, the Slovaks in the United States had a significant effect on the economics, society, and politics of the Slovak homeland.

²² For more on this period of immigration, see: John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, *Americanization in the States : Immigrant Social Welfare Policy, Citizenship, & National identity in the United States, 1908-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009). June Granatir Alexander, *Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1870-1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007). Donna R. Gabaccia, *Immigration and American Diversity: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002).

²³ The precise numbers are difficult to establish due to the methods of categorization used by the United States for most of this period, but the 1920 census calculated the total number of native Slovak speakers in the United States at that time as 619,866. The Slovak population remained below other more populous European groups such as the Germans, Irish, and Italians, but they migrated in larger numbers than the Czechs did, whose immigrant population totaled around 350 thousand during the same period. The states with the largest Slovak populations were (in order): Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Illinois & New Jersey, while the cities with the largest populations were (in order): Cleveland, New York City, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Wilkes-Barre, PA. Joseph Stasko, *Slovaks in the United States of America: Brief Sketches of their History, National Heritage and Activities* (Cambridge, Ont, Canada: Good Books, 1974), 41-45, 69. Stolarik, "Role," 7-82. Ference, "Slovak Immigration," 130-135.

In the United States, their experience was also much like other migrants from the period. They faced the difficulties of moving into the industrial environment, of adapting to new conditions and new ideas, and of finding their place among pre-existing American citizens and their fellow migrants from other locations. For those that settled for the duration in the United States, this adjustment was largely addressed through the consolidated their own institutions, including schools, churches, press, and fraternal organizations.²⁴ For example, historians June Alexander and Robert Zecker have shown how churches were particularly central for Slovak-Americans, both Catholic and Protestant denominations, serving as the foci for the organization of culture, education, and society in the United States, as well as providing the core linkage to their communities back in Slovakia.²⁵ It should thus prove unsurprising that clergymen played an important leadership role for Slovak-Americans, including in politics.

Fraternal organizations, alternatively, provided the core point of Slovak national organization on a national scale. These organizations helped Slovak laborers become acclimated to American life and provided them social security through insurance programs. They also led efforts to promote Slovak culture and national identity, pursued side-by-side with promotions of Americanization. They organized Slovak cultural activities but they also encouraged Slovak immigrants to learn English, and to embrace American democracy and its perceived culture of enterprise and hard work. The fraternal organizations also provided the primary linkages for Slovaks from different parts of the United States with each other, particularly among the

²⁴ Mark Stolarik has produced the most encompassing study of the early periods of Slovak Immigration. For more, see: Stolarik, *Immigration*. Joseph M. Kirschbaum, "Slovak Emigration to the U.S. in the Context of Slovak History," *Furdek*, 20 (1981), 69-79. Čulen, "Slovak Emigration," 49-55. Gilbert Oddo, *Slovakia and Its People* (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1960), 327-338.

²⁵ The Slovak populations in Slovakia and in the United States were predominantly Catholic, but also included a much smaller, albeit influential Protestant minority. Religion also served as a major point of division among Slovaks, with Slovak Catholics, Protestants, and non-believers bringing their biases and conflicts along with them from the homeland. For more on Slovak churches in America, see: Alexander, *Immigrant Church*. Zecker, *Streetcar*, 116-159. James J. Zatko, "Slovaks in the USA," *Slovakia* 16, 39 (1966), 41-62.

leadership. By serving this role, fraternal organizations provided the structures for the development of national Slovak-American politics. The first long-standing Slovak fraternal was founded in February 1890, the non-denominational National Slovak Society (NSS) based in Pittsburgh. A Catholic alternative, the First Catholic Slovak Union (FCSU) out of Cleveland, followed shortly thereafter in September 1890. Other fraternal organizations soon followed, including Protestant specific ones such as the Slovak Evangelical Union (SEU), founded in 1893 in Freeland, Pennsylvania, but also Women's alternatives such as the Živena Beneficial Society and the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union (FCSLU), both founded in 1891. This process also saw the arrival of the Sokols, Gymnastic organizations that served a similar cultural role as the fraternal bodies for Slovak-American youth.²⁶

Next to fraternal organizations, the Slovak press in America, rooted in such core paper as *Jednota*, *Národné Noviny*, *Slovák v Amerike*, and *New Yorský Denník*, was critical to uniting Slovak-Americans.²⁷ The fraternal organizations founded and ran many of the major papers, but other, generally smaller, publications also buttressed the Slovak-American press. The Slovak press in the United States was the primary method of communication among the Slovak-Americans on a national scale. They were the means by which the Slovak groups and individuals in America explained their objectives and ideas, and arranged meetings and other organized activities. They were also an educational and intellectual spearhead, producing many books

²⁶ Religious conflict among the Slovak-Americans spurred these competing organizations. Slovak-American businessman Peter Rovnianek originally founded the NSS as a non-denominational organization with the idea of it serving the entirety of Slovak-Americans. Catholic Priest Steven Furdek, however, feared its secular based organization would encourage a loss of religious values amongst the Slovak-Americans and formed the FCSU as a competitor. The central fraternal organizations remained exclusive to males during this time, although they welcomed the founding of women's equivalents with which they closely cooperated. The Živena linked to the NSS, while the FCSLU to the FCSU. Stephanie O. Hušek, "Slovak American Fraternal, Cultural, and Civic Organizations to 1914," in *Slovaks in America*, 23-38. Jan Pankuch, *History of the Slovaks of Cleveland and Lakewood*, trans. Rasto Gallo (Cleveland: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International & Western Reserve Historical Society, 2001), 29-30, 34-38. Stolarik, "Role." Zecker, *Streetcar*, 160-210.

²⁷ There were more than 250 unique Slovak serial publications produced during the period of this study, although most did not last long. For a complete list of Slovak-American papers produced up to 1975 see: M. Mark Stolarik, "Slovak-American Newspapers, 1885-1975," *Slovakia*, 32, 58-59 (1985-86), 34-70.

along with their serial publications. As such, the Slovak-American newspapers provided the basis for the spread and promotion of Slovak national culture in the United States and for the promotion of Americanization among the Slovak-Americans. As providers of news, they also linked the United States at large and to events in the homeland, for example, presenting American conceptions of democracy as frameworks for Slovak political organizations in Hungary.²⁸ The Slovak-American press regularly communicated with the Slovak press in Slovakia to share journalistic contributions. According to Slovak-American historian Draga Paučo, these connections were critical in assuring that the Slovak-Americans continued to “consider themselves an inseparable unit of the Slovak ethnic family, and an integral part of the Slovak nation itself.” It was therefore not surprising that newspapermen held a key place among the top Slovak-American leaders.²⁹

Slovak-American National Activism before World War I

The politics of national identity dominated Slovak-American political activism. Historian Donna Gabbacia has shown how the experience of immigrating into the United States, and the forced categorization it established, played a major role in the forming national identities of many new immigrants, even where they might not have had them upon entering. This is most certainly true of the Slovaks. In fact, this was a point that Slovaks themselves embraced as a defining point of their own historical image. The Slovak historian Francis Hrušovský, for example, made this very point clear: “Loneliness drew the Slovak immigrants together. They felt insecure and unhappy in the strange world...the realization that they were an island in a strange

²⁸ For example, see: “Americkí Slováci a vyklad programu Slovenskej Národnej Strany” in *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti*, vol. 1, eds. Ján Beňko, et al (Národné literárne centrum: Dom slovenskej literatúry, 1998), 406-407.

²⁹ Draga Paučo, “Slovak American Journalism” in *Slovaks in America*, 67-78. Hušek, “Fraternal.”

sea made the Slovaks aware of their national origin.” Having left the confines of Hungary after moving to the United States, Slovak-American nationalists thus embraced their migratory experience as a liberating movement, one that freed them from the shackles of Magyarization and allowed them to develop their Slovak culture and identity without restraint. In turn, they embraced this experience as an opportunity to try to bring the experience of national liberation back to the homeland through financial and moral support, but also by bringing external pressure on the Hungarian government by exposing the treatment of the Slovaks to the American public and the world. Many Slovak-American historians, such as Stephanie Hušek, believe that migration to America effectively saved Slovak national identity. Accordingly, Konštantín Čulen argued that given the circumstance in Hungary, the “real nation,” consisting of both intellectuals and ordinary people, was at the time in America. Even if these arguments are somewhat exaggerated, it is nonetheless difficult to deny that immigration to America played a major contributing influence to Slovak national development.³⁰

In some respects the political motivation for migration to the United States has been overstated, particularly by the Slovak-Americans themselves as a product of their own desire to see their national liberation as the focal point of their reasons for migrating. Economic interests undoubtedly served as the primary motivation for most Slovaks moving to America. Finding jobs was likely the primary motivation for working class Slovaks, while education likely served as the primary reason for the middle class. The politics of national identity is nonetheless important as the motivation for migration for many would-be Slovak-American leaders. The two primary Slovak-American leaders of the pre-World War I era, Štefan Furdek and Peter Rovnianek, migrated specifically with the goal of national organization. Utilizing the opportunity presented

³⁰ Gabaccia “Everywhere,” 1115-1134. Francis Hrušovský, “American Democracy and Slovak Life,” in *Sixty*, 9-25, 13. Hušek, “Slovak American Fraternal.” Čulen, *History*, 303. Zatko, “Slovaks in the USA.”

in the United States to escape Magyarization, they began organizing along national political lines and brought a significant section of the broader Slovak-American population along with them.³¹

Coming to America also brought the added issue of adapting to American life as well as the pressures of Americanization. As June Alexander and other historians have shown, the dual concern of moving into a very muddled social and cultural environment and the pressure to assimilate to American political values provided a key impetus for Slovak-American organization. Although Slovak-American leaders made the sustainment of Slovak cultural heritage a high priority, adapting to the pressures of Americanization did not prove a conceptual difficulty for them. Because the experience of moving to America was central to their sense of liberation as a nation, they openly embraced it as part of their national conception. They developed a hyphenate identity as Slovak-Americans, in which they conceptualized themselves as culturally and ethnically Slovak on the one hand, but as civically American on the other, having embraced ideas of American styled democratic statehood and citizenry. This sense of dual identity served one role of carving the Slovaks a spot within American society, but it also became a defining point for what they saw as the liberation of the Slovak nation in the homeland. Many Slovak-Americans believed that by transferring American civic values back to Slovakia, they could bring the same national liberation and flourishing of national cultural that they had experienced in the United States.³²

³¹ “Peter Vitazoslav Rovnianek” in *Slovaks in America*, 99-100. Čulen, *History*, 219-236, 329-333. Stolarik, “Role.” Oddo, *Slovakia*, 334-345. For concise biographies of several Slovak-American leaders see: Paučo, *Slovenskí Priekopníci*. Čulen, “Slovak Emigration.” The exact number of Slovaks involved in national political activities is unknown, but Stolarik estimates that the combined Slovak Fraternal organizations had over 200, 000 members in 1920. Stolarik, “Slovak League,” 8.

³² June Alexander’s monograph provides the most in-depth study of this process of Americanization among the Slovaks, although she focuses on later periods and provides only a light international perspective. Alexander, *Ethnic*. Joseph A. Mikuš “The Slovak League of America: A Historical Survey,” in *Slovaks in America*, 39-56. Hrušovský, “American.” Constantine Čulen, “American Slovaks and Slovak Statehood,” *Slovakia*, 1, 1 (May 1951), 18-22. Konštantín Čulen, “Beginnings of the Slovak League in America” in *Sixty*, 26-36. Hušek, “Slovak American

Gaining recognition among the broader U.S. population, however, remained difficult for the Slovaks. They were a sparsely populated people from a region not looked upon highly, that few Americans knew much about. Given their relatively obscurity, getting anyone to know that they even existed as a people proved a difficult, fundamental task for Slovak-American leaders. As the Slovaks started moving in large numbers, they were most often labeled as Hungarian (or Huns, “Hunkies”), or generally as Slavs (also, Slavish, Slavonians).³³ Gaining recognition as ‘Slovaks’ was thus a key focus of Slovak-American action. Using his press organization *Jednota*, Furdek led the charge to gain recognition of the Slovaks as a particular people in the United States as well as the normalizing of the term ‘Slovak.’ Peter Rovnianek pursued a similar effort. In an English language information booklet, he called the Slovaks the “unknown nation,” asserting, “We are a living nation, residing in the heart of civilization, in a country well known and cultivated,” and unknown only because of the Magyar attempt to absorb them as a nation. He focused the book on defining Hungary as a polyglot state made up of many different nations, including the Slovaks, before explaining the rise of Slovak nationalism in the mid-19th century, Magyarization, and, finally, Slovak-American institutions. As part of this information effort, Slovak-American leaders also attempted to persuade the U.S. federal government to categorize immigrants from Austria-Hungary on the 1910 Census by nationality instead of state citizenship, which would classify them as ‘Slovak’ rather than ‘Hungarian.’ Although the Slovaks remained broadly unknown in the United States, their campaign was successful in getting the Slovaks at least recognized as ‘Slovak’ in most official settings. The census campaign, for example, proved

Fraternal.” The Slovak-American political organizations were comparable to other East Europeans in the United States. See: Pienkos, *Freedom*. Kuropas, *Ukrainian*. Puskas, *Ties*.

³³ This is clearly exemplified by a reference in the Congressional Record of the Magyars and Slovaks being, “popularly known as the Huns.” 51 *Congressional Record (CR)* 2612 (1914) Friday, January 30, 1914.

a success. Congress passed the changes to the census on March 14, 1910, and President William H. Taft signed them into law shortly thereafter.³⁴

Recognition of the Slovaks as a unique people in broader academic studies of U.S. immigration during this period, such as those produced by Edward A. Steiner and Emily G. Balch, also reflected the success of this campaign. Both of these works gave the Slovaks due consideration. These works also reflected how far Slovak information efforts had to go, as they appealed to stereotypes that, despite the best efforts of Slovak-American leaders, continued to stick to the Slovaks. Such stereotypes presented the Slovaks as among the poorest, least educated, anti-modern, and parochial peoples of Europe. Steiner, for example, referred to the Slovaks as “one of the crudest Slavic Types,” marking them as undeveloped, prone to fighting and drinking, and initially overwhelmed by American modernity. He also presented them as parochial, showing no interest in the outside world, and thus easily manipulated. Balch’s study was more respectful, and openly praised elements of Slovak culture, but still appealed to some of the above stereotypes. Balch bemoaned a Slovak “passiveness and lack of initiative and their proneness to drink,” and complained that in Slovak villages the “Jew middleman” was most often “the only intelligent man in the community.” Balch was nonetheless highly favorable of the Slovak immigrants in America, claiming that they represented the best of the Slovak people, marked by “energy, strength, and trustworthiness.”³⁵ These conceptions of the Slovaks would come to play a major role in the conflict over the Slovak Question. Both Magyar and Czech

³⁴ Their main ally in this cause was Congressman Adolph J. Sabath from Illinois, who regularly fought for Czech and Slovak causes. During this process, Rovnianek gained an audience with Taft, and Taft later gave the pen he used to sign the bill to Rovnianek as a gift. P. V. Rovnianek, *Who are the Slavonians?* (Pittsburgh: Amerikánsko Slovenské Noviny, 1891). 45 CR 3039 (1910) Thursday, March 10, 1910. “Amendment to Section 8 of Census Act,” 45 CR 3290-3291 (1910) Thursday, March 17, 1910. Joseph C. Krajsa, “The First Catholic Slovak Union (Jednota) of the U.S. and Canada,” in *Slovaks in America*, 103. Čulen, *History*, 329-333. Pankuch, *History*, 62-66. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 27-30. Joseph Paučo, “National Slovak Society,” *Furdek*, 16 (1977), 3-6.

³⁵ Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Revell, 1906), 199-201, 206-207, 301-302. Emily G. Balch, *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, Reprint Ed. (New York: Arno, 1969), 85-108.

nationalists would use images of Slovak primitiveness as an excuse to assert their authority over them, whereas Slovak on both sides of the Atlantic would fight to counter these images in order to validate their worthiness for self-determination.

Before explaining the developments leading up to the creation of the Czechoslovak state, it is important to drive home that the Slovak-American political efforts against Hungary began well before the war. This process included building organizations devoted toward politics, public protests against Magyar officials visiting the United States, diverse propaganda efforts, and building connections with the homeland for political action.

Of these components, political organizations served as the root from which all of the others spread. This process largely began within the fraternal organizations. Although Rovnianek originally founded the NSS to serve strictly as an aid organization, he began using it for political activism after it came under attack from Hungarians as an independent Slovak organization. The FCSU, led by Furdek, developed likewise. Political organizations then spread outward into many different forms. They included efforts to organize a national fund, but also conferences, such as the Slovak “Catholic Congress” of Sep 3, 1906 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, organized to bring together Slovak-American leaders to discuss issues relating to the Slovak Question. Slovak-Americans also formed new political organizations such as the Slovak Catholic Federation of America (SCF), founded in 1911 by the Slovak priest and scientist Joseph Murgaš.³⁶ After long discussions on the need to unify the disparate Slovak groups in the United States behind a common political organization, Furdek called a conference to address the issue on April 4, 1907 in Cleveland. Attend by the leadership of all of the major Slovak-American fraternal organizations, including the NSS, FCSU, and SEU, as well as the Slovak press, this conference culminated in the foundation of the Slovak League of America (SLA) on May 30,

³⁶ Murgaš is, however, more famous for his role in the development of the wireless telegraph.

1907. The SLA's main objective was to develop the cultural and political life of the Slovaks in America as a means of supporting the cultural and political life of the Slovaks in the old country. Although founded with much hopeful rhetoric, existing rivalries and lack of early funding almost sank the organization before it eventually took off. The Slovak League nonetheless became the center of Slovak nationalist activity in the United States, and remained from this point on at the forefront of the debate over the Slovak Question and the effort to make it an international issue.³⁷

These organizations played a key role in mobilizing Slovaks in public protest. Most of these protests came in response to Hungarian propaganda efforts in the United States, as a means for Slovak-Americans, along with other minorities from Hungary, to assert their independence. When the Hungarian government tried to send a memorial Hungarian flag around the United States in 1902 for propaganda purposes, the Slovak-Americans protested to Secretary of State John Hay before organizing a widespread counter effort to promote the Slovak flag. In another case, Slovak-American activists answered an attempt to build a monument to Hungarian leader Louis Kossuth in Cleveland with an extensive protest effort to pressure the city to disallow it, which ultimately forced the project's relocation.³⁸ Nothing stirred up the Slovaks in the United States as much as visits by Hungarian officials. Albert Apponyi, a Hungarian nobleman and politician at the forefront of Magyarization policy, visited the United States twice, in 1904 and 1911. The Slovak-Americans responded both times with an extensive propaganda and protest campaign at every stage of his tour in an attempt to expose treatment of Slovaks in Hungary.

³⁷ Jan Pankuch, an important Slovak-American publisher in the early 20th century, claims that the Cleveland Slovaks single-handedly kept the organization alive in its early years. Pankuch's memoir, available in English as well as the original Slovak, provides a valuable first-hand account of many events discussed in this dissertation. Pankuch, *History*, 68-74. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 17-33. Čulen, *History*, 272-310. Stolarik, "Role." Čulen, "Beginnings." Zátka, "Slovaks in the USA." Mikuš, "Slovak League," 27-30. Oddo, *Slovakia*, 341-344.

³⁸ Kossuth was a Magyarized Slovak viewed in a heroic light in the United States for his leadership in the 1848 Hungarian Revolution. The memorial was designed to exploit this image to build pro-Hungary sentiment among Cleveland's Magyars and Slovaks. Slovak nationalists, however, viewed him as a false democrat and a traitor to the Slovak people for embracing Magyarization.

Visits in 1914 by Mihaly Karolyi, a Hungarian liberal nationalist and a promoter of democratic reforms in Austria-Hungary, provoked a similar response. Trying to avoid the experience of Apponyi, Karolyi encouraged the stop of anti-Slovak propaganda in America during his visit and agreed to meet with Slovak-American leaders to attempt a compromise. After he made clear at the meeting that he did not see the Slovaks as an independent nation and would not push a change of Hungarian language laws, the Slovaks in America quickly gave up on him. When Karolyi returned shortly thereafter to fund-raise after the start of the war, the Slovaks organized to try to prevent any Slovak support for his effort, while also leading several major protests.³⁹

This protest was also very dependent on printed material. Newspapermen remained at the forefront of debates over the treatment of the Slovaks, both in their individual mediums but also collectively. For example, they organized the Association of Slovak Newspapermen of America to collaborate in political action. Next to the efforts to inform about the Slovaks, protesting Magyarization was the primary subject of publications in English. During Apponyi's visit in 1904, the Slovak-Americans produced a "Memorial Pamphlet" for the Interparliamentary Peace Conference in St. Louis attended by Apponyi, which they also provided to the press and U.S. government officials. To contrast against Hungarian claims of liberalization, this pamphlet provided counter examples, such as the suppressing of Slovak language education, lack of press freedom, and lack of appropriate representation in parliament for Slovaks. This document also contrasted the experience of the Slovaks in the United States with those in Hungary with an

³⁹ Karolyi was much admired in America as a liberal reformer in Hungary, and the Slovaks had to work hard to try to counter this image by showing this as a fraud when it came to the Slovaks. "Sending of the Hungarian National Banner to the United States," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Theodore Roosevelt, 1902 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903), 45-48. Čulen, *History*, 237-258, 263-270, 334-366. Pankuch, *History*, 31-33, 42-57, 87-91, 96-101. Stolarik, "Role." Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 39-46. Mamatey, "Slovaks," in *Immigrants*, 230-234. For a detailed account of Karolyi's meetings with Slovak-American leaders, which fleshes out the sparring between the two sides over Magyarization and reflects how the Slovak-Americans openly used their status in America as an example and a threat of resistance, see an account by Štefan Osuský: *The Osuský, Stefan Papers (ŠO Papers)*, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center (IHRC), University of Minnesota, B: 1, F: 8.

idealized image of the freedom for national development America had offered the Slovaks. “In no other country in the world will you find so many different races, and at the same time so little friction among them as in the United States. Persecution is unknown. The government does not meddle with the people’s customs, faith or language, wisely leaving these things to a natural process of assimilation.” In 1906, Slovak journalists highlighted how American freedom had bettered their national culture and allowed them to show “the American people and the whole civilized world the oppression of their native country,” in an English transcript of the political trial proceedings of Slovak nationalists in Hungary. The NSS also recruited the Czech-American lawyer Thomas Čapek to write a history of the Slovaks to expose Hungarian treatment of them. Serving in part as an encyclopedic description of the Slovaks, it also presented a heroic narrative of the Slovaks holding out against Hungarian oppression.⁴⁰

A few non-Slovak sources also buttressed the Slovak American campaign. Balch’s book provided ample detail on Magyarization, criticizing it for threatening Slovak culture and forcing their high levels of outmigration. English historian of East Central Europe, Robert Wilson Seton-Watson, however, produced the most prominent study of the Slovaks and Magyarization. As a great admirer of Louis Kossuth, Seton-Watson visited Hungary to complete a study of the empire. He instead discovered the plight of the Slovaks and adopted their cause as his own. Seton-Watson’s primary objective seemed to be the condemnation of the Hungarians, and he showed little particular admiration for the Slovaks, presenting them mostly as passive victims. Nevertheless, the Slovak-Americans embraced such rare works that acknowledged the Slovaks,

⁴⁰ The text of the Memorial Pamphlet is available in: Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 39-46. American Slovak Association of Journalists, *A Political Criminal Trial in Hungary in the Year of Our Lord 1906: The Political Criminal Trial against the Rev. Father Andrew Hlinka: The Rev. Father Joseph Tomik; Dr. Šrobár, and Others in Ruzomberk, Liptov Comitát, Hungary* (New York: American Slovak Association of Journalists, 1906). Čapek’s study, however, focused almost entirely on the Slovak Protestant minority, while also showing much sympathy to pan-Slavism. Unsurprisingly, Čapek became an ardent proponent of Czechoslovakism. Thomas Čapek, *The Slovaks of Hungary: Slavs and Panslavism* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1906). D. Paučo, “Slovak American Journalism.” Čulen, *History*, 263-270. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 31.

and often distributed copies of both works as propaganda along with their own pamphlets. Seton-Watson claimed that a group of Slovaks even gave a copy of his book to former President Theodore Roosevelt during the latter's visit to Budapest in 1910.⁴¹

Next to all of these efforts in the United States, Slovak-Americans also maintained ample linkages with the homeland in support of national development. The Hungarian government openly recognized this influence, and took many measures to limit it. Their efforts included the encouragement of Hungarians in America to agitate against their Slovak counterparts, but also efforts to limit return information from Slovak-American nationalists back into Hungary through the banning of Slovak American publications and the confiscation of letters from Slovaks in the United States. These efforts ultimately did not halt transatlantic interactions. On the broadest and most fundamental level, the transatlantic impact was social. Slovaks migrants sent economic wealth back to Slovakia, providing new capital to Slovakia and allowing many of those Slovaks who returned to enter into the middle class. The process also allowed many Slovaks to obtain an education independent of Hungarian schools and develop an independent understanding of politics. The Slovak-American press also played a key role in bringing new and subversive ideas into Hungary as a proxy to a negligent Slovak language press in Slovakia, working around Hungarian censors. The Slovak-Americans also tried to build proxies to banned cultural organizations such as an American branch of the Slovak Cultural Institute, the Matica Slovenska, and the Sokol gymnastic organizations.⁴²

⁴¹ Seton-Watson nonetheless praised the effect of Slovak immigration to America stating: "they are doing much to leaven the Slovak population with new ideas of liberty and justice." Balch, *Our Slavic*, 108-116. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972). "No Title" (Doc 1), in *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks: Documents, 1906-1951*, vol. 1, eds. Jan Rychlík, et al (Prague: Ústav T. G. Masaryka, 1995), 109-115. Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 43-56. Pankuch, *History*, 87-91.

⁴² Furdek led the effort to reestablish the Matica Slovenska in America, although the effort ultimately failed. Joseph Paučo, "The Matica Slovenská in America," *Slovakia*, 13, 1 (March 1963), 77-82. Čulen, *History*,

These connections also included relationships with Slovak nationalist leaders and other important figures, such as Seton-Watson. Slovak political leaders openly encouraged Slovak-American political activity and both sides worked to establish a common political program.⁴³ Slovak-American money helped fund the political careers of Slovak politicians, such as Milan Hodža and Pavel Blaho, the latter of whom visited America in 1893 and November 1912 to build political linkages. Furdek also had regular contact with the Slovak Nationalist leader, and fellow Catholic Priest, Andrej Hlinka. After Hlinka became a Slovak national icon with his arrest in 1906, along with other Slovak leaders, Slovak-Americans came out strongly in his support. Slovak historian Joseph Paučo argues that the international pressure on Hungary spurred by the Slovaks in the United States led to Hlinka's eventual release and emboldened Hlinka to continue his fight for Slovak autonomy. Shortly thereafter, the Černova Massacre in 1907 led to another flurry of activity, including large-scale fundraising campaigns to aid the families of the victims and another campaign to support Slovaks on trial for political reasons and to assist Slovak nationalist politicians and press. These connections remained very important, as they established a transatlantic activism that continued deep into the twentieth century.⁴⁴

272-300. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 35-65. Pankuch, *History*, 86. Mikuš, "Slovak League," 40. Hrušovský, "American." D. Paučo, "Slovak American Journalism." Čulen, "Beginnings." Joseph Paučo, "Furdek Confronts the Magyarones," *Furdek*, 16 (1977), 27-30.

⁴³ For an example, see: "Americkí," in *Dokumenty*, 406-407.

⁴⁴ After his first visit, Blaho labeled America his second "spiritual homeland." Štefan Janšák, *Život Dr. Pavla Blahu: Slovenské Národné Hnutie Na Prahu XX Storočia*, vol. 1 (Trnava: Spolok Sv. Vojtecha, 1947), 92-103. Čulen, *History*, 219-236, 272-300, 313-319. Stolarik, "Role," 13-21. Pankuch, *History*, 62-66, 105-106. Joseph Paučo, "Slovaks Abroad and Their Relationship with Slovakia," in *Slovakia in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, ed. Joseph M. Kirschbaum (Toronto: Slovak World Congress, 1973), 333-342. Joseph Paučo, "Furdek and Hlinka," *Furdek*, 16 (1977), 31-35. "Stanislaus Morávek to Seton-Watson" (Doc 43), in *Seton-Watson*, 185. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 35-65. Čulen, "Beginnings." Shelley, *Slovaks*, 84-86. The Černova Massacre occurred on 27 October 1907, when the Slovak nationalist leader Andrej Hlinka was prevented from attending the consecration of the village church at which he was born. When a group of Slovak protestors attempted to halt the Magyar clergy from attending, the police fired into the crowd killing 15 people and injuring 60 more. This event played a watershed role in motivating Slovak nationalism in Slovakia and the United States. It also inspired Seton-Watson's action on behalf of the Slovaks. Stolarik writes that the Slovaks in America raised about twelve thousand dollars in charity, and seven thousand dollars to help politicians and newspapers after the event. For more, see: Bosák, "Slovak National," 69-71. Kirschbaum, *History*, 145-146. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 43-44. Maxwell, *Choosing*, 30.

This survey is important in order to drive home how the Slovak-Americans already had well-established infrastructures organizing in favor of Slovak self-determination and autonomy in Hungary by the time the Czecho-Slovak movement got underway in 1914. Thus, when Thomas Masaryk started organizing in the United States, he simply encouraged these existing organizations to embrace his conception of the struggle. In turn, these same organizations largely shifted these preexisting infrastructures to protest against Prague after the war.

The Slovak-American and the Outbreak of World War I

The victory of Czechoslovakism during World War I is predominantly attributable to the efforts of Czech liberal reformer Tomáš G. Masaryk and his close followers. Masaryk, born to a poor family in Moravia to a Slovak father and Czech mother, worked his way up to become a professor of philosophy at the University of Prague. He entered politics in the late 1800s an ardent reformer, pushing the liberalization of Austria-Hungary, including full autonomy for the still territorially recognized Czech kingdom of Bohemia. With his efforts stymied, he determined the empire incapable of reform and went into exile with the outbreak of war on July 28, 1914. Travelling between the Allied states, he built support for Czech independence among the Czech and Slovak immigrant populations and the Allied leadership, while, based in Paris, his close confidants Edvard Beneš and Milan Štefánik, who was a Slovak, established the official political and military components of what became the Czechoslovak revolutionary organization.⁴⁵ As the movement took shape, it expanded to include all of the Czech lands and Slovakia, framed under a common 'Czechoslovak' national identity, despite a limited Slovak participation in the movement. For most of the war, there was little sense of inevitability to the breakup of Austria-

⁴⁵ Štefánik was a well-known astronomer, who had migrated from Slovakia to France, adopted French citizenship, and joined the French army during the war. He was particularly important in giving Masaryk and Beneš connections with important officials in France.

Hungary, and the movement lacked connections in the homeland, cut off by the war. Masaryk's diplomatic efforts nonetheless changed perceptions and the Western Allies gradually accepted the creation of a Czechoslovak state. As the closing of the war appeared imminent, the Czechs and Slovaks in the homeland broadly embraced the new political order.⁴⁶

Although politically active, the outbreak of war surprised Slovaks in the United States and the wartime security measures in Hungary cut off their ties to the homeland. Because the Slovak-Americans already had infrastructures putting pressure on Hungary, they nevertheless reacted quickly to use the war for the benefit of their national objectives. The Slovak nationalist leader Ivan Daxner, who had moved to the United States in 1913 to help consolidate Slovak-American political action, organized the release of an SLA memo to American government officials and to the representatives of the Allied governments in Washington. It promoted many of the ideas later linked to 'Wilsonianism,' particularly those related to national self-determination. It clarified the Slovak League's support for American activism abroad in the name of spreading the American vision of democracy to oppressed nations:

We the citizens and residents of the United States of Slovak birth, can the more keenly feel the plight of our brethren across the seas and hear the agonizing cries of those millions of our kin who are still groaning under the oppression of inhuman laws and

⁴⁶ For more on these topics, see: Dagmar Perman, *The Shaping of the Czechoslovak State: Diplomatic History of the Boundaries of Czechoslovakia, 1914-1920* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1962). Robert A. Kann, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburgermonarchie: Geschichte und Ideengehalt der nationalen Bestrebungen vom Vormärz bis zur Auflösung des Reiches im Jahre 1918*, vol. 1 (Graz: Herman Böhlau Nachf., 1964). Victor S. Mamatey, "The Establishment of the Republic" in *History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey & Radomir Luža (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 3-38. Zbyněk Zeman, *The Masaryks: The Making of Czechoslovakia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). Roman Szporluk, *Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Josef Kaldova, *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). Norman Stone & Eduard Strouhal, eds., *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918-88* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). H. Gordon Skilling, *T.G. Masaryk: Against the Current* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). Jaroslav Krejčí & Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Zbyněk Zeman & Antonín Klimek, *The Life of Edvard Beneš 1884-1984: Czechoslovakia in Peace and War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Roshwald, *Ethnic*. Cornwall & Evans, *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist*. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*.

tyranny of a selfish privileged class, and well knowing that the American heart always beats in sympathy with the oppressed nations of the earth and always has been willing to lend to such oppressed people its moral and even material support.

The document then asserted the goal of the Slovaks to reach their national potential, as “modest, good natured, peace-loving, also naturally talented and capable of culture and development,” and called for the Slovaks to be granted self-determination and equal status as a world nation at the conclusion of the war.⁴⁷ The SLA pursued a range of other actions. For example, it formally condemned Slovak leader Matúš Dula for stating support for Budapest and the war and called on Slovaks in America to ignore calls for Hungarian reservists to return home to join the war. It also established a fund for the families of the Slovak war dead. Slovak-American leaders also regularly wrote to the Departments of State and Justice to complain about Austro-Hungarian propaganda in the United States.⁴⁸ The League even sent representatives to Canada, where they successfully convinced that government to release many Slovaks from prisoner of war camps.⁴⁹

There nevertheless remained divisions among the Slovak-Americans, which were rooted in personality conflicts, sectarian debates, level of support for Hungary, and, later, the relationship of the Slovaks to the Czechs. No two figures better represented this divide than did Slovak Catholic nationalist Josef Hušek, in Middleton, Pennsylvania, and the avid secularist, Czechophile Milan Getting in New York. Their conflicts almost sabotaged Slovak-American unity, and it was only due to the diligence of Slovak-American leaders such as Albert Mamatey

⁴⁷ Slovak League of America, *Memorandum of the Slovak League of America: Issued in the Name of the American Slovaks, Citizens and Residents of the United States, on behalf of the Slovaks of Hungary* (Slovak League of America, 1914). “Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike, vydané menom amerických Slovákov, v záujme Slovákov v Uhorsku,” *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 11.

⁴⁸ It is unclear how American officials responded to Slovak letters and pamphlets in the early parts of the war. It seems likely, based on later attempts to contact executive branch officials and recognized American policies of neutrality, that that Washington simply ignored these letters. The Slovaks did gain some recognition, however, from congressional representatives from their districts.

⁴⁹ Stolarik, “Role,” 22-31. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 29-62. Zatko, “Slovaks in the USA.” The Letters to State and Justice are referenced in: Pankuch, *History*, 113-114. Ference, *Sixteen*, 119-121, 128-139.

and Ivan Bielek in mediating these conflicts that the SLA held together. Mamatey was particularly important in this regard, as he effectively bridged the gap on the Czech-Slovak debate by organizing common action between the two people based on recognition of complete Slovak cultural and political autonomy.

A mechanic who migrated to Pittsburgh in 1893, Mamatey became president of both the NSS in 1907 and the SLA in 1911, for which he served through the duration of the war. Mamatey helped rescue both organizations from early financial trouble, and he worked hard to keep the Slovak-Americans united under the banner of the Slovak League. For example, to counter regionalization among the Slovaks in America, he developed a plan to decentralize the SLA through regional councils in the major cities, to allow more localized action based on the desires of those in each area while also keeping them linked to the overarching organization that coordinated them nationally. Mamatey also became the Slovak's main figure of public outreach in America, publishing regularly in English about the Slovaks and new immigrants in general. In one article, for example, he called out Americans for their ignorance about the different nationalities and their indifference and contempt for immigrant concerns. He compared World War I to the American Revolution, and claimed, in Wilsonian fashion, that American ideals "have spread over the world, and by this time have taken root also in the hearts of the various European peoples...no race shall be allowed to tyrannize over another race, nor a privileged, aristocratic class to dominate and oppress the people, but when liberty and 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people,' shall be established everywhere."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ "Mamatey to Osuský, 18 Nov 1915," *Štefan Osuský Papers (ŠO Papers)*, B: 28, F: 26, Hoover Institution Archives (HIA). Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 74-75. Paučo, *Slovenskí Priekopníci*, 269-275. Albert Mamatey, *The Situation in Austria-Hungary* (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1915). Stolarik, "Role," 22-31. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 74-75. Pankuch, *History*, 108-113. Mikuš, "Slovak League," 40-42. B.S. Buc, "The Role of Emigrants in Slovak Nationalism," *Slovakia*, 9, 4 (March 1959), 32-46. For more on Hušek, Getting and Mamatey, see: Paučo, *Slovenskí Priekopníci*, 137-138, 150-195, 269-275. Shelley, *Slovaks*, 46-74.

Masaryk's attempts to recruit the Slovak-Americans

Having its own organizations, from the start of the war through early 1915, the Slovak League maintained an independent course from the Czechs. Several Slovak-American leaders nonetheless worked to change this situation. Getting, for example, coordinated with Czech organizations, and released a joint statement with Czech-American leader Thomas Čapek calling for Czech and Slovak unity. Getting also caused a controversy when he condemned the 1914 declaration for not calling for the dismemberment of Hungary. In both cases, Getting received a sharp rebuke from the SLA leadership. Other leaders, such as Mamatey and Daxner, attended some Czech-American meetings as observers, but the SLA remained tentative in its response. At its eighth Congress in February 1915, the League formally rejected unity with the Czechs, and agreed to maintain autonomy within Hungary as its primary goal.

This restraint was due, in part, to Slovak-American fears that Budapest would interpret their actions as treason, and punish their families still in Hungary in retribution. The primary reason, however, was a broad desire among Slovak-American leaders to wait until more clarity arose concerning the outcome of the war, so that they could maximize their options. The Slovak-American nationalists were concerned about other nationalities trying to claim ownership of them, including the Czechs. Hušek expressed this fear, stating, “The Magyars say we are Magyars, the Czechs that we are Czechs. But we are Slovaks!” The SLA therefore considered multiple options that included complete independence, remaining within Hungary, joining the Czechs, or even joining the Polish or Russians, based on which national group guaranteed the greatest amount of Slovak freedom. The SLA thus maintained an independent course.⁵¹

⁵¹ According to Baumgarten & Stefka, Mamatey was a Russophile and preferred that direction before Russian failure in the war made it an impossibility. Pankuch claimed that Polish-American groups were active in trying to court the Slovaks. Slovak nationalist leader Karol Sidor believed that joining the Polish was a possibility, but that Mamatey openly criticized the Polish for their anti-Russia sentiments and killed this opportunity. Pankuch,

This independent action by the Slovak-Americans caused Masaryk concern. Masaryk identified himself as part Slovak and believed strongly in Czechoslovakism. Masaryk had helped organize the Hlasists, a group of Prague educated Slovaks working for Czech-Slovak unity, and made clear his belief that there were no differences between the two peoples. Thus, he claimed that upon entering exile he “already counted absolutely on Slovakia.”⁵² Masaryk, however, lacked a mandate from the Czechs and Slovaks within Austria-Hungary, cut off from them due to the war. The success of his movement, therefore, depended on support from internationally based Slovaks and Czechs, who would serve as proxies to Czechs and Slovaks in the homeland. The Slovak-Americans were an absolute necessity in this regard. As the largest population of overseas Slovaks, Masaryk needed them as evidence of popular Slovak support for a common Czech-Slovak state. He thus pushed the Czechs in America to try to work out a compromise with the American Slovaks as a means of reining them in behind his own movement.

This task was not easy. According to historian Mark Stolarik, Masaryk was largely unknown to the Slovak-Americans at the time, and Mamatey had to produce a series of articles to expose the Czech leader to them. Moreover, the desire of the Slovak-American leadership to keep their options open remained firm. Mamatey complained in a letter to his colleagues about how the Czechs expected the Slovaks just to fall in line behind Czech leadership. Mamatey asserted that any agreement between the two nations should establish fair and honest arrangements with an acknowledgement of Slovak autonomy. The Slovaks remained a unique nation, having every attribute thereof, and the idea that the Slovaks were only a section of the

History, 131-136. “Osuský Memoirs,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 10, HIA. Stolarik, “Role,” 22-31. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 29-38. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 74-75. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42. Ference, *Sixteen*, 140-177.

⁵² The Hlasists, ardent Czechoslovakists, remained in close relationship with Masaryk and his supporters and later received numerous appointments in the Czechoslovak state. Thomas G. Masaryk, *The Lectures of Professor T.G. Masaryk at the University of Chicago, summer 1902*, ed. Draga B. Shillinglaw (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1978), 42. Karel Čapek, *President Masaryk Tells his Story* (New York: Arno, 1978), 190-194. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 61. Pankuch, *History*, 106-107.

Czech nation, he argued, was the same fallacy promoted by the Magyars. Common action thus required the Czechs to acknowledge and respect this reality. Mamatey expressed his willingness to take steps forward with the Czechs, but needed clear assurances on these necessities.

Mamatey, in a letter to Czech leaders in Paris, thus firmly demanded that the Czechs recognize the Slovaks as equals, copartners, and assure the Slovaks local autonomy in any future state.⁵³

Despite this resistance, the efforts of certain Slovak-Americans, such as Matthew Jankola and Štefan Osuský, encouraged the SLA leadership to change its position. Jankola, a priest, made the first and most convincing case to join the Czechs. According to historian Joseph Mikuš, Jankola argued that the Czechs had the smallest population of the potential suitors, and were the most likely to treat the Slovaks as equals by embracing both liberalism and federalism. He also argued that the clear difference in “character and temperament” between the Czechs and Slovaks would assure no loss of independent identity. Osuský, who migrated to America in 1906 to pursue educational opportunities after accusations of Slovak nationalism prevented him from continuing his education at home, also criticized the Slovak League’s strategy of biding its time. Believing the Slovaks could never trust the Hungarians, he regularly petitioned a close union with the Czechs. He said on the matter, “I was of the opinion in 1915 that Czechs and Slovaks could found their own state, a strong state, imbued with intense patriotic feeling and thought, not quarrelling about whether we belonged to the same race, and not attempting to force upon, nor deprive each other of the mother tongue.”⁵⁴

⁵³ “Mamatey to Tehlár, 10 April 1915,” & “Mamatey to Osuský, 10 April 1915,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 28, F: 26, HIA. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 32. Stolarik, “Role,” 22-31.

⁵⁴ “Osuský Memoirs (Slovak and English Versions),” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F:s 1, 2 & 10, HIA. Štefan Osuský, “How Czecho-Slovakia was Born” in *Slovakia in the 19th*, ed. Kirschbaum, 81-93. Štefan Osuský, “Moje Poslanie,” in Slavomír Michálek, *Diplomat Štefan Osuský: 1889-1973* (Bratislava: Veda, 1999), App, 219-226. “Interview with Dr. Štefan Osuský, April 5, 1967,” Appendix III, in Stolarik, “Role,” 57-66. Stolarik, “Role,” 22-31. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42. Osuský received a law degree from the University of Chicago, and quickly worked his way up the ranks of the SLA, becoming its vice-President in 1916. Mamatey expressed his belief that Osuský would eventually succeed him as SLA President. See: “Mamatey to Osuský, 18 Nov 1915,” *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA.

Figures such as Jankola and Osuský were able to convince the SLA to open up talks with a Czech-American group, the Bohemian National Alliance (BNA), about forming common action. After a hastily called meeting, the two sides ironed out a compromise. The result was the Cleveland Agreement of October 25, 1915. This document stated that the two organizations would coordinate in common action for Czech and Slovak independence, establishing a common council, a common political fund, and a common press, while agreeing to coordinate with the Czechs and Slovaks in Europe. In order to reach this compromise, the Czechs had to appease Slovak fears and make clear that the common action was based on cultural independence of the two and on political autonomy as well. The agreement thus asserted that any future state would be a democratic confederation “with complete national autonomy for Slovakia,” including its own parliament, state government, finances, and public administration, as well as “full cultural freedom, particularly the right to use the Slovak language as the official language of the state.” The Cleveland Agreement served as the first formal declaration of common action between the Slovaks and Czechs during the war, one based on cooperation but also on decentralization. Supporters of the agreement praised the alliance of the Slovaks and Czechs as a “natural act” and in coordination with the Czech and Slovak leaders abroad. They likewise declared its purpose was to inspire Czechs and Slovaks everywhere to work in common action. While a few Slovak-American leaders did not sign the agreement, including Getting because he opposed the agreement’s implication of an independent Slovak nation, most of the important Slovak-American leadership signed the document, including Mamatey, Daxner, Hušek, Pankuch, and Osuský. Masaryk also approved the Agreement.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ “Daxner & Mamatey to Osuský, 20 Oct 1915,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 28, F: 26, HIA. “Clevelandská Dohoda” in *Dokumenty*, 444-447. “The Cleveland Agreement,” (Doc 18), in *Slovakia: Political*, 155-156. “Za českú a slovenskú samostatnosť,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 91, F: 17, HIA. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, “The Cleveland and Pittsburgh

Slovak and Czech cooperation and conflict after the Cleveland Agreement

Common organization between the Slovaks and Czechs in America was, nevertheless, slow to get moving, and in the early stages amounted predominantly to joint propaganda efforts. In order to assure that Masaryk's organization acknowledged their interests and desires, the SLA decided it needed to get a representative of its own to Europe. Sensing an opportunity for upward mobility, Osuský convinced Mamatey to hold the SLA's ninth Congress of February 1916 in Chicago, where, dominated by his own colleagues and supporters, Osuský succeeded in having himself selected as the SLA representative to Europe. Milan Getting and the Czechoslovakists embraced the decision, offering Osuský their full support.⁵⁶ Osuský's political maneuvering caused ample concern among Slovak Catholic leaders, as did the possibility of a Protestant serving as the sole representative. To pacify this dissent, Mamatey quickly called an alternate meeting in Pittsburgh in May 1916 for the selection of a second, Catholic representative. At this meeting, SLA officials seconded the approval of Osuský's selection, and then chose Catholic lawyer Gustav Košík to serve as the second representative. After raising a political fund for the effort, the two representatives were sent to Europe with \$14,000 and instructions to visit the major western European capitals, to become acquainted with the leadership of Masaryk's organization, and then to move on to Moscow to coordinate with the Slovaks there.⁵⁷

The Czech-Americans remained generally respectful of Slovak identity. For instance, an essay on the Slovaks by Čapek was careful to assert the Slovaks as a unique, albeit related,

Documents," in *Slovakia* 36, 66 & 67 (1998), 81-97. Stolarik, "Role," 22-31. Sidor, "Slovak League," 29-38. Pankuch, *History*, 108-113. Hletko, "Slovaks," 5-54. Ference, *Sixteen Months*, 178-187.

⁵⁶ Despite concerns, Mamatey put faith into Osuský to assure that the Chicago Slovaks held firm to the values asserted by the central organization. Many of the traditional leadership, based further east, were unable to attend the conference. "Mamatey to Osuský, 12 Jan 1916," & "Mamatey to Osuský, 4 Feb 1916," *ŠO Papers*, B:28, F:26, HIA. "Getting to Osuský, 27 Mar 1916," *ŠO Papers*, B:28, F:34, HIA.

⁵⁷ "Mamatey to Osuský, 1 April 1916," "Mamatey to Osuský, Date Unknown," "SLA to Osuský, 5 April 1916," & "Mamatey to Osuský, 12 May 1916," "SLA Fundraising Letter, 1916," *ŠO Papers*, B: 28, F: 26, HIA. Osuský, "How Czecho-Slovakia." Osuský, "Moje Poslanie." "Osuský Memoirs (English)," *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 1, HIA. Stolarik, "Role," 22-31. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 76-77.

people simply working in common partnership with the Czechs.⁵⁸ Alternatively, as the relationship between Masaryk's exile movement and the Slovak-Americans developed, there remained a clear conflict over status. Masaryk clearly saw the Slovak-Americans simply as a supportive group working underneath his own organization based in Paris. The Slovak-Americans saw themselves differently. They represented the majority of the Slovaks overseas and they had developed their own independent organizations well before the war. They felt they had joined with the Czechs upon terms of equality, as represented in the Cleveland Agreement, and not subservience to Czech organizations. SLA leaders thus saw themselves as equal partners who should have a primary say in the decision-making regarding the Slovaks, with the right to back out at any point if the Czechs did not recognize their interests and desires. Mamatey regularly warned Masaryk about this mindset and warned him to be careful about calling the Slovaks 'Czechs' or otherwise ignoring them.

Masaryk did not very well heed this advice. For instance, when Osuský arrived in London and introduced himself to Masaryk, the latter expressed his appreciation that the Slovak-Americans had sent a 'journalist' to help him. When Osuský corrected him and explained his real role, Masaryk showed clear consternation.⁵⁹ In a letter to Czech-American leaders, Masaryk complained that the Slovak League was supposed to send "secretaries," not agents; no less, ones with instructions to work for the Slovak League's own interests and not take orders from him. The question of Slovak identity also continued to cause tension. Slovak-American autonomists regularly expressed frustration that Masaryk barely mentioned the Slovaks and was often derogatory to them. Pankuch and Mamatey both criticized Beneš and the National Council in

⁵⁸ Thomas Čapek, "The Slovaks of Hungary," in *Bohemia Under Hapsburg Misrule*, ed. Thomas Čapek (New York: Fleming H Revell Company, 1915), 113-122.

⁵⁹ Osuský says that Masaryk, nevertheless, still treated him cordially and they mutually agreed that unity of the two peoples would come without major problems.

Paris for several articles in the Czech-American press that condescendingly declared the Slovaks as Czechs and the Slovak language as simply a Czech dialect. Nothing caused more outrage, perhaps, than a November 1915 statement by Masaryk, in which the Czech leader called for freedom of all nationalities in Austria-Hungary and ignored the Slovaks, even though two Slovaks had signed the document. In June 1916, the SLA addressed the matter in a memo, approving of open and friendly relations with the Czechs but reasserting their demand for a strict adherence of the terms of the Cleveland Agreement.⁶⁰

An unexpected development nonetheless weakened the Slovak League's ability to assert its voice in the formation of the state, when both of their two representatives effectively detached themselves from the Slovak League upon arriving in Europe. Before Osuský and Košík's departure, the SLA continued to debate over their approach and in the end failed to provide the delegates with specific duties. Osuský affirmed that the fear of Czech domination remained prevalent in these discussions. In his accounts, the Slovak-American leaders suggested that he and Košík were to be friendly to the Czechs and show support, but were to remain cautious and not openly commit. They were also to pursue all negotiations as a separate body from the Czechoslovak National Council. The view held that the Allied powers would ultimately decide the conditions of the war, not the Czechs, thus they should work to convince the Allied leaders as an independent people. This approach would ultimately allow the League to choose the best course based on the developed circumstances. In the end, however, the only formal instructions the League provided was for the delegates to work in the spirit of the Cleveland Agreement, to focus on building a relationship with the Slovaks in Russia, and to stay and work together.

⁶⁰ "Osuský memoirs," *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 8. Osuský, "How Czecho-Slovakia." Michálek, *Diplomat*, 30-34. Pankuch, *History*, 131. "Mamatey to Osuský, 10 April 1915," *ŠO Papers*, B: 28, F: 26, HIA. Stolarik, "Role," 22-31. Sidor, "Slovak League," 29-38. Memo referenced in: Hletko, "Pittsburgh Pact."

Although receiving these instructions, once Osuský and Košík arrived in Europe, they instead went about working along their own designs. Osuský held firm in his belief that the Slovak's only viable option was unity with the Czechs and he declared his refusal to compromise on the matter. Masaryk sent Osuský on to Paris to meet with Beneš and Štefánik, and Osuský would remain in Western Europe for the duration of the war. Košík, alternatively, stopped in Paris before moving on with Štefánik to Moscow. The SLA never received reports from Košík during his trip. Osuský did send a few reports to America, mostly to Getting, yet he never accepted any further instructions from the SLA. Osuský also quickly joined the Czechoslovak National Council, thus becoming part of the exile government, who accepted him out of need for his foreign language skills. Košík also sparked a controversy when rumor spread to America that he had signed, in the name of the SLA, the Kiev Agreement of August 16, 1916. Created as a means of countering autonomous sentiment among Slovaks in Russia, the agreement called for the creation of 'Czechoslovakia,' without a separate definition of the Slovaks. It also declared the National Council the sole official representative of the Slovaks.⁶¹

The behavior of the two delegates almost sabotaged Slovak-American unity. When word got out in the Czech press about Masaryk's displeasure over the SLA delegates, Mamatey and the other Slovak leaders became irate and Mamatey made a public statement expressing his bafflement that Masaryk claimed to think that the Slovak League should not work on behalf of the League's own interests. Several Slovak-American leaders then accused the Czechs of untrustworthiness, and began seriously questioning the pursuit of common action. They also charged that Masaryk had 'hoodwinked' the Slovaks and even began to call for Košík's revoking and censure. This uproar caused Getting to quit the SLA and move into a complete embrace of

⁶¹ Osuský, "Moje Poslanie." Stolarik, "Role," 22-34. Sidor, "Slovak League," 29-38.

Czechoslovakism.⁶² Eventually Košík returned to America in May 1917. Košík pleaded that he had actually written back, but that the Russian government had confiscated his letters. He also argued that the usage of the term “Czechoslovak nation” intended to mean “Czechoslovak State” and was thus not a great concern. The Slovak-American leadership ultimately accepted his explanation and welcomed him back into the fold. Nevertheless, with this explosion, the unity of the Czechs and Slovaks in the United States almost disintegrated.⁶³

The behavior of the SLA representatives became (and remains) a point of much debate. Many Slovak-American leaders at the time felt that Osuský and Košík acted with extreme duplicity. In addition, some historians have argued that Osuský was simply an opportunist looking to boost his social status. Osuský himself argued, however, that he fulfilled his duty to the SLA. He claimed to have always worked, as was asked of him, in the spirit of the Cleveland Agreement. He also argued that he collaborated with Štefánik to advance Slovak interests. During the uproar at the time, Osuský attacked Pankuch for misrepresenting him, arguing, albeit in vague terms, that he had been working hard to assure the creation of the state on a basis of national equality and federation. As an example in his own defense, Osuský claimed to have convinced Beneš to change the name of their organization from the Czech National Council to the Czechoslovak National Council. Osuský claimed that Beneš disrespected the Slovaks and wanted simply to subsume them under the Czechs, but that he forced Beneš to comply. “I answered that it (*the name*) was basically the same and that the American Slovaks would not go along with the Czechs as long as their name did not appear in the name of the Council, and I added ‘If you do not change this, I will go back to America and I will inform them that it is not possible to cooperate with the Czechs.’” He also took credit for assuring that every post-war

⁶² According to Stolarik, Getting even declared, “the Slovaks were not a nation but a group of ‘illiterate boobs’ who needed the Czechs for their survival.”

⁶³ Stolarik, “Role,” 22-34. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 29-38. Hletko, “Slovaks.”

treaty implemented the hyphen into the name ‘Czecho-Slovakia,’ including those at Versailles, Germain, and Trianon. Some historians accept his explanation.⁶⁴

The truth is probably somewhere in between. It is probably safe to conclude that Osuský did try to uphold a sense of equality for the Slovaks, and thus, at least semantically, followed through on the vague instructions given to him. It is nevertheless also clear that once he officially joined the Czechoslovak government, he severed his political ties with the Slovaks in the United States. Osuský later admitted that he never subscribed to the instruction to avoid firm commitments, as he remained principally against such concepts and fully trusted the Czechs as the best option. He also claimed that the fear of the Czechs arose because the Slovaks in America had lost touch with their life in Slovakia and that all “educated and intelligent” Slovaks supported such a union. He never again played a major role with the SLA.⁶⁵ This decision by the two SLA representatives to act independently, however, had the impact of diminishing the Slovak-Americans influence in Europe. Where the delegates might have given the Slovak-Americans a voice in Europe and spurred the revolutionary leadership in a different direction, the Slovak-Americans were instead limited to their activities and organizations in the United States. This isolation allowed Masaryk to consolidate the image in western capitals that he and his organization served as the primary representative of the Slovaks overseas. The Slovak-

⁶⁴ Pankuch admitted in his memoir to being livid over the actions of the two delegates, but conceded that he and most other Slovaks ultimately accepted Osuský’s explanation at the time. Many Slovak nationalist historians, such as Sidor and Kirschbaum, continued to promote a negative view of Osuský, but others such as Stolarik and Michálek have accepted Osuský’s defense of himself. The reasoning behind Košík’s behavior is more unclear. He seemingly acted in favor of the Czechoslovakists while in Europe, but claimed to have worked as instructed after he returned to the United States and affirmed autonomist sentiments. It seems likely that he simply took the positions necessary to keep himself in good favor with those in charge on both sides of the Atlantic and was not guided by rigid beliefs one way or the other. “Osuský responds to Vnuk,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 2, HIA. “Výročie tragickej smrti generála Štefánika,” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 3, HIA. Pankuch, *History*, 119-120. Osuský, “How Czecho-Slovakia,” 84. “Osuský Memoirs (English & Slovak Versions),” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 1, 4, 10, HIA.

⁶⁵ Osuský, “Moje Poslanie.” Michálek, *Diplomat*, 30-34. Stolarik, “Role,” 22-31. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 29-38. Osuský also declared that he had never taken American citizenship, because he only saw himself as Slovak. Osuský’s decision also did much to help his career, as he became the first Czechoslovak Minister to London, and then a delegate to the peace conferences, before finally settling in as the Czechoslovak minister to France, where he would remain until the Second World War.

Americans would never be able to overcome this image, which forced them to remain linked to the National Council in order to maintain some influence.

Tensions ease?

In spite of the controversy, the common action with the Czechs nevertheless held together. According to Pankuch, “the Slovaks decided not to break the agreement and often closed their eyes to the insults, in order not to harm the main goal—the revolution.” The Slovak-American press, nonetheless, remained firm in reacting to the domineering attitude in many Czech circles. Ultimately, the American buildup to war held the effort together. Masaryk recognized that he needed the Slovak-Americans for manpower and financial support. Perhaps more importantly, he needed them to help gain the support of the United States government. Likewise, as the Czechoslovak National Council began to have more and more success, Slovak-American opinion shifted toward unity with the Czechs as the best option. The Allied letter to Wilson in January 1917 that mentioned the liberation of Central European nationalities, including the Czechs and Slovaks, was the watershed moment that convinced the Slovaks-Americans of the correctness of this approach. Although SLA leaders remained bothered by the use of the term Czecho-Slovakia, they embraced the message as a hopeful sign, and out of fear that Allied leaders would otherwise completely ignore the Slovaks. By early 1917, the SLA thus began openly calling for the break-up of Austria-Hungary.⁶⁶

The National Council also made efforts to appease the American Slovaks, including through several articles praising the Slovaks. Their primary effort, however, was to send the exile Minister of War, Milan Štefánik to the United States in June 1917 to rally and organize the Czech- and Slovak-Americans, to fund-raise, and to gather volunteers. Masaryk and his cohorts

⁶⁶ Pankuch, *History*, 131. Stolarik, “Role,” 32-41. Hletko, “The Slovaks.”

recognized military participation as critical for proving the worth of his movement to the Allies, and without access to the Czechs and Slovaks in Austria-Hungary, they had to rely on émigré volunteers. Stolarik claims that Štefánik did much to bring unity to the Czechs and Slovaks. As a Slovak himself, Štefánik talked the Slovak-Americans down from their concerns of Czech domination, and convinced the devout Catholics that Czech leaders would respect religious freedom. Embracing this effort, the SLA started a fund-raising campaign, organized by a committee of clergymen with experience in fundraising. The Sokols then organized recruitment for the Czechoslovak Legions and held basic training camp in Stamford, Connecticut. Slovak-American women also organized a group called the Včelky (the Bees) that assisted this effort by sewing uniforms for the volunteers as well as arranging their daily requisitions.⁶⁷

In the end, this recruitment was largely a failure. Štefánik had a recruitment goal at twenty thousand people, but only achieved around three thousand. This issue with recruitment was due in part to uncertainty whether the exile organization would be able to supply its military volunteers adequately, as well as a high risk of execution for treason if captured by Austro-Hungarian forces. There were also concerns that Slovak-Americans would appear to hold loyalty to the United States secondary to their loyalty to Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, Štefánik's visit did get the Slovak-American organizations to shift onto a war footing.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ "Mobiliyačná vyhláška Milana Ratislava Štefánika v Spojených Štátoch Amerických," in *Dokumenty*, 487-461. "The Ambassador to Italy (Page) to SoS," in *FRUS, 1918, World War I Supplement 1, Vol 1* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 800-801. Victor S. Mamatey, "The United States and Czechoslovak Independence" in *Crossroads*, 69-70. The Czechoslovak Legionnaires fought on the western front against Austria-Hungary, but also in Siberia as part of the Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks, which probably did more to build their credibility in the United States than any other action. See: Better Miller Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

⁶⁸ According to Stolarik, the total amount of money and volunteers provided by the Slovaks in America is unknown, as the records were sent to Prague, where they disappeared. Many Slovak leaders believed that Prague covered up this information, because they Slovaks provided the vast majority of both. Sidor claims that the Slovak-Americans provided over 1 million dollars, although this number is unverified. Pankuch, *History*, 121-134. Stolarik, "Role," 32-41. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 79-81. Sidor, "Slovak League," 39-46. For a local first-hand account of the recruitment effort, see: Imrich Mažár, *A History of the Binghamton Slovaks: Over a period of Forty Years, 1879-1919*, ed. Wilhelmina Mažár Satina, trans. Thomas Janacek (Phoenix: Via Press, 2003), 203-217, 298-299.

Despite the consolidation of common action between the Czechs and Slovaks abroad, the underlying concerns and conflicts never dissipated. Imrich Mažár's local perspective from Binghamton, New York made clear the ample difficulties in his local organization due to intra-Slovak conflicts based on personal politics, religious differences, and differing views as to the best direction for the Slovaks, and Mažár was very critical of the central leadership for not solving these conflicts.⁶⁹ The Slovak Question remained at the forefront of these conflicts. The ardent Czechoslovakists among the Czechs and Slovaks continued to try to squelch all efforts for Slovak autonomy, and the Slovak nationalists continued to fight back against them. One such Czechoslovakist group attempted to disrupt the 1917 SLA Congress in opposition to autonomy, and after the League rebuked it, the organizations took unsuccessful legal action to try to freeze the SLA's funds. The constant attacks eventually force Daxner to resign from the SLA in late 1917 out of frustration. In order to quell these arguments, Masaryk sent Ján Janček (a former Legionnaire) to the United States. Although Janček claimed his mission was to compromise, Stolarik suggests that Masaryk actually sent Janček to force the Slovak-American organizations into line behind the exile government. Upon his arrival, Janček finagled his way into the leadership of the SLA, convincing Mamatey to hold the February 1918 Congress in New York City where Czechoslovakists flooded the event. The result was the election of Janček as secretary to replace Daxner, while also removing the autonomist Pankuch as treasurer. Janček's main effort, however, was the founding of a new body on February 9, 1918—the Czechoslovak National Council of America—designed to centralize activity and to serve as a direct proxy for

The Slovak-American efforts to support the war were comparable to other groups such as the Polish, who built relief organizations to fundraise in support of Polish in the homeland that the war had harmed or displaced, as well as military recruitment organizations to fight in Polish military organizations. Pienkos, *Freedom*, 40-72. For other American immigrant perspectives, see: O'Grady, *Immigrants*. Nancy Gentile Ford, *Americans All!: Foreign-born Soldiers in World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

⁶⁹ Mažár said that his community remained split between pro-Hungarian, pro-Czech, and Slovak autonomist views. Mažár, *History*, 203-217.

the European version. The Slovak-American nationalists pushed against this organization, but the SLA eventually joined after the Czech-American participants agreed to accommodate them by giving the Slovaks equal representation on the Council, while splitting the costs equally.⁷⁰

The Slovak-Americans and Masaryk's Diplomacy

Štefánik's visit was also important for his efforts to convince American government officials to embrace the Czechoslovak movement, albeit only passively. Washington at first did not recognize Štefánik's presence, despite a joint statement from the SLA and Bohemian National Alliance to Secretary of State Robert Lansing encouraging him to meet with the Slovak leader. Wilson and other leaders still refused to commit to recognition of Czechoslovakia at this point, concerned about breaking their policy of neutrality. Eventually, connected through the French embassy, Štefánik did gain an audience with American officials, including Secretary of War Newton Baker. Štefánik ultimately convinced Washington to allow him to recruit for the Czecho-Slovak Legionnaires in the United States, so long as the efforts remained discreet and did not include draft eligible Americans. Štefánik also met with former President Theodore Roosevelt, who Štefánik convinced to embrace the Czechoslovak cause, due to the former President's aggressive stance against the Central Powers. According to historian Victor Mamatey, Štefánik nonetheless left the United States disappointed. He had heard Wilson's rhetoric about democracy and the defense of small nations, but found at this time a government still holding firm to neutrality and unwilling to make any broad commitments.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Stolarik, "Role," 32-54. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81-83. Sidor, "Slovak League," 39-46.

⁷¹ Victor Mamatey claims that Štefánik found Wilson a "charlatan" for espousing one set of values and then upholding to another. Mamatey, however, felt that Štefánik was unrealistic in his expectations and did not fully appreciate the internal politics determining American neutrality. Mamatey based his description on Štefánik's papers. Unfortunately, I have yet to find documentation on the perspective of American officials during these meetings. Mamatey, *United States*, 129-135.

The Slovak-Americans also played a key role in the effort to persuade American officials. The SLA and the BNA jointly founded the Slav Press Bureau, led by the Czech-American Charles Pergler, to inform on events and serve as the center of propaganda. In its propaganda, the Bureau applied Wilson's statements on the rights and protections of small nations to the Czech and Slovak cause: "The interests of our blood brothers and sisters in Europe are identical with the interests of America. We demand freedom and independence for Bohemia and Slovakia. President Wilson now knows that it is impossible to sign peace without justice for all nations, small and large, weak or powerful." This organization played a key role in persuading the national press in the United States to support the break-up of Austria Hungary. It also helped encourage dual resolutions in each house of Congress in May of 1917, organized by Adolph J. Sabath, William S. Kenyon, and William H. King, that called for the creation of an independent Bohemian-Slovak state. The resolutions did not pass, however, due to neutrality still holding sway and a yet lack of firm knowledge or support for the Central European national movements. The Slovak-Americans gained other advocates in Congress, mostly those representing heavily Slovak districts, such as Robert Crosser & William Gordon from Cleveland.⁷²

Stolarik describes how the SLA even received an invitation to attend Wilson's second inaugural, for which they organized a march of 100 of their members carrying American flags in front of the President's reviewing stand. The SLA sent a delegation to the White House to meet with Wilson after the event, although the President was not available. The representatives left a note of support for his policies and asked him to help relieve their oppression. Pankuch claimed that a Slovak-American named Margita Krsak did later meet with Wilson and spoke with him

⁷² Pankuch, *History*, 137. 55 CR 2856 (1917) Friday, May 25, 1917. The Bohemian National Alliance also continued to promote Slovak autonomy to facilitate cooperation. For example, a flyer they produced explaining their objectives in the war as working toward "a confederacy which would include Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakland." "Bohemian (Czech) National Alliance in America," *SLA Cabinet, F: 11th Congress of the Slovak League of America*, 22 February 1918, New York, NY, SI.

about the Slovaks. Accordingly, “President Wilson assured her that he knew the Slovaks and the Slavs as most dependable people loyal to the United States.”⁷³

The revolutionary organization in Europe also influenced the American viewpoint. After putting Osuský to work in Paris, the National Council relocated him to Geneva, where Osuský met U.S. Charge d’Affaires Hugh Wilson from the U.S. embassy in Bern when the latter visited the Czecho-Slovak press office. Wilson became impressed with the organization’s knowledge of Austria-Hungary and with Osuský in particular, and came to rely upon it for information.⁷⁴ Through this connection, Osuský eventually befriended George Herron, an expatriate American scholar who became an Allied advisor during the war. Herron had many connections in politics and academia to which he supplied Osuský’s information, including Seton-Watson, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, and President Wilson. Osuský claimed that Herron’s reports, for which Osuský provided most of the information on Austria-Hungary, served as the primary basis of Wilson’s information on the country, giving Osuský an indirect link to the American president. Osuský purported to have convinced Herron not to trust Vienna’s overtures for peace, and that Herron, in turn, ultimately convinced Wilson to reject the peace proposals made by Austria-Hungary late in the war, which would have maintained the existence of the state.⁷⁵

⁷³ It is possible that this story is apocryphal. Nonetheless, Pankuch believed it and claimed that it spurred the Slovak-Americans to believe they were having success. Pankuch, *History*, 121-141. Stolarik, “Role,” 32-41. Victor S. Mamatey, *Building Czechoslovakia in America: 1914-1918*, (Washington D.C.: SVU, 1976). Hletko, “The Slovaks.” Mamatey, “Slovaks” in *Immigrants*, 224-249. Otakar Odložilík, “The Czechs” in *Immigrants*, 204-223.

⁷⁴ Hugh Wilson, however, falsely categorized Osuský as a Czech.

⁷⁵ Osuský much admired Herron, even writing a biography of him for Czechs and Slovaks. Osuský says that Herron was as “obscure to the public at large as that of Colonel House was well known,” but no less important. Hugh R. Wilson, *Diplomat between Wars* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1941), 23-24. Osuský, “How Czecho-Slovakia.” Michálek, *Diplomat*, 34-40. “Osuský Memoirs (English version),” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 2, HIA. “Osuský Memoirs (English and Slovak versions),” *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 1-2. Štefan Osuský, *George D. Herron: Dôverník Wilsonov Počas Vojny* (Bern: Prúdiv, 1925), 34-57. For an example of Herron’s efforts to persuade Wilson, see: “A Letter to the President” (Herron to Wilson), Geneva Switzerland, May 31, 1918,” in George D. Herron, *The Defeat in Victory* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1921), 194-205. The higher-level British officials, such as Balfour, approached the issue of national self-determination similarly to their American counterparts, showing hesitation early on to the breakup of Austria-Hungary before eventually accepting this course of action.

Wilson remained firmly committed to the maintaining of Austria-Hungary until the very end of the war. He openly supported better treatment of the national minorities in Austria-Hungary, but worried about the geopolitical instability that would occur with its breakup. In his 14 Points, for example, Wilson stated that the peoples of Austria-Hungary should be granted “the freest opportunity of autonomous development;” a vague statement in contrast to his firm statement for an independent Poland.⁷⁶ Wilson maintained this standpoint even as the Austro-Hungarian leaders continued to disappoint American policymakers and constant propaganda success on both side of the Atlantic, such as the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Rome, convinced much of the U.S. Congress and Secretary Lansing to embrace the alternative. Seeing this resistance from Wilson, Masaryk realized he needed to come to the United States to make his case personally. Understanding the need to prove the readiness of his people for self-government, he sensed that active participation of the Czech- and Slovak-Americans would help convince Wilson of the Czech and Slovak desire for independence and of their understanding of democratic statehood. The Slovak-Americans were particularly critical for justifying Slovak unity with the Czechs, since Masaryk’s movement lacked broad popular support in Slovakia, and the Slovaks, being largely peasants, hardly met the strict Wilsonian conception of a people prepared for self-determination. Masaryk, therefore, made the consolidation of Czech- and Slovak-American support his first priority when he arrived in April 1918.

The Pittsburgh Agreement

The Slovaks remained by far the hardest case. Despite having publically declared support for Czecho-Slovakia, Hušek remained distrustful, and used Masaryk’s visit to agitate further for

⁷⁶ “Address of the President of the United States Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, January 8, 1918,” in *FRUS, 1918, WWI Supl, Vol 1*, 12-17.

Slovak self-assertion. When Masaryk gave a major speech to Czechs and Slovaks in Chicago on May 5, 1918 and, either by design or simply negligence, failed to mention the Slovaks, Hušek and other autonomists led a firestorm of complaint. This criticism grew when a few letters from Slovak Legionnaires sent to their families in America purported mistreatment by the Czechs, including claims that Czech leaders were confiscating Slovak-American newspapers mailed to them and replacing these papers with Czech materials. Hušek called for a full revoking of support for Masaryk: “The Struggle for a greater Czechia is not worth one cent, nor one drop of Slovak blood...we want to know whether we are fighting for a Greater Czechia or for a free, self-governing Slovakia and for a free, self-governing Czechia.” After being kicked out of a Czechoslovak National Council of America meeting in May 1918, where he appeared unannounced to present his demands for Slovak autonomy, Hušek threatened that either the National Council accept autonomy or he would lead the Slovak-American Catholics in a full-fledged campaign against the Czecho-Slovak movement—a threat Mamatey quickly forwarded to Masaryk. This harsh criticism, and the possible embarrassment and questioning from the Allied leaders that it might cause, ultimately forced Masaryk to face the Slovak Question head on. Consequently, it led to the creation of the most important document relating to the Slovak question for the next 20 years: the Pittsburgh Agreement.⁷⁷

When Masaryk visited Cleveland on June 15, 1918, the Czechs and Slovaks honored him with a parade and banquet. The Cleveland Slovak leaders were also vocal in expressing their concern about the Slovaks not receiving equal credit within the movement and their fear of subservience to the Czechs. Masaryk assured them that his organization would treat the Slovaks justly.⁷⁸ Masaryk was able to do so, because in the month prior he had reached a compromise

⁷⁷ Stolarik, “Role,” 42-54. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 39-46. Hletko, “The Slovaks.”

⁷⁸ Pankuch, *History*, 145-150.

with the Slovak-Americans. Looking to amend his mistake in Chicago, upon his arrival in Pittsburgh, Masaryk gave a spirited speech praising the Slovaks. He hailed his own Slovak heritage and liberally promised equal and separately recognized Slovak participation in the new state. This speech convinced the American Slovaks in attendance. Nevertheless, looking for written insurance, SLA officials then met privately with Masaryk. They provided Masaryk a copy of the Cleveland Agreement, and asked for a formal recognition of the document by the exile government. Masaryk accepted the document, but convinced the SLA leaders to allow him to revise it. Overnight, he rewrote the text in a much more concise and considerably vaguer form. The agreement once again declared common action between the Czechs and Slovaks in the formation of a democratic republic, while declaring that the Czech- and Slovak-Americans would intensify their activities in pursuit of this goal. Two lines in the agreement, however, would cause controversy. The first was an assertion for Slovak autonomy, under the terms that the Slovaks would have their “own administration, own parliament, and own courts.” The second was the final line of the text stating that details of the state’s organization would “be left to the liberated Czechs and Slovaks and to their duly elected representatives.” Masaryk originally did not include the line on autonomy in the text, but Hušek and other nationalists rejected the draft agreement until its addition. The final line was uncontroversial at the time of the document’s creation, but later served as a poison pill utilized by Czech and Slovak centralists.⁷⁹

Although there remained divisions, the competing parties accepted the document, and SLA and Czech-American representatives signed it on May 31, 1918. When Masaryk formally became president on November 14, 1918, Hušek and a group of Slovak-American leaders met with him in Washington, D.C. on that very day. Masaryk then formally signed the agreement as the official head of the Czecho-Slovak state. In the short term, this action appeased the Slovak-

⁷⁹ “Pittsburgská Dohoda,” *Dokumenty*, 484-487. “Pittsburgh Pact,” (Doc 20), *Slovakia: Political*, 156.

Americans, who consolidated their support around the budding state. In their view, the agreement set in stone a common basis for cooperation predicated on equality and autonomy for the Slovaks. The SLA made an official announcement praising the agreement: “There are not reasons anymore for further fearing, for any prejudice, for any suspicion. Everything is now clear between us and the brother Czechs.” Even Hušek praised Masaryk afterwards. While Masaryk used the agreement as a legitimating device in his diplomatic efforts, it later came back to haunt the Czech leadership as a symbol of Slovak nationalism.⁸⁰

The United States Recognizes Czechoslovakia

Masaryk met with Wilson multiple times during his sojourn in the United States from May to November 1918. Nevertheless, U.S. policymakers extensively debated the breakup of Austria-Hungary. Austro-Hungarian peace feelers that promised reforms, including national autonomy within the Empire, appealed to some U.S. officials, who feared a balkanization of the region without a strong central authority.⁸¹ Ultimately, Masaryk’s diplomacy bore fruit and Washington recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the legitimate ruling body of the Czechs and Slovaks on September 13, 1918 and Wilson made his formal rejection to the

⁸⁰ The Slovak-Americans also raised ample money for Masaryk after the Pittsburgh Agreement, including a 50 thousand dollar donation in September 1918. “Masaryk to Mamatey, 22 September 1918,” *SLA Cab, F: 11th Congress*, SI. Stolarik, “Role,” 42-54. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 39-46. Hletko, “The Slovaks.” Buc, “Slovak Nationalism,” 32-46. Kirschbaum, “Cleveland and Pittsburgh.”

⁸¹ For examples and more details of this debate, see: Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 93-105. Thomas G. Masaryk, *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint*, New Ed., eds. W. Preston Warren & William B. Weist (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), 40-47. Edvard Beneš, *My War Memories*, trans. Paul Selver (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 331-337. “Relations of the United States with the Czecho-Slovak and Jugo-Slav National Movements” in *FRUS, 1918, WWI Supl, Vol 1*, 790-871. “Sharp to SoS, No. 6690”, 10 Oct 1918, F#: 863.00/96, *Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Austria-Hungary and Austria 1910-1929 (DoS AHA 1910-1929)*, Microfilm (Washington D.C.: The National Archives, 1967). “Stovall to SoS, No. 5262”, 17 Oct 1918, F#: 863.00/88, *DoS AHA 1910-1929*. “Stovall to SoS, No. 5395”, 25 Oct 1918, F#: 863.00/94, *DoS AHA 1910-1929*. “Stovall to SoS, No. 5262”, 17 Oct 1918, F#: 863.00/88, *DoS AHA 1910-1929*. “Stovall to SoS, No. 5448”, 27 Oct 1918, F#: 863.00/95, *DoS AHA 1910-1929*. Mamatey, *United States*, 318-345. Heater, *National*, 28-46. Ambrosius, *Wilsoniansim*, pp 115-134. Adam, “Woodrow Wilson”, 3-28.

Austrian proposal on October 18, 1918 on the same day as the release of the formal Declaration of Independence for Czechoslovakia.⁸²

Charles Seymour, who led Wilson's Austria-Hungary research division at the Peace Conference, later accredited this decision to a "magnetic" Beneš and the "honest diplomacy of Masaryk." This seems largely accurate, for Wilson might likely have taken the opposite approach, as he did with many other national groups, had he not been convinced of the credibility of the Czechoslovak, and other Central European, movements.⁸³ Historian Victor Mamatey argues, however, that the direct diplomacy was only tangential to the influence of public and political pressure on Wilson to support the breakup of Austria-Hungary. Thus, Masaryk's most important influence was on swaying popular support in America. The participation of the Legionnaires in the war effort played a key role, particularly their mission to Siberia. Reported on extensively in the press, the effort captured the American public's imagination, which helped Masaryk convince Wilson that the Czechs and Slovaks had been doing their part in the war and thus had earned the right to organize their own state.⁸⁴ Of course, the influence of public opinion was a component also influenced largely by the Czech- and Slovak-Americans. It is unknown what degree of influence the Czech- and Slovak-Americans had directly on Wilson's sentiment toward Czechoslovakia. Masaryk did cite the support they

⁸² "United States Recognizes the Czechoslovak National Council," "President Wilson's Reply to Austria Hungary," & "Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation," in *The Birth of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Cestmir Jesina (Washington D.C.: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1968), 74, 92, 100.

⁸³ That the United States refused to support other independence movements in the region, such as the Ukrainians, exemplifies this position. Wilson regularly emphasized the need for peace and order when discussing his support for national self-determination, and clearly did not support cases for independence that he felt would result in political instability. For example, see: "Text of Wilson's Statement", 5 Nov 1918, F#: 863.00/106a, *DoS AHA 1910-1929*. Charles Seymour, "The End of an Empire: Remnants of Austria-Hungary" in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919*, by *American Delegates*, eds. Edward House & Charles Seymour (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 94. Masaryk, *Making*, 197-286. For more on the Czechoslovak efforts, see: Mamatey, "United States," 197-286. Nolte, "New," 7-24. Mamatey, *United States*, 258-317,

⁸⁴ Stolarik, "Role," 42-54. Victor S. Mamatey, "Documents: The United States Recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council of Paris (September 3, 1918)," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 13, 1 (April 1953), 47-50.

gained in Congress and elsewhere as critical for his diplomatic efforts, stating how public opinion in America, “up to then knew little about us and still less about the Slovaks.” Charles Pergler, the first Czechoslovak Ambassador in Washington, also highlighted how Czechs and Slovaks in America supplied necessary funds and organization, while providing the critical component of linking the movement to American values of democratic statehood. The journalist Elmer Davis, who followed immigrant activities during the war, believed likewise. Just about all scholars of Slovak- and Czech-Americans also uphold this view.⁸⁵

Back in Europe, the American entry into the war emboldened Slovak nationalists. In one example, the Slovak priest and national leader Jozef Tiso praised how the Slovaks had “breathed the free air of free America,” and were now set to overthrow Hungarian oppression. Slovak politician Milan Hodža likewise praised the “American miracle,” and the spread of America’s spirit of freedom and democracy. Issues regarding the Slovaks nevertheless remained. Štefánik began to have misgivings, becoming more fearful of the treatment of the Slovaks. At the same time, Beneš began to push Štefánik out of influence, replacing him as war minister. Osuský claimed that Beneš resented both he and Štefánik as capable, assertive Slovaks and constantly tried to undermine their credibility and exclude them from influence in the organization. Moreover, up until late 1918, the Slovaks in Slovakia remained mostly detached from these happenings, and even continued negotiations for Slovak autonomy within Hungary.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Tamaš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918*, trans. Henry Steed (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927), 211. Čapek, *President*, 281-282. Charles Pergler, *America in the Struggle for Czechoslovak Independence* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1926). Elmer Davis, “America’s contribution to Central Europe” *The New Europe*, 9, 112 (5 December 1918), 177-180. Mamatey, “Slovaks” in *Immigrants*, 224-249. Alexander, *Ethnic*, 15-43. Odložilik, “Czechs” in *Immigrants*, 204-223. Joseph Bouša, “Wilson and T. G. Masaryk,” *Slovakia*, 10, 6 (March-June 1960), 29-36.

⁸⁶ “Bude nás Dost”, 16 April 1916,” (Doc. 8) in Jozef Tiso, *Prejavy a Články (1913-1938)*, eds. Miroslav Fabricius & Ladislav Suško (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2002), 96-97. “Americký Záznak, 13 September 1918,” in Milan Hodža, *Články, Reči, Študie*, vol 2 (Prague: Novina, 1930). Osuský, “How Czecho-Slovakia.” “Interview with Dr. Štefan Osuský,” in Stolarik, “Role,” 57-66. “Unpublished Osuský Interview,” ŠO Papers, B: 41, F: 4, HIA. The latter-most document is an unpublished portion of Stolarik’s interview with Osuský.

The opening up of Slovakia after the end of the war also sparked controversy. A firestorm occurred in October 1918, when the Slovak delegate in the Hungarian Parliament Ferdiš Juriga declared that he had no knowledge of the events abroad and asserted that the Slovaks were an independent nation. Juriga's speech again opened the wound of the Slovak Question in the United States. Hušek once again began to criticize Czech trustworthiness, while demanding a plebiscite to gauge the true desires of the Slovaks. Other Slovak-American leaders, such as Ivan Bielek, called for more input from Slovaks in Slovakia. Trying to tame this sentiment, Masaryk called on his supporters, such as Czechoslovakist Vavro Šrobár and the moderate nationalist Milan Hodža, to align the Slovaks in Slovakia behind his movement. These Slovak leaders quickly organized the Martin Declaration of 30 October 1918 declaring support for Slovak unity with the Czechs under the terms of the exile government. Although the Martin Declaration received widespread support at the time, many Slovak leaders, including the political leader of the Slovak Catholic nationalists, Andrej Hlinka, expressed regret that the Czechoslovakists had duped them into signing the document. The intent of 'proving' the unity of the Slovaks behind the Czechoslovak movement was nevertheless successful in convincing Allied leaders. Hušek remained highly skeptical of the declaration, but most of the Slovak-American leaders maintained faith that Masaryk and the Czecho-Slovak movement would uphold the Pittsburgh Agreement. According to Pankuch, "When we received the news about our brothers finally being free from the Hungarian yoke, we were so elated that we forgot all the hardships and all the insults."⁸⁷ The formal organization of the state, thus, began with as much trust and optimism from a transatlantic perspective as the Czechoslovak state would ever see.

⁸⁷ "Martinská Deklarácia," in *Dokumenty*, 512-513. "Declaration of the Slovak Nation" (Doc 23), *Slovakia: Political*, 161. Stolarik, "Role," 42-54. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81-83. Pankuch, *History*, 145-150.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this process proved a mix of success and regret for the Slovak-Americans. While the Slovaks achieved separation from Hungary, it occurred in a way that minimized Slovak-American influence over the direction of the state. While the Slovak-Americans were able to pressure Masaryk into symbolically accepting their goals for Slovak autonomy, their influence only extended to the points where he needed their assistance. They instead became more dependent on him and his influence over the Allies in order to achieve even their minimum goals, a familiar scenario for a small, largely unrecognized nation. Accordingly, once the Allied leaders recognized the National Council's claim to represent the Slovaks, it maintained control over Slovakia's future direction.

The way events played out raises the question as to whether the Slovak-Americans should have jumped in with the Czechs as early as they did. Most historians assume that joining the Czechs was ultimately the best and most realistic option for the Slovaks. Sidor argued, however, that by joining the Czechs before fully pursuing other options, the Slovak-Americans minimized their leverage and allowed the Czechs assert control over them.⁸⁸ This counter-factual is tough to judge. Complete independence for the Slovaks was always highly unlikely, and not even pursued by the American Slovaks. It also does not seem likely that any of the other possible state partners would have treated them any better. A decision by the Slovak-American autonomists to work independently from the Czechs might have left Slovakia still in Hungary, perhaps, but not assuredly, with domestic autonomy within it. Even more likely, however, it would have left the Slovak-Americans to watch the Slovaks become part of Czechoslovakia without any of their own influence.

⁸⁸ Sidor, "Slovak League."

There remained a much stronger possibility for them to achieve domestic autonomy for Slovakia within the new Czechoslovak state. Masaryk was keen to keep them in his camp, as reflected by his willingness to give in on some matters as he did at Pittsburgh, which the Slovak-Americans used to assert some influence. Perhaps had the Slovaks put more pressure on the Czechs or delayed their commitment to the movement, the threat of ruining Masaryk's designs could have allowed them to enter into the relationship in a more assertive position and allowed them more influence in the organizing of the state. Yet, dependent on Czech leaders to reach Allied leaders, they put their trust in Masaryk to respect their wishes. Masaryk likewise played them correctly, using the Pittsburgh Agreement to mollify the Slovak nationalists and ensure that they did not hinder his plans. As a result, the Slovak-Americans remained on the margins during the building of the state and the establishment of Prague centralism, and likewise allowed the Czech nationalists to define an image of the Slovaks internationally that they would constantly have to overcome.

Chapter 3

The United States and the Slovak Question during the Founding of Czechoslovakia

The formal process of the founding of the Czechoslovak state proceeded from late 1918 into 1921, aligning with the final years of the Wilson presidency. As shown, the Slovaks embraced the Wilsonian rhetoric on national self-determination, particularly that related to the rights and protection of small nations, and used it during the war against Hungary but also against their own partners the Czechs as they worked in common action. While the Slovaks and Czechs had found some compromise during the war, the Slovak Question continued to ferment in the years afterward. While Slovak nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic worked to establish autonomy under the terms of the Pittsburgh Agreement, they met intransigence from the federal government in Prague and its Slovak supporters, who instead wanted a strongly centralized state. The Slovak-Americans, who up to this point had an active role in the formation of the state, thus gradually found themselves once again becoming outsiders challenging the state authority over their homeland. In response, Slovak nationalists in America reconsolidated their existing organizations and reestablished their transatlantic relationships with Slovak nationalists in the homeland that had been cut off by the war. This transatlantic national activism provided a disruptive influence that helped sabotage the institutionalization of Czechoslovakization and assured that the Slovak Question became a permanent debate in Czechoslovakia.

As the Slovak Question reasserted itself to the new political organization, both sides actively pushed the U.S. government to support their vision, making the Slovak Question an issue of American diplomacy. By examining how United States officials observed the Slovak Question during the Czechoslovak Republic's foundation, one can thus catch a glimpse of how these officials saw the framework and application of Wilsonian national self-determination.

Cases such as the Slovaks are, however, largely lacking within the broader literature on Wilsonianism foreign policy. Most of these works deal with the issues of nationality and national self-determination on the level of the nation state and dismiss such questions as they manifested within the nation-states themselves, particularly among works focusing heavily on the Paris Peace Conference. By 1919, the creation of the new states in East Central Europe had already been accepted by the Allied powers, having already received legal recognition and a seat at the conference, and the post-war conferences largely dealt with the *legal* components such as the drawing of state boundaries. To the degree that national self-determination was a concern for the United States, it mostly came in dealing with the populations in the newly formed states of the larger nationalities on the losing side of the conflict, primarily the Germans. Much of the history of American diplomacy during the war and peace conference, therefore, focuses heavily on these issues, with most of the historiography on the American response to nationalism and national identity premised around territorial disputes and the treatment of the Germans. This examination attempts to shift this trend by examining the period immediately prior to the conference, when most of the decisionmaking on the creation of the new states was completed, and the period afterward, focusing on the implementation of the postwar order.

The historiographical debates about Wilsonian national self-determination largely circle around interpretations of Wilson's intent and the impact of Wilsonianism on the political outcomes following the war. Much of the literature on the theme has focused on establishing Wilsonianism's complicity in abetting nationalism, while also gauging the Wilson administration's role in the inconsistent application of national sovereignty. Many of these works are critical of Wilson. Margaret MacMillan's history presents Wilson as overwhelmed by the national avarice among European leaders, whereas Joan Hoff blames Wilsonianism directly for

ethnic nationalism in the twentieth century by having established a precedent that misconstrued national self-determination with national sovereignty. Erez Manela in turn criticizes the failure of Wilson to uphold his rhetorical standard beyond Europe and for abetting colonialism. Such criticisms have also extended to scholars focused on East Central Europe, such as Peter Pastor and Claire Nolte, who each criticize Wilson for hypocrisy in his promotion of national self-determination due to the treatment of the nationalities on the opposing side of the war. Aviel Roshwald likewise argues that the volatile postwar order resulted primarily due to its legitimization by the western Allies, including the United States.⁸⁹

Alternative views have largely centered on arguments that the ultimate outcomes in the postwar order were contrary to Wilson's actual vision. Scholars such as Magda Adam and Mieczyslaw Biskupski place the blame rather on West European *realpolitik* displacing Wilson's vision. Victor S. Mamatey argued that blame for the problems in political organization in the region should fall on the Central European national movements themselves, having set the terms for their own territorial sovereignty. Works by Derek Heater and Lloyd Ambrosius likewise argue that Wilson espoused a 'civic' nationalism, rather than the ethnic based nationalism that held sway following the war. They affirm that Wilson saw the ideal national identity as one formed out of the common historical experience of peoples within a political state, rather than one based strictly on ethnic lineage, and, thus, only desired to accredit immediate statehood to those groups he saw with an established, historical civic tradition. These established nations would in turn serve as upstanding members of the international legal order and as guides to those

⁸⁹ Margaret O. MacMillan, *Paris 1916: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002). Joan Hoff, *A Faustian Foreign Policy from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush: Dreams of Perfectibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Peter Pastor, "The Hungarian Critique of Wilsonianism" in *Wilsonian East Central Europe: Current Perspectives*, ed. John S. Micgiel (New York: Pilsudski Institute, 1995), 1-6. Claire E. Nolte, "The New Central Europe of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk," in *Wilsonian*, 7-24. Roshwald, *Ethnic*.

still in need of development. The ethnic conflict following the war thus arose in spite of Wilson.⁹⁰

By looking at a Czech-Slovak case that blurs many of the traditional lines delineating national identity, this article will provide a greater nuance between these competing interpretations of Wilsonian national self-determination. Given the complexity of post-war East Central Europe, it is safest to say on a macro level that the United States treated each nationality on a case-by-case basis, encouraging some while discouraging or completely ignoring others in trying to find a stable political balance in the region. Ultimately, the national movements on the winning side of the conflict defined the new organization of the region, although the Western powers—the United States, France, and Great Britain—served as the final arbiters. The shape of the region thus boiled down to which national leaders were able to convince the Western powers to accept their vision. This article will show in the context of the Slovak Question, how Czech nationalist leaders exploited Wilsonian framework of civic nationalism to gain American acceptance of their vision for Czechoslovakia, in spite of ample Slovak protest in the name of a broader application of national self-determination. That United States policy favored a state dominated by the Czechs at the expense of the Slovaks, likewise serves as a clear example of the exclusivity of Wilsonian national self-determination, even in a region where the United States nominally accepted its application. This article will support the view that ethnicity was less a concern for Wilsonian foreign policy in Central Europe than has often been stated, for it placed divergent views on the Czechs and Slovaks based on images of civic and cultural development,

⁹⁰ Heater and Ambrosius disagree on the merits of this approach. Magda Adam, “Woodrow Wilson and the Successor States: An American Plan for a New Central Europe” in *The Versailles System and Central Europe*, ed. Magda Adam (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 3-28. Mieczyslaw Biskupski, “The Wilsonian View of Poland: Idealism and Geopolitical Traditionalism,” in *Wilsonian*, 123-146. Mamatey, *United States*. Derek Heater, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy* (New York, St. Martin’s, 1994). Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

despite qualifying the two peoples as ethnically common. In East Central Europe, the Wilsonian focus on civic development and modernity over national identity nonetheless left too many nationality questions to fester and abetted a volatile national-political environment that Nazi Germany exploited leading up to the Second World War.

Wilson and Images of the Czechs and Slovaks

The Czechs and Slovaks were both undoubtedly part of the Wilsonian Moment, and Wilson and the United States remained in high regard in Czechoslovakia. At the opening of the American embassy in Prague, Milan Štefánik, for example, lauded how American support had “saved” Czechoslovakia from disorder, and President Thomas Masaryk emphasized how the Czechs and Slovaks had embraced the American way and remained “forever grateful.” Masaryk then encouraged the first American ambassador to Prague, Richard Crane, to teach the people of Czechoslovakia “what is meant by the American spirit, what are the American ideals,” for they would “be glad to be Americanized.” Masaryk also wrote to Wilson to give the American President credit for Czechoslovak national liberation, and he praised American ideals as “one with the ideals of our nation.” This popular image remained even after Wilson’s star had faded following Versailles. A Slovak-American writer recently returned from Czechoslovakia reported that Czechoslovakia was the lone European state where Wilson remained highly regarded, to the point where “one would think that President Woodrow Wilson was running for the Presidency of that Republic.” Crane also later reported a constant praise and thankfulness, that “every child above the age of eight knew and revered the name of Woodrow Wilson.”⁹¹

⁹¹ “Thomas Masaryk to Wilson,” 2 Jan 1919, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 53, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 590. “The Minister in Czechoslovakia to the Acting SoS,” in *FRUS*, 1919, V2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934), 88. “Reply of President Masaryk to the Remarks of the American Minister (Crane) on the Occasion of His Reception, June 11, 1919,” in *FRUS*, 1919,

On the other side of the Atlantic, it is clear that Wilson agreed to the creation of Czechoslovakia because he became convinced of the developmental legitimacy of the Czech nation. This sentiment began with a positive view of the Czech leadership. Agricultural Secretary David Houston proclaimed Masaryk “a powerful force for good in Europe,” while Wilson advisor Edward House praised Masaryk’s knowledge of foreign affairs. Crane, furthermore, claimed to have found it difficult to find a “more conciliatory, far-seeing, tolerant, and just ruler.” Accordingly, Wilson and Masaryk were in many ways similar. Both were scholar-presidents, whose writings dealt largely with liberal-democracy and the role of the nation-state, and idealist reformers.⁹² Wilson himself thus expressed hope for Masaryk “to always think of me as a genuine friend of the people over whom he so worthily presides.” The Slovaks had charismatic leaders, but most did not have international connections comparable to Masaryk.⁹³

Beyond Masaryk’s person, the Czech’s historical claims to independence, modern economy, and proactivity in the Austrian parliament clearly met the standards of national development set by Wilson. In one letter to Masaryk, Wilson wrote, “it is deeply gratifying to me that the Czecho-Slovak peoples should recognize in me their friend and the champion of their rights and I beg you to believe that I shall be always happy to serve the Nation in any way that it is in my power to serve it.” Likewise, Wilson later wrote to Masaryk’s daughter, Alice, stating,

V2, 91-92. Masaryk, *Making*, 871. Herman Bernstein, “Len Češi, Oslobodení Pomocou Spojených Štátov, Cvália Prezidenta,” *Slovák v Amerike*, 3 July 1920, Microfilm (Bethlehem, PA: Preservation Resources). “Crane to SoS,” 21 Oct 1920, File #: 860F.01/106, *Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1910-1944 (DoS CS 1910-44)*, Microfilm (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1982). Mamatey, *The United States*, 32.

⁹² Masaryk himself stated that he and Wilson, “understood each other fairly well—after all, we had both been professors,” and claimed to have convinced the American President by appealing to Wilson’s own values. Čapek, *President Masaryk*, 281-282. Masaryk, *Making*, 274-278. The one Slovak with enough international stature to make a difference was Štefánik, but he decided to support Masaryk before his death in 1919.

⁹³ David F. Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson’s Cabinet, 1913-1920: With a Personal Estimate of the President* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1926), 327. “House Notes of a British Statement on Russia” in *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House arranged as a Narrative by Charles Seymour*, vol. 3, ed. Charles Seymour (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926-1928), 408. “Crane to Secretary of State (SoS), No. 423,” 16 Feb 1921, F#: 860F.01/113, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Wilson to Alice Garrigue Masaryk,” 18 April 1923, in *Papers*, Vol 68, 337.

“What I did to assist that stout little nation to gain independence was done with genuine zest, and I shall always be proud to have it thought I played any part in the Nation’s birth and the establishment of its independence.” The Czech imagery of aiding the Slovaks certainly also would have appealed to the Wilsonian view of mature states serving as guiding forces to the less developed. A letter from Wilson to congratulate Masaryk’s birthday hints at such a case. In the letter, Wilson emphasized his pleasure with Masaryk’s treatment of the minority question “as contributing so largely to the welding of Czechoslovakia into a stable nation.” Crane also regularly lauded the state as a beacon in the region, at one point stating how “economically, politically and socially, the Czecho-Slovak Republic emerges clearly as a bulwark of peace, progress, and order in the midst of Europe.”⁹⁴

The argument that carried the most weight in negotiations, however, was the Czech claim to have previously run their own kingdom. A memo from Albert H. Putney, Chief of Near East Affairs, made clear how the sense of prior statehood was necessary for recognition:

The Bohemians stand in a different position from any other subject people who are asking the assistance of the United States in securing their freedom and independence. For many centuries prior to the election of Ferdinand of Austria as king of Bohemia in 1526, Bohemia had been an absolutely independent country and for a considerable period prior to this date it had been an elective monarchy.

The American statement recognizing Czecho-Slovak belligerency on the side of the Entente also made clear that the U.S. government viewed Bohemia as a kingdom turned vassal state. Lansing asserted the exclusiveness of this decision, stating, “I feel that we must so far as we can avoid committing ourselves to a policy of a principle which cannot be uniformly applied when a

⁹⁴ “Wilson to T. Masaryk,” 10 Jan 1919, in *Papers*, vol. 53, 711. “Wilson to Masaryk” 3 Mar 1920, F# 860F.001/-, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Wilson to A. Masaryk.” “Crane to SoS, No248,” 22 May 1920, F#: 860F.00/96, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 509,” 19 May 1921, F#: 860F.00/171, *DoS CS 1910-44*. MacMillan, *Paris*, 229-30.

readjustment of nationalities takes place as it undoubtedly will.” This formulation was condemnatory for the Slovaks, as Washington clearly would not have recognized them in a similar vein. The exile organization, therefore, lumped them into the Czech conception. It claimed that the Slovaks were also a historical part of Bohemia, before the Hungarians had stolen them away in the 10th Century.⁹⁵ As this chapter will show, the U.S. government would largely accept this conception and show little consideration toward claims of Slovak particularism, in spite of constant efforts by Slovak autonomists to gain recognition. This lack of recognition would in turn contribute to a sense of frustration and alienation among Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic that motivated them toward an even more strident Slovak nationalism.

The Slovak Question in the Founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic

In spite of this embrace of Wilsonianism, Prague exhibited difficulties in applying the values of national self-determination in what was a multinational state. Prague’s response to the nationality problem was to assure national self-determination for the Czechs, while forming a centralized government in Prague that held a tight leash over the other nationalities. The Slovaks, although a nominal partner in the state, also fell into this system. Prague faced in Slovakia a predominantly peasant population in poor economic condition. It, furthermore, confronted a population lacking broad support for a Czechoslovak identity as well as determined Hungarian agitation, including the Hungarian invasion of Slovakia in early 1919 led by the communist revolutionary Bela Kun.⁹⁶ Based on these concerns, Prague established political dominion over

⁹⁵ Victor Mamatey argues that Masaryk used these historical claims more so than claims for national self-determination to make his case. Mamatey, “Documents,” 50-57. Masaryk, *Making*, 361. For more on the methods used by the Czechs to build support from the West, see: Unterberger, *United States*. Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁹⁶ According to Victor Mamatey, 62.6% of the Slovak population worked in agriculture and only 18.4% in industry in 1910, compared to 34.4% in agriculture and 39.5% in industry in the Czech lands. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party won the highest percentages of votes in the 1920 elections promising to rectify these

Slovakia under the claim protecting the state and uplifting the Slovaks. For the first years of the state, Prague implemented martial law in Slovakia, stationing Czech troops throughout. It replaced the old Hungarian bureaucracy and education system in Slovakia with one led almost entirely by Czechs, and then pursued a harsh secularization program against Slovak Catholics, which Czech troops enforced with ample violence toward church property. Prague also delayed land reform and economic development programs in Slovakia, even as they proceeded in the Czech lands, while also liquidating Slovak industries in favor of Czech counterparts. Claiming instability, Prague then cancelled in Slovakia the first national elections, which determined the delegates for the constitutional convention. A Prague appointed group called the Slovak Club instead represented the Slovaks, the majority of which consisted of Czechoslovakists and Lutherans. These figures also filled all of the lead administrative posts in Slovakia, most notably with the appointment of the former Hlasist, and lead Slovak centralist, Vavro Šrobár as Minister for Slovakia. This organization largely excluded Slovak Catholic and autonomist leadership.⁹⁷

In this formulation, Czech nationalists and their Slovak supporters tossed aside the Pittsburgh Agreement. The 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution ignored Slovak autonomy almost entirely, and caused much controversy with the elimination of the hyphen in the name of the state, formally making it ‘Czechoslovakia.’ Masaryk justified this decision by dismissing the Slovak-Americans who had pressured it upon him. He claimed that the agreement “was concluded in order to appease a small Slovak faction which was dreaming of God knows what sort of independence for Slovakia.” Masaryk also attempted to discredit the SLA as a legitimate

economic issues. A failure to deliver, however, ripened the sentiment against Czechoslovakism. The SDP led government collapsed in less than a year, after Bolshevik agitation encouraged a split in the party. The left of the SDP became the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Victor Mamatey, “The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938,” in *History*, 114-120. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 92-98. Bela Kun came to power in Hungary after the war and invaded eastern Slovakia, where he established a short-lived ‘Slovak Socialist Republic’ from 16 June to 7 July 1919 before a coalition between Czechoslovakia and Romania disposed of it.

⁹⁷ Osuský claimed that Prague also resisted Slovak autonomy because it wanted to avoid a precedent that Czechoslovakia’s other minorities would also demand. “Interview with Štefan Osuský,” in Stolarik, “Role,” 57-66.

organization, claiming it lacked legal charter. In connection with this conception, he denied the authority of the transatlantic component of the revolution: “I signed the Convention unhesitatingly as a local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks upon the policy they were prepared to advocate. The signatories were mainly American citizens... it was laid down that the details of the Slovak political problem would be settled by the legal representatives of the Slovak people themselves.” Masaryk claimed that the Slovaks had agreed to this result when the Slovak Club accepted the Czechoslovak Constitution in 1920.

Meanwhile, supporters of centralism defined all support for autonomy and the Pittsburgh Agreement as either ignorant or treasonous. As stated by Masaryk, “The more thoughtful Slovak leaders saw that the Slovaks would derive no benefit from territorial autonomy and that an independent Slovak movement for the liberation of Slovakia must end in a fiasco. ...But I am quite aware that many Slovaks, in their racial and political humiliation, sought consolation in visions and dreams rather than in action or work.” Likewise, centralists presented the idea for Slovak autonomy as simply the machinations of the “enemies” of the state, and they condemned any Czech or Slovak supporting this idea. They repeated these accusations *ad hominem* to try to discredit supporters of Slovak autonomy in both Czechoslovakia and the United States.⁹⁸

These policies justifiably spurred among most Slovaks a sense of alienation and Czech domination. While the broader Slovak population joined the Czechs willingly, to escape Hungary, many Slovak leaders on both sides of the Atlantic maintained full expectations of a federal relationship that recognized Slovak cultural uniqueness and granted the Slovaks civic equality with autonomy over domestic affairs. Prague-centrism thus became a point of ire for Slovak nationalists, and they began organizing against Prague to try to gain Slovak autonomy

⁹⁸ Masaryk, *Making*, 208-211, 338. “Šrobár to Mamatey, Oct 1919,” in Vavro Šrobár, *Oslobodené Slovensko: Pamäti z Rokov 1918-1920*, vol 2 (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2004), 190-197. Osuský, “Moje Poslanie.” “Osuský Memoirs (English Version),” *ŠO Papers*, B: 49, F: 1, HIA.

within the state. The Slovak Catholic nationalists, led by Catholic priest and national icon Andrej Hlinka, formed the Slovak People's Party (SPP), appealing to peasant and bourgeois nationalism and traditional Catholicism. The SPP utilized the hostility against Prague-centrism to great effect, and very quickly made autonomy the most important political issue in Slovakia. It supported union with the Czechs with the caveat of domestic autonomy for Slovakia within a federalized state. The SPP remained for the entirety of the interwar period the most popularly supported party in Slovakia. The power in Slovakia, however, remained with the Slovak centralists and Protestants, led by Milan Hodža and Šrobár. Nationalist pressure nonetheless forced many of the Slovak centralists to start promoting a more limited form of autonomy by late 1920. Originally a unique party—the Slovak National and Peasant Party (SNPP)—most of the centralists later joined the Czech Agrarian Party (AP) after a group of nationalist Lutherans split from them over the issue of autonomy, forming the smaller Slovak National Party (SNP). Even left-wing parties in Slovakia divided over the issue, with the Social Democratic Party embracing centralism and the Slovak Communist Party autonomy.⁹⁹

Transatlantic Slovak Nationalism

The three-year period following the end of the war was extremely dynamic from a transatlantic perspective. It featured much interaction between Czechoslovakia and the United States, including regular interaction between Slovak-American leaders and Slovak officials. This

⁹⁹ The SPP program pushed for an independent Slovak parliament that handled domestic affairs, with foreign policy, trade, and defense handled jointly with Prague. The Magyars in Slovakia also attempted to utilize this animosity to build support for a return to Hungary under the promise of full autonomy. For more on this period of Slovak history, see: Susan Mikula, "The Politics of Frustration: The Slovak Political Experience, 1918-1938" in *Reflections*, 73-88. Owen Johnson, *Slovakia 1918-1938: Education and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University, 1985). Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1948* (New York: Columbia University, 1983), 1-17. James Felak, "Slovak Considerations of the Slovak Question: The Ludak, Agrarian, Socialist, and Communist views in Interwar Czechoslovakia" in *The Czech and Slovak Experience*, ed. John Morison (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 136-162. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 49-106. Kirschbaum, *History*, 155-184. Rychlik, "Czech-Slovak," 13-26. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 20-86.

interaction played a key role in fostering Slovak nationalism and it effectively made the Slovak Question into an international debate.¹⁰⁰

While keeping up with the organization of the new state from afar, the Slovak-Americans heard accounts from centralist officials praising the state's positive direction. Šrobár, for example, maintained contact with Slovak-American leaders in an effort to convince them to embrace centralism. In one such letter, he thanked the Slovak-Americans for their role in the revolution, praised the new opportunities for the Slovaks, and called on close cooperation with the Czechs. In another letter, Šrobár begged for Slovak-American support for his leadership by claiming that the new government had put the Pittsburgh Agreement into place in full, minus the parliament, which it had substituted with the Slovak Club. Likewise, Šrobár chastised support for autonomy as a campaign by their enemies ("Germans, Magyars, and Jews") to ruin the state.¹⁰¹

Slovak-Americans nonetheless began to receive separate accounts from their families and compatriots in Slovakia complaining about Prague. Reports about Czech attacks on religion, about how the state had appointed only Prague-educated Slovaks, and about Prague ignoring autonomy began to concern them. In order to ascertain the truth, the SLA sent a delegation to Czechoslovakia in March 1919. Centralist leaders took in this delegation upon their arrival and almost sweet-talked the Slovak-Americans into accepting their vision for the state. Milan Getting sent back many favorable reports about Czech-Slovak unity, and he condemned autonomy as a Magyar trick to try to divide the Slovaks from the Czechs. Getting also built up a strong relationship with the centralist Slovaks, including Šrobár.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ For example, see the following letter discussing communication with Šrobár to update him on Slovak-American activities: "Mamatey to Michael Bosak, 3 Sep 1919," *Person File (PF): Albert Mamatey*, Slovak Institute (SI), Cleveland, Oh.

¹⁰¹ "Vavro Šrobár to Slovak-Americans, 15 April 1919," in Šrobár, *Oslobodené*, Vol II, 197-198. "Šrobár to Mamatey," in *Oslobodené*. Vavro Šrobár, *Z Môjho Života* (Prague: Fr. Borovy, 1946), 322-323.

¹⁰² This delegation included Getting and Hušek, as well as M. Francisci, Edo Kovach, J. Matloch, Pavol Šiška and Ignac Gessay. Šrobár praised Getting as the shrewdest Slovak-American and gave the majority of credit to

The other SLA delegates became more skeptical, however, as they travelled around Slovakia and met different people. They found that few in Slovakia embraced any semblance of Czechoslovakism, despite claims otherwise from Prague, and they became upset when they learned that even fewer knew about the Pittsburgh Agreement. Jozef Hušek, unsurprisingly, led the skepticism. He expressed concern about how the government in Bratislava wholly supported centralization and Czechoslovakism. He commented on the “arrogance and domineering attitude,” of the Czechs, as he perceived that those officials he met “only smiled artfully, as if they pitied me for my naïve faith in the fitness of the Slovak nation.” In contrast, Slovak nationalist leaders fully embraced the Slovak-Americans as legitimate representatives of the Slovak people. Hušek assertively outlined the difference:

Hlinka alone gave me a clear-cut statement—he lived and died for the American pact...Hlinka stands for autonomy and a Christian world-view. He stands for autonomy because he sees in it the assurance of a better future for his nation, and a guarantee of the free growth of its national culture and economy, as well as a barrier to Czech materialism and atheism...Hlinka stands for autonomy because he is Slovak, not Czechoslovak!...And besides, it must be said of Hlinka that he loves his nation warmly, truly and entirely selflessly; he is ready to sacrifice everything for it—which is something I cannot in good conscience say about many of his opponents.

In making this statement, Hušek affirmed how Slovak-American nationalists saw in Hlinka a figure who represented their own desires—their sense of Slovak independent identity and their hope for autonomy as reflected in the Pittsburgh Agreement. Nevertheless, Hušek did not like the ample Slovak infighting, particularly between Hlinka and Šrobár, and expressed concern about the influence of Magyarites in the SPP. He ultimately concurred that the Slovak-Americans should be patient and should avoid abetting the Magyars with sharp calls for autonomy. In the

him and his organizations for the Slovak-American efforts in the war. Šrobár, *Oslobodené*, 172-189. “Šiška and Getting to Mamatey, 13 Mar 1919,” *SLA Cab, F: Minutes of the Meeting Formulating the Pittsburgh Pact*, SI.

end, the delegation remained open to the government. It still expected autonomy for Slovakia, but it was willing to accept a gradual application.¹⁰³

Back in America, a failure to address the Slovak Question at the Peace Conference caused much consternation among the Slovak-American autonomists and spurred a gradual shift into direct opposition against Prague. The SLA continued to send material to Prague in support of the Pittsburgh Agreement. For example, in a memo in response to “erroneous opinions circulated in the Czecho-Slovak Republic concerning the political creed of the American Slovaks,” the League affirmed how they remained prepared to stand up against anyone who opposed the principle of Slovak autonomy. The memo then demanded that Prague assure autonomy in the laws of the state, because it “rests on eternal, natural and unchangeable laws of humanity.” The Slovak autonomists even gained support from the Czech-Americans, convincing the Czech members of the Czecho-Slovak National Council of America to sign a memo supporting the complete application of the Pittsburgh Agreement. A failure to address the Slovak Question at the Peace Conference spurred more anger, as did the Conference’s granting of the Slovak regions of Spiš and Orava to Poland. With no clear advances in favor of Slovak autonomy, many Slovak-Americans also began to criticize what they perceived as centralist Slovak duplicity. In one such example, the Slovak League made a large donation to the Slovak ministry to establish a national Slovak press for the purpose of countering Magyar propaganda. Šrobár instead utilized the press to attack Slovak Catholics and autonomists. The League made a formal complaint and eventually forced Bratislava to shift much of the equipment to the reestablished Matica Slovenska. This incident was not isolated, as many Slovak-Americans donations directed toward Slovakia ended up going to Prague instead, including a ten thousand

¹⁰³ Paučo, “American Slovaks,” 63-75. Karol Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka, 1864-1926* (Bratislava: Kníhtlačiarne Sv. Andreja, 1934), 364-365.

dollar charity donation that suddenly became unaccounted for after its receipt by the Slovak Ministry. These experiences led many Slovak-Americans to mistrust Šrobár and forced them to work around state organizations when fundraising for the homeland.¹⁰⁴

Continuing to hear conflicting reports, SLA President Albert Mamatey himself went to Slovakia in the winter of 1919-1920. Upon arrival, he presented the original draft of the Pittsburgh Agreement to Slovak leaders, including Šrobár, Hodža and Hlinka. Hlinka praised the experience for allowing him to confirm the document's validity, including Masaryk's signature. The former two both rejected the agreement, arguing that talk of autonomy was simply the work of the Magyars, that the Slovaks were yet unable to stand alone, and that the government had nevertheless already put the terms of the agreement into effect. The Slovak centralists then produced a letter asserting these arguments, which Mamatey took back with him. This letter thanked the Slovak-Americans for their efforts, but argued that the Slovaks in Slovakia remained under constant threat from the Magyars and "could neither build up nor maintain its autonomy without Czech help," due to a lack of competent economic and administrative workers. It then claimed that the Constitution had made good on the Pittsburgh Agreement and that it would protect the Slovaks, supported by "the brotherly feeling of the Czech Nation." Prague also appointed Mamatey as the first Czechoslovak Consul in Pittsburgh. The SLA responded in turn. The organization refused to renounce the Pittsburgh Agreement, but it once again expressed willingness to accept its gradual implementation.¹⁰⁵ After his return to America, Mamatey

¹⁰⁴ Slovak-American nationalists accused Beneš of sacrificing Spiš and Orava in order to gain control of the Polish region of Teschen. "Memorandum from SLA Central Committee, Oct 24, 1919" in *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburgskej Dohody do ústavy Č.-S. Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922), 3. "Memorandum from the Czecho-Slovak National Council of America, Nov 7, 1919, in *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike*, 3-4. "Exposé dra Benešal!" B: *Slovak League of America*, SI. Pankuch, *History*, p 151-154,

¹⁰⁵ According to Baumgarten and Stefka, Mamatey was nevertheless able to convince Šrobár to form a commission to examine problems in Slovakia that would have included the National Slovak Society as an oversight body. This plan never occurred, however, because Prague ended the Slovak Ministry before it went into effect.

became an advocate for centralism from his position as Consul in Pittsburgh. In his farewell address after resigning from the SLA presidency in 1920, Mamatey made a statement of support for the Pittsburgh Agreement, but ultimately declared that the Slovaks in Slovakia would have to resolve the issue. His shift in sentiment estranged him from the League before he passed away in 1923.¹⁰⁶

Despite their growing concern over Prague centralism, the Slovak League failed in the early years of the republic to build reciprocal relations with the Slovak nationalists in Slovakia. Negative centralist propaganda convinced the SLA to keep its distance from the SPP early on. After taking over as SLA president in 1920, Ivan Bielek actually encouraged the SLA to focus its support on the small, Protestant nationalist party the SNP. He disqualified the Agrarian Party due to its closeness to Prague and its hosting of centralist Slovaks such as Šrobár, but also the SPP because of his concern that too many of their members supported reunion with Hungary. The SNP in turn courted the SLA for financial support. Despite the early hesitation, transatlantic interaction did not lack a major impact, as the visit of the Slovak-Americans to Slovakia in early 1919 had the effect of spurring Slovak nationalists into action. Hlinka learned about the Pittsburgh Agreement from them, and copies of the document quickly spread hand-to-hand, spurring a sense among many Slovaks that Prague had misled them. Hlinka thus began organizing his long fight for autonomy based around the agreement. The Pittsburgh Agreement became the primary symbol of the continued Slovak fight for self-determination, and Slovak nationalists would use it aggressively to build support for their cause through the duration of the

“Club of Slovak Deputies to the SLA, Feb 6, 1920,” in *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike*, 4-5. SLA Response to the Slovak Club, May 1920,” in *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike*, 5. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 46-57. Stolarik, “Slovak League,” 7-35. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81-83. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42-46. Paučo, “American Slovaks.”

¹⁰⁶ Prague regularly paid off Slovak supporters with government positions. Unsurprisingly, Getting also received appointment as a Slovak consul. “Pán Mamatey sa vzdáva predsedníctva Slov. Lígy,” *PF: Bielek*, SI.

First Republic. Hlinka likewise reached out to the Slovak-Americans, sending Catholic Priest Jozef Rudinský and businessman Jozef Kubala to the United States in October 1919 to establish a transatlantic political organization. Rudinský and Kubala addressed the Slovak League, but League leaders remained concerned that moving too fast would sow disunity and benefit the Magyars, and the SLA rejected their proposal.¹⁰⁷

Internal division also undermined the Slovak League. Before his resignation, Mamatey complained to Šrobár about the splintering of the Slovak-Americans over the Slovak Question and his difficulties holding them together. The League continued to try to balance the different views as it had during the war, but without the war to keep the Slovak-Americans united, this goal was no longer feasible. With the backing of Prague behind them, many of the Lutheran and centralist Slovaks in America abandoned the SLA. The NSS, Živena, Slovak Sokol, and the Slovak Evangelical Union each rescinded support in favor of pro-Czechoslovak approaches.¹⁰⁸ Alternatively, The Slovak Catholic nationalists in America remained upset about Prague's treatment of the Catholic Church, and after Prague detained Hlinka for attending the Paris Peace Conference in the fall of 1919, Hušek and his close affiliates abandoned the SLA in protest, and shifted their activities to the First Catholic Slovak Union and the Slovak Catholic Federation. They published openly in Hlinka's defense, trying to explain his reasons for going to Paris as well as the reasons for his imprisonment. They then held a fundraiser, ultimately sending Hlinka over 100,000 Crowns for political and general Catholic activities. The Slovak-American Catholics then embraced Rudinský and Kubala, who remained in America until fall of 1920.

¹⁰⁷ SLA leaders were likewise hesitant due to false reports from Prague that these two were Hungarian agents. "Narodná Strana Na Slovensku Obživená na Základe Pittsburgskej Dohody," *PF: Ivan Bielek*, SI. "Veľactenej Slov. Líge v Amerike, 9 Aug 1921," *PF: Ivan Bielek*, SI. "Pittsburgská" in *Dokumenty*. Beyond the figures discussed here, two Slovak-American Socialists, Jozef Schiffel and Marek Čulen also returned to Slovakia, and helped form the Czechoslovak Communist Party. M. Mark Stolarik, "Slovak Immigration to the United States and its relation to the American Socialist and Labor Movements," *Slovakia*, 33, 60-61 (1987-88), 47-62.

¹⁰⁸ Many individuals from these organizations nevertheless continued to support Slovak autonomy.

Believing that the SLA was not protecting Slovak interests, Hušek boycotted the 13th convention in June of 1920 and all of the Slovak-American Catholic organizations followed him. He argued that this action was a necessary protest against those using the League to “complete the service of their own personal interests and religious and political intolerance,” and for “objectives that are anti-Slovak, anti-American, and anti-Christian.” He praised the League’s leadership in the fight against the Magyars, but bemoaned how the Czechs had ignored the Slovak-American role in the revolution and had betrayed their promises of equal cooperation. Faced with this pressure and upset when the Czechoslovak Constitution neglected Slovak autonomy, the Slovak League became more assertive in its opposition to Prague.¹⁰⁹

As this hostility rose, Prague sent two centralist Slovaks, Ladislav Moyš and Ján Pocisk, to America. The Slovak-American autonomists chided these two figures about Prague centralism, particularly when Moyš and Pocisk questioned Slovak readiness for autonomy and claimed that the Slovaks in Slovakia did not want autonomy anyhow. When they returned to Prague and claimed that the majority of Slovaks in America were “anti-Autonomistic,” the SCF caught word and sent a counter statement declaring that the Slovak-Americans supported the Pittsburgh Agreement more than ever. Unable to convert Slovak-American autonomists, Prague tried to silence and to discredit them. Pankuch claimed that Prague banned his publications due to his criticisms of Prague centralism, and that the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington collaborated with Getting to try to have his newspaper shut down by undermining its funding. He also outlined a major Czechoslovakist propaganda campaign against an effort by autonomist Slovaks to build a statue dedicated to Štefánik in Wade Park in Cleveland. These types of actions became more prevalent as Prague settled into normal affairs. Ultimately, a sense of betrayal took

¹⁰⁹ “Mamatey to Šrobár, 22 Nov 1919,” in Šrobár, *Oslobodené*, Vol II, 190-197. “Moje Stanovisko Naproti Slov. Lige, 24 Oct 1920,” *SLA Cab, F: SLA Presidents*, SI. Sidor, *Hlinka*, 410-413.

over for many Slovak-Americans. They began to protest more assertively against Prague centralism, demanding immediate implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement, and they began to coordinate thoroughly with autonomists in homeland for this objective.¹¹⁰

The Slovak Question as an International Debate

Because of this fervent Slovak nationalism on both sides of the Atlantic, Prague fought to control the narrative among the Western Allies to assure that they backed its vision for the First Republic. This effort came from a variety of individuals, including Masaryk, and attempted to justify Prague centralism by disparaging the Slovaks. Masaryk did not mask his opinion on the matter in his memoirs:

To the East, some millions of Hungarian Slovaks joined the Republic. They had long been oppressed by the Magyars, deprived of education and deliberately kept in a backward, nay, a primitive condition. In general culture and political maturity they were decades, perhaps generations, behind the Czechs; and, despite the presence of a Protestant leaven among them, they were apt to be fanatically Catholic and priest-ridden.

Masaryk showed more tact during the war, perhaps due to his tenuous hold on the support of the Slovak-Americans, but he nonetheless still appealed to the ideas rooted in Czechoslovakism. In Masaryk's statement of the Czecho-Slovak war aims, he claimed the two peoples as the same:

"Culturally the Slovaks remained constantly in close relation with the Czechs... The union of the Czechs and Slovaks is therefore a legitimate demand. The demand was made not only by the Czechs, but also by the Slovaks." He asserted that disputes over the difference between the two "have practically ceased," before talking about the "undeveloped" parts of Slovakia and how the

¹¹⁰ For example, see: Slovak League of America, *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburgskej Dohody do ústavy Č.-S. Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922). Sidor, "Slovak League," 46-57. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81-83. Pankuch, *History*, 151-154, 159-173, 180. Mikuš, "Slovak League," 42-46. Oddo, *Slovakia*, 339-340. Paučo, "American Slovaks." Sidor, *Hlinka*, 410-413. Adamec, "Slovak Catholic Federation," in *Slovaks in America*, 223-232.

Czechs would easily bring industrialization to them. When the National Council released the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence on October 18, 1918, it included only a short paragraph on the Slovaks, stating that they were simply a lost brother, “once part of our national state, later torn from our national body.” Czechoslovak officials regularly whitewashed the Slovak Question out of the image of the state, and presented the Slovak autonomists as simply an irrelevant, cranky minority working for the Hungarians.¹¹¹

The Czech and Slovak centralists also cultivated allies among academics and journalists, and the Czechoslovakist viewpoint became the dominant one among the general literature concerned with the Czechs and Slovaks. R. W. Seton-Watson remained sympathetic to the fate of the Slovaks, but fully embraced the view that “saving” the Slovaks necessitated Czech leadership over them. A book he produced at the beginning of World War I, for example, asserted, “the Slovaks cannot be abandoned to their fate,” because “they form an essential part of the Bohemian problem...In every way the Slovak districts form the natural continuation of Bohemia.” Historian Lewis B. Namier likewise claimed that the Czechs and Slovaks lacked “any vital division,” and “at all the greatest moments of Czecho-Slovak history the two branches of the nation were one, or at least tried to become one.” The handbooks put together for the British delegates at Versailles, and published for general consumption shortly thereafter, noted Slovak potential, but remarked of being “impressed with the slowness, want of initiative, passivity, and intemperance of the people,” who were, “in great need of foreign capital and of a continuance of such enlightened guidance in technical and agricultural affairs.”¹¹² Studies of Slovak-Americans,

¹¹¹ Masaryk, *Making*, 21. Masaryk, *New Europe*, 127-139, 147-148. “Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation by its Provisional Government,” (Doc 22) in *Slovakia: Political*, 158-160. “A Communication to Senator Stone,” in, Appendix, Pergler, *America*, 107-111. B.P. Matocha, “Work of the Czechoslovaks in America,” *Current History*, 10, 1, 2 (May 1919), 309-312. Charles Pergler, “The Right of Czechoslovakia to Independence,” *Current History*, 14, 6 (Sept 1921), 942-943.

¹¹² Seton-Watson claimed to have been at the forefront of Czechoslovakism and to have pushed Masaryk to include the Slovaks in the revolution. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk*, 61. R.W. Seton Watson, et al, *The War and*

such as those by Eleanor Ledbetter and Archibald McClure, were often highly favorable. Ledbetter, for example, praised them as extremely resilient, hard-working Americans, and McClure praised how the Slovak-American provided a good example of how the immigrant can rise up to be a community leader. Nonetheless, images of primitiveness remained prominent even in these more positive works. McClure, for example, labeled the Slovaks in Slovakia “a less cultured Bohemian,” being marked by illiteracy, alcoholism, while being controlled by the clergy and a few ‘free thinkers’ among them. Thus, “the Slovak hope lies not in an independent Slovak nation, but in a union with their northern cousins and neighbors—the Bohemians.” Perhaps no book was as damning of the Slovaks as one by Lothrop Stoddard & Glenn Frank that asserted “of the Slovaks there is little to be said,” for they were “a backward, depressed people, show little aptitude for modern industrial life...the Slovaks are peasants, politically depressed, economically weak, and culturally backward.”¹¹³

In response to these presentations, the Slovak-American autonomists fought for recognition of the Slovaks as an independent people. Their efforts centered mostly on appealing to American values, and proving a Slovak embrace thereof, as a means of validating the worth of the Slovak nation for self-determination. This approach included general support for the war effort, most notably programs to encourage volunteerism and fundraising in the name of the Slovak-Americans. The Slovak support on the American home front included campaigns to ship

Democracy (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970), 132-133, 272-273. Seton-Watson also established relationships with the Czechoslovakists in America. “The Slavs of America and the Allied Cause,” Letters to the Editor Section, *The Times* (London), 1 Oct 1915, 7. “Thomas Čapek to Seton-Watson” (Doc 79), in *Seton-Watson*, 264-265. Lewis B. Namier, *The Czecho-Slovaks: An Oppressed Nationality* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917). *Peace Handbooks, vol 1, Austria-Hungary, part 3, Slovakia*, Historical Section of the British Foreign Office, reprint ed. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1973).

¹¹³ Eleanor E. Ledbetter, *The Slovaks of Cleveland* (Cleveland: Cleveland Americanization Committee, 1918). Archibald McClure, *Leadership of the New America* (New York: Doran Company, 1916), 110-118. Stoddard and Frank nonetheless felt that Czechoslovakia would be untenable, and decided the best option would be to keep the Slovaks in Hungary, but under constant international surveillance. Lothrop Stoddard & Glenn Frank, *Stake of the War: Summary of the Various Problems, Claims and Interest of the Nations at the Peace Table* (New York: Century, 1918), 120-121, 124-125, 130-131.

items not supplied by the military to the troops overseas, such as sweaters, and charity stipends to the dependents of U.S. military volunteers. The Slovak fraternal organizations also raised money for war bonds, most prominently the ‘million dollar fund’ organized by Joseph Murgaš on behalf of the SLA. The Slovak-Americans also pursued various symbolic efforts, including Slovak ‘loyalty days’ designed to promote Slovak culture, such as music, art, literature, dancing and gymnastics, linked to symbolic displays of American patriotism. Pankuch says that the Slovaks in Cleveland even tried to assert their influence by getting “one of their own,” Vlačav Svarc, elected to Congress, although they were unsuccessful. The Slovak-Americans also worked to gain recognition through articles praising the Slovaks in the general press. One such article praised Slovak loyalty to America. It praised that the Slovaks in America “forever dropped the hyphen when they took their oath of allegiance,” but that “the Stars and the Stripes do not now represent to him only his own liberty, but the liberty of his beloved and much abused nation.”¹¹⁴ Mamatey remained at the forefront of these efforts. He jostled with federal bureaucracies, such as the National Investigation Bureau, in defense of the League’s activities during the war. After the war, he also worked to get wounded Slovak-American Legionnaires returned to the United States and even for them to be received by the Secretary of Defense in Washington D.C.¹¹⁵

The Slovak-American’s primary effort, however, was to convince U.S. officials to recognize Slovak particularity and support Slovak autonomy in Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, with Slovak control over the direction of Slovakia arrested by Czech nationalists, Slovak autonomists struggled to gain recognition from Washington. Their efforts included direct

¹¹⁴ “Mamatey to the Bureau of Advice and Information of the Charity Organization Society, 26 Sep 1918,” *SLA Cab, F: 11th Congress*, SI. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81-83. Pankuch, *History*, 137, 175-177. Alexander, *Ethnic Pride*, 15-43. “Where the Slovaks Stand,” *The Pueblo Chieftan*, Mar 1, 1917, 6.

¹¹⁵ The NIB gave the SLA a hard time over its qualification as a charity organization versus a political one, while also questioning possible mismanagement of funds. Mamatey categorically denied the latter charge and worked to defend the SLA as a joint political and charitable organization. “Mamatey to Barry D. Smith, 30 Oct 1919,” *PF: Mamatey*, SI. “V. J. Hurban to Mamatey, 23 July 1919,” *PF: Mamatey*, SI. “Hurban to Mamatey, 7 July 1919,” & “Hurban to Mamatey, 8 July 1919,” *SLA Cab, F: SLA Presidents, Telegrams, 1907-2006*, SI.

mailings to government officials, such as one to Lansing in which they praised Wilson as their “best friend” and emphasized how America remained the key to the liberation of their homeland, before expressing concern with Wilson’s statements about maintaining Austria-Hungary. Other appeals included a memorandum to Wilson in September 1920 that asked him to help the Slovaks in their continued effort for self-determination as thanks for the SLA’s widespread support for the war effort. Another letter to president-elect Warren Harding complained about Prague and asked that his incoming administration help the “downtrodden Slovak nation regain its independence.”¹¹⁶ Their efforts also included general texts such as one published by the SLA asking for support for Slovak national self-determination. Once again, this publication openly appealed to American liberty as having given new life to the Slovaks. “America has given us opportunity of development she had taught us many a noble lesson in freedom and liberty, and, we in turn, have freely given the best in our lives to make her great, rich and powerful, and now, at the climax of it all, she has set herself to free our brothers and sisters across the seas from political bondage.” In another piece, Mamatey defined the Slovaks within the Czecho-Slovak state, and remarked on the American role in Slovak history, before concluding with praise for how the Slovaks, Czechs, and Americans live and fight under the same ideals.¹¹⁷

Stephen Bonsal, Wilson’s aide and translator at the Paris Peace Conference, remarked how the flurry of letters from Slovak-Americans assured the American delegation’s knowledge of the Slovak autonomy movement and its objectives. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that many government officials gave these Slovak-American arguments much

¹¹⁶ The SLA also appealed to Wilson for a plebiscite for the regions of Spiš and Orava. “Unsigned Letter to Lansing, 18 Sep 1917,” *SLA Cab, F: Minutes...Pittsburgh Pact*, SI. “SLA to Wilson, 18 Sep 1920,” *PF: Bielek*, SI. “Andrew Sitcher to Harding,” 9 Mar 1921, F#: 860F.01/112, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹¹⁷ Paul Jamarik, *Hungary and the Future Peace Terms* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1917). Albert Mamatey, *The Czecho-Slovaks: Who are They?* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1919). Found in: *The Immigrant in America*, Microfilm, Unit 3, Reel 90 (Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications Inc).

consideration. The Slovak-Americans had their most success through the support of U.S. Congressmen from districts highly populated by Slovaks. Historians Guido Kisch and Victor Mamatey argue that Congressmen, such as Adolph Sabath from Chicago, were more important even than Masaryk in convincing Wilson to change his views on Austria-Hungary. Other Congressmen helped promote the Slovak cause directly. For example, Representative John Ramsey put on record a resolution produced by the Slovak League branch in his constituency in Passaic, NJ. The text declared Slovak loyalty to America, while adding that their hearts were “bleeding with pity for their unfortunate brethren who are suffering under the oppression of the cruel Austro-Hungarian Government.” It then praised Wilson for demanding the rights of small nations, and offered their services in the war effort. Other elected officials, such as Senators George McLean from Connecticut, Charles Townsend from Michigan, and Atlee Pomerene from Ohio, also provided similar statements.¹¹⁸

The Slovak Question at the Peace Conference

The Slovak Question was almost non-existent during the process of American recognition of Czechoslovakia. Given a lack of sources, it is difficult to say precisely how Masaryk presented the issue in his diplomatic efforts and where Wilson and others stood. The reports of other State department officials, however, showed a distinct lack of interest. When discussing the Czechoslovak movement through most of the war, they predominantly referred to it as strictly the “Bohemian” or “Czech” national independence movement. Only after the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence in 1918 did they even begin to refer to it as the

¹¹⁸ Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1969), 156-166. Ramsey simply had this document published in the Congressional Record as a symbolic gesture. 55 CR 1873-1874 (1917) Saturday, May 5, 1917. 56 CR 2014 (1918) Wednesday, February 13, 1918. Guido Kisch, “Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe,” in *The Journal of Modern History*, 19, 3 (Sep., 1947), 235-238. Mamatey, “Documents,” 57-58.

‘Czechoslovak movement,’ albeit still only really connecting it to the Czechs. In the first draft of the statement recognizing Czechoslovak belligerency, Lansing originally recognized the separate “peoples of Bohemia and Slovakia.” After meeting with Wilson, however, the second draft omitted all independent references to the Slovaks in place of the term Czecho-Slovak. Because Washington did not see the Slovaks as separate from the Czechs, they were also not included in discussions over the issue of national minorities. Accordingly, the most highly considered minority question related to Slovakia dealt with the Hungarians.¹¹⁹

By the time of the peace conference, Slovak autonomist appeals were largely in vain. The Allied governments had already determined the basic structure of the new order in Central Europe. The Czechoslovak National Council had full Allied recognition and a seat at the conference table as a belligerent on the side of the Entente. Where the debate over national self-determination persisted, it was in the distribution of minorities within the new states. The peace conference otherwise dealt mostly with legal nuances such as the precise drawing of borders. While the new and old states of Central Europe debated over nationality and strategic interest in equal measure, the Western powers were largely concerned with establishing a working order in the region. The view of Central Europe in the West divided between support for a strategic balance (the French) or an ethnic balance (Britain and the U.S.), with both sides asserting influence. The issue of national minorities loomed largest for the Americans, who did not want to punish the nationalities on the losing side unfairly and were conscious of linking state borders to ethnic populations. In Czechoslovakia, American officials were mostly concerned about the Sudeten Germans, whose treatment they acknowledged as a point of hypocrisy and future conflict. The Czechs, however, made mostly economic and strategic claims for the Sudetenland

¹¹⁹ Mamatey, “Documents,” 55-56. For other examples, see: “Relations” in *FRUS, 1918, WWI Sup I, Vol I*, 790-871. “Czechoslovakia,” in *FRUS, 1918, World War I Supplement I, Vol II*, 376-384. “Death and Funeral of General Milan R. Štefánik,” 13 May 1919, F#: 860F.01/48, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

and other minority regions. Washington ultimately accepted these arguments, with the belief that Czechoslovak democracy would allow fair treatment of the state's minorities.¹²⁰

While the Slovak Question received treatment at Paris, it was more as a *fait accompli* of Czechoslovakism than a serious debate. Osuský served as one of the Czechoslovak delegates at Versailles and played a role in producing support material in English. It was Beneš, though, who made the primary case for Slovakia's inclusion into the republic. To the conference, he asserted a dubious claim that Slovakia used to be part of the 'Czech' kingdom of Great Moravia before Hungary captured it in tenth century.¹²¹ Accordingly, "the conquerors had attempted without success to Magyarize the country. The population still felt Czech, and wished to belong to the new state. There was never any suggestion of separatism in Slovakia. The same language, the same ideas and the same religion prevailed." Otherwise, Beneš mostly argued the need to uplift the "economically backward" Slovakia as justification for claims to certain economically based territorial concessions, such as the Teschen region also claimed by Poland. In order to appease Allied concerns about the treatment of minorities, Beneš also declared that Prague would organize the state along the lines of Switzerland, with each nationality receiving "proportional representation in all elective bodies." Osuský claimed that Beneš originally wanted to argue for a centralized state on the French model, but that he himself convinced Masaryk to promote the Swiss model at the conference, which forced Beneš's hand.¹²²

¹²⁰ Seymour, "The End," 103-111. "Memorandum by Mr. D.H. Miller on Revised French Proposals of November, 21, 1918," in *FRUS, 1918, World War I Supplement 1, vol 1*, 361. For one example, see: "Secretary's Notes of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon's Room at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, on Tuesday, 11th March, 1919, at 3 p.m.," in *FRUS, The Paris Peace Conference (PPC) 1919, vol IV* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 317-322. MacMillan, *Paris*, 229-242.

¹²¹ The Kingdom of Great Moravia was a 9th and 10th century Slavic kingdom, centered in what is present day Czech Moravia and Slovakia, whose borders at its peak might have included much of present day Central Europe. Much is unknown about the kingdom. Several Slavic nationalities in the region, including the Czechs and Slovaks, have nevertheless claimed it as part of their national heritages.

¹²² "Czecho-Slovaks," *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 8. "Note of Edvard Beneš to the Peace Conference on the Constitutional Organization of Czecho-Slovakia, May 20th, 1919" (Doc 24) in *Slovakia: Political*, 162-163. Osuský

In response to these claims, the committee secretary acknowledged that the leaders “generally agreed that the claim to Slovakia presented no difficulties,” and most of the discussion focused on political boundaries. Beneš very clearly utilized Slovak victimization under Hungary—including an emphasis on how it spurred extensive Slovak emigration to the United States—to justify economic/strategic territorial claims in heavily Hungarian areas. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George was the only leader to call this out directly as a land grab. The only recorded commentary by Wilson on Slovakia was a concern over the fair treatment of Hungarians. Osuský claimed that the Supreme Council largely did not buy Czech’s historical claims to Slovakia linked to Great Moravia, and ultimately told the Czechoslovak delegation that they had to choose between ethnic and historical claims. In the end, however, the Committee agreed to the bulk of Beneš’ territorial claims in Slovakia, justified on the premise that the over half million Slovaks remaining in Hungary would assure reciprocally fair treatment to Hungarians still in Slovakia. Overall, the Allies gave in to almost all of the Czech territorial demands, based largely on desires to use Czechoslovakia as a buffer against Germany. The concerned states later ironed out the formal legal boundaries at Trianon in February 1920, where Osuský served as extraordinary and plenipotentiary envoy for Czechoslovakia.¹²³

claimed that he regularly feuded with Beneš on this matter and on the Slovak Question in general. He said that, having lived in the United States and Switzerland, he saw the benefits of a federal model. “Osuský Memoirs (English and Slovak versions),” *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 7. “Interview,” in Stolarik, “Role,” 57-66. Osuský also took personal credit for convincing the Supreme council to treat Czechoslovakia as an allied power to prevent it from having to pay reparations, which he claimed Beneš was willing to give in on.

¹²³ “Osuský Memoirs (English and Slovak versions),” *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 1, F: 7. “Interview,” in Stolarik, “Role,” 57-66. “Secretary’s Notes of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon’s Room at the Quai d’Orsay, Paris, on Thursday, 6 February, 1919, at 3 p.m.,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol IV*, 882-885. “Secretary’s Notes of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon’s Room at the Quai d’Orsay, Paris, on Tuesday, 11th March, 1919, at 3 p.m.,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, vol IV*, 317-318. “Crane to SoS, No. 77,” 8 Oct 1919, F#: 860F.00/30, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 117,” 14 Nov 1919, F#: 860F.00/49, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Archibald Cary Coolidge, *Ten Years of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 264-265. George later regretted giving in to Czechs demands, condemning Czechoslovakia as a “polyglot and incoherent state.” David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol. 1 & 2 (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972), 612. The maps used to delineate the new territories also did not distinguish the Slovaks and Czechs. Wesley J. Reisser, *The Black Book: Woodrow Wilson’s Secret Plan for Peace* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), 103-106. At Trianon, Osuský made the same historical claims, but focused

Facing this exclusion, the Slovak autonomists fought for recognition from the West of their own perspective. Slovak leaders, however, lacked effective connections and resources in the West, and events conspired against them when Milan Štefánik, the most influential and internationally well-connected Slovak at the time, died in a plane crash in May 1919.

Recognizing that the official Czechoslovak delegation would not represent Slovak autonomist interests, Hlinka pursued the approach of many other dismissed national leaders and took his case directly to Versailles. Prevented by Prague from attending as an official delegate, Hlinka and a small group of colleagues travelled to Paris independently and covertly, with assistance from Poland. Connected by Polish Catholic leaders, Warsaw provided Hlinka's group with passports, a letter of introduction, and financial aid. The Polish delegates then gave the Slovaks access to the conference and introduced them to other delegations, including the Americans.¹²⁴

The Hlinka delegation made the trip to Paris with the goals of receiving independent recognition as a nation and of promoting autonomy for the Slovaks within Czechoslovakia. It passed around a document asserting that the Slovaks were “neither Czechs nor Czechoslovaks; we are simply Slovaks.” This document affirmed that the Slovaks, inspired by the hope of liberty, had worked to overthrow the Hungarians in collaboration with the Czechs, Moravians, and Ruthenians, but that they had done so with the promise of autonomy, so that Slovakia could “preserve its national character” and improve its cultural development. Providing the text of the Pittsburgh Agreement, the document then declared that the Slovak nation remained “cruelly deluded in its hopes,” as Prague had attempted to force the “ethnographical monstrosity” of

on undermining claimed Slovak support for Hungary. He accused pro-Magyar Slovaks of being ‘fake’ Slovaks, while claiming that the Martin Declaration had spoken for the Slovaks, made by “the best men in Slovakia, united in the very heart of their country.” “Response to Hungarian Claims, 20 Feb 1920,” in *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B: 2, F: 3.

¹²⁴ Hlinka's colleagues were František Jehlička, Jozef Rudinský, Jozef Kubala, and Štefan Mnohel. Warsaw provided the Slovaks financial and logistical support for their journey to Paris as a means of tweaking Prague due the territorial disputes between the newly formed Czechoslovakia and Poland. Bonsal, *Suitors*, 156-166. Thaddeus V. Gromada, “Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists,” *Slavic Review*, 28, 3 (Sep 1969), 445-462.

Czechoslovakism in an effort to denationalize the Slovaks and turn them into Czechs. Accusing Prague of “imperialism and self-seeking,” the text complained about Czech exploitation of Slovak resources, the flooding of Slovakia with Czech officials, and the ill-treatment of Slovak Catholics and autonomists. It also condemned appointed Slovak leaders as tools of Prague, and unrepresentative leaders for not having come to power through democratic elections. The document finally appealed to the “friends of liberty and justice” to recognize Slovak individuality, and to guarantee the promised Slovak autonomy for the sake of peace in Central Europe and a Czechoslovakia internally strong enough to resist a possible German threat. Ultimately, the document called for a plebiscite in Slovakia under the observation of the Entente armies to validate Slovak popular support for autonomy.¹²⁵

After the unofficial Slovak delegation arrived in Paris in late September, it visited the American delegation and requested a meeting with Wilson or House. Stephen Bonsal received the Slovaks and almost turned them away. He decided to hear their case, however, after they presented a letter vouching for them by the recently deceased Milan Štefánik. After receiving House’s permission, Bonsal visited the Slovaks. Hlinka apologized for the condition and timing of their arrival, remarking that the premature death of Štefánik, who was supposed to stand in their stead, forced them to scramble around Prague. Hlinka then went over the Slovak’s concerns, focusing on the religious divide, economic dislocation, and Prague’s failure to grant Slovak autonomy. Bonsal quoted Hlinka’s complaint that “abroad they shout that we belong to the same race, and yet at every opportunity they treat us as helots. With the borders of what they are pleased to call Czechoslovakia, they only treat us as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the High Mightiness of Prague.” Interested in their case, Bonsal visited a second time, and on a

¹²⁵ “For Peace in Central Europe: Memorandum of the Slovaks to the Peace Conference of 1919” (Doc 25) in *Slovakia: Political*, 163-170.

third attempt discovered their expulsion from France. Reflecting on these meetings, Bonsal noted that he came to accept that the Slovak autonomists were right on the merits of the Pittsburgh Agreement and its betrayal. Bonsal likewise remarked on Hlinka personally as “transparently sincere,” and “convincing.” He added, “I think of him as the most sympathetic of the many agents of the scatted and disinherited ethnic fragments with whom I was brought in touch.” Bonsal claimed that House had also admitted to being “startled and impressed by the plea of the Slovaks,” and had expressed worry about the internal viability of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, Bonsal affirmed that this effort ultimately did not sway the American delegation to abandon trust in Prague’s leadership. Bonsal expressed high faith in the Czechs, and, despite having sympathy for the Slovak claims, noted regret that Hlinka remained hesitant to compromise with Prague.¹²⁶

Hlinka’s attendance to the conference greatly upset Prague and its supporters. Seton-Watson, for example, wrote to Hlinka begging him to reconsider his efforts, and chastised the Slovak Question as an effort by their enemies to undermine the budding Czechoslovak state. No one was angrier, however, than Beneš, who contacted the French government and had the Slovak delegates detained and then expelled from the country. While none of the other Slovak delegates returned to Slovakia immediately after their expulsion, Hlinka decided otherwise. Czech police promptly arrested Hlinka upon his reentry into Czechoslovakia, and Prague stripped him of his parliamentary mandate, most importantly during the drafting of the Czechoslovak Constitution, and detained him for a year until political pressure forced his release.¹²⁷

This effort ultimately proved a failure, and in his writings while in prison, Hlinka openly criticized the failures of Wilsonianism and the neglecting of the Pittsburgh Agreement. The

¹²⁶ Bonsal, *Suitors*, 156-166.

¹²⁷ “Seton-Watson to Andrej Hlinka, 11 October 1919” (Doc 93), in *Seton-Watson*, 303-304. “Cesta Andreja Hlinku do Paríža,” in *Dokumenty*, 100-105. Sidor, *Hlinka*, 364-365, 371-375. Gromada, “Pilsudski,” 445-462.

Hlinka group produced a convincing document that effectively outlined the legitimate demands of the Slovaks and set the standard arguments for the nationalist side on the Slovak Question. Nonetheless, Prague held a stranglehold on the upper leadership of the Allied powers regarding Czechoslovakia. Although some officials politely received Hlinka and his colleagues, the Slovak nationalists could not gain access to the influential circles necessary to force a change.¹²⁸

American Diplomats and the Slovak Question

Even though the top American leadership brushed aside the Slovak Question, this was not the case for all U.S. officials. For individuals sent to research the minority question or to serve as diplomatic officials during the period from 1918 to 1921, such as Archibald Cary Coolidge, Lawrence Steinhardt, and Arthur W. Dubois, the festering of the issue was unavoidable and they reported on it extensively. It is difficult to say how much influence these reports had on the policymaking level. Nevertheless, these individuals were appointed in conjunction with the goals and beliefs of the Wilson administration and were broadly a product of their times. Their views largely reflect the accepted frameworks of Wilsonian national self-determination, and offer a capable insight into how the unique position of the Slovaks fit into the Wilsonian world-view.

The primary source of information on the Slovak Question for these American officials remained the centralist leadership in Prague, with whom they had regular contact. These Czech nationalist leaders and their Slovak supporters continually pushed the images of the Slovaks as poor, ignorant peasants that were susceptible to villainous outside forces such as Bolshevism and Hungarian irredentism in order to justify centralization efforts. Moreover, they brushed aside supporters of Slovak autonomy as radical outsiders who did not accurately represent the broader

¹²⁸ “Za slovenskú slobodu! Moje uväznenie,” & “Balkanizovanie Európy? Zabitie Slovenska,” *Andrej Hlinka, Zápisky z Mírova: Články, Listy a Úvahy o Slovenskej Slobode*, eds. Karol Sidor & Štefan Baranovič, 2nd ed. (Bratislava: Spoločnosť Andreja Hlinku, 1991), 16-28.

Slovak population that, in their view, fully embraced Czechoslovakism. It was from this framework that American officials largely formulated their views on the Slovak Question.

The first attempt to analyze the situation in Slovakia came with the research mission led by Archibald Cary Coolidge. Coolidge was a scholar of Russian History at Harvard, a founding father East European Studies in America, and later a co-founder of the Council on Foreign Relations. He served as the first editor-in-chief of *Foreign Affairs*. For the first half of 1919 he accepted the assignment, based in Vienna, to research and report to the U.S. peace delegation on the political and economic situation in the former Austria-Hungary.¹²⁹ While the Coolidge mission provided a fair and accurate understanding of the Slovak situation, it also established early paradigms that persisted through future American perceptions of the Slovaks.

Those working under Coolidge provided most of the research on Slovakia. Hugh Gibson, a career diplomat also connected with the Hoover Mission, reported on the economic conditions in former Austria-Hungary and made clear the Slovak discontent. He presented the Slovaks as thankful to the Czechs for liberation, but unhappy about the poor conditions caused by the breaking of Slovakia's historical economic linkages Hungary while they faced Czech administrative domination and martial law. Another report came from Captain John Karmazin, a Czech-American businessman who joined the U.S. military during the war. As a Czech speaker, Karmazin gathered intelligence for Coolidge, and provided a fair explanation of those agitating against the joining of Slovakia with the Czechs, including the Magyar Bolsheviks and those who had benefited from Hungarian rule such as the large landowners, merchants, and ministry officials. Karmazin also highlighted the Slovak's connection to the United States through extensive migration. In his view, "the best class among the peasantry are those who have lived

¹²⁹ Robert F. Byrnes, "Archibald Cary Coolidge: A Founder of Russian Studies in the United States" *Slavic Review*, 7, 4 (Dec 1978), 651-667.

for several years in the U.S. and returned here. This class is now carrying out the democratization of the people and exerting a strong influence toward maintaining law and order and keeping up the patient struggle for a better day.” He commended their humanitarian efforts and their desires to help their “less enlightened kinsmen” understand their newfound freedom. While Karmazin argued that the system was working well given the restraints, he did warn, nevertheless, that the Bolsheviks remained a threat, bribing the “ignorant classes in poverty and want” through the promise of high wages and food.¹³⁰

Coolidge’s primary agent reporting on Slovakia was Robert Joseph Kerner, an American born to Czech parents who had studied under Coolidge at Harvard before becoming a professor of Slavic history at the University of California-Berkeley. Kerner offered the first of a pattern of American presentations on Slovakia that stuck heavily to Czechoslovak paradigms. Kerner complimented the Social Democrats in Slovakia for their support of the state and even more so the Agrarians, supported by the “free-thinking and Protestant land-owning class.” While Kerner recognized autonomist fears of “Czechization” and secularization, he argued that neither concern had merit. Overall, he presented the Slovaks as embracing the Czechs, in spite of Hungarian propaganda, and he stated his expectation that most of the Magyarized Jews—whom he accused of having “financial control over peasantry”—and Magyarized Slovaks would leave the new state once the boundaries were official. Like Karmazin, he accredited the American Slovaks with having wrecked the “Magyar Slovak” efforts.¹³¹

Coolidge, alternatively, never embraced the validity of Czechoslovakism. After the conference, he conveyed, “The Slovaks, speaking a language closely akin to that of the Czechs,

¹³⁰ “Memorandum by the Secretary of Embassy at Paris (Gibson), for the SoS,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 238. “Captain John Karmazin to Professor A.C. Coolidge, No. 25,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 356-359.

¹³¹ “Professor R.J. Kerner to Professor A.C. Coolidge,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 345-350.

were deemed to be ardently desirous of reunion with their brethren... the Conference assented, even though Czechs and Slovaks had for long ages been separated, and the laws of geography point emphatically to a connection between Slovakia, and still more, Ruthenia with Hungary.” In his final report to the Peace Commission, Coolidge expressed skepticism over the restraint of Czech nationalism, but focused predominantly on Hungarian arguments regarding Slovakia. Coolidge highlighted Czechs and Slovak differences, as well as Hungarian promises of autonomy to draw the Slovaks away from the Czechs. He also provided the Hungarian claims that the Czech leadership was using the Slovaks simply for strategic-economic gain and absorbing many Magyar dominated regions to do so. Coolidge put forth the Hungarian argument that “the whole thing is nothing but imperialism in its most naked form and that they cannot believe the allies and especially America can contenance such a violation of the principles of justice and self-determination,” an exaggerated statement but not unreasonable given Prague’s effort to gain many territories solely for strategic-economic interests.

Although Coolidge justified Hungarian complaints, acknowledging the dubiousness of Czech historical claims to Slovakia, he emphasized that most Slovaks desired separation from Hungary. He furthermore acknowledged that the American Slovaks had provided most of the popular support for Slovakia joining with the Czechs and that in Slovakia popular opinion on the matter ran the gamut, with few clear desires other than “peace, order, and a certain respect for their individuality.” In a rarity, he criticized Masaryk for preventing a plebiscite in Slovakia as well as the implementation of martial law, signaling both as a sign of Prague’s lack of assuredness of its own authority. Nevertheless, he argued that by following principles of nationality the Slovaks should “go to the Czechs,” even if it did violence to history and geography. While he made some exceptions, such as supporting Czechoslovak access to the

Danube in Slovakia, Coolidge emphasized that the drawing of the borders in the region should focus predominantly on nationality, and less on strategic-economics, to minimize as much future discontent as possible.¹³²

The reportage on Slovakia in the latter years of the Wilson administration, after the peace conference, became largely the purview of two men: Richard Crane and Andrew W. Dubois. Richard Crane was a businessman with many connections in Central Europe, including a close friendship with the Masaryk family, and during the war served as the personal secretary to Secretary of State Lansing. These connections, along with his financial support for Wilson's reelection campaign, made him an easy choice as America's ambassador to Prague.¹³³ Crane himself never visited Slovakia, and relied on outside reports for information on events there. Crane feared the Slovak susceptibility to outside forces, and criticized the autonomy movement as a Hungarian, Bolshevik, clerical coalition to undermine Czech and Slovak unity and break up the new state. For example, he reported that the Hungarians were manipulating "the most part uneducated and ignorant" Slovaks to resist the new state, because "the ignorant Slovak peasants are again hoping for a king, as in the 'good old days.'"¹³⁴ Crane also asserted an indisputability

¹³² The peace treaties gave Czechoslovakia most of its strategic claims, which gave the Slovaks more territory along its southern border, but it also absorbed a significant Hungarian minority. Coolidge ultimately decided the conference made the right choice given the extreme difficulties in dealing with such complicated issues. Coolidge, *Ten Years*, 264-265. "Memorandum by Professor A.C. Coolidge," in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 274-275. "Professor A.C. Coolidge to the Commission to Negotiate Peace, No. 27," in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 382-383. "Professor A.C. Coolidge to the Commission to Negotiate Peace, No. 210," in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 435-436.

¹³³ Lansing credited Crane with performing "difficult duties faithfully and well." Robert Lansing, *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935), 363. "Appointment of an American Minister in Czechoslovakia," in *FRUS, 1919, V2*, 85. "The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Crane) to the Acting Secretary of State," in *FRUS, 1919, V2*, 88-91. "Crane to SoS, No. 20," 26 July 1919, F#: unk, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 248." "Crane, No. 423." Masaryk, *Making*, 274.

¹³⁴ "Crane to SoS, No. 77," 8 Oct 1919, F#: 860F.00/30, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 146," 9 Dec 1919, F#: 860F.00/56, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 80," 8 July 1919, No File #, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 155," 22 Dec 1919, F#: 860F.00/61, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 135," 31 May 1920, F#: 860F.00/99, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS, No. 200," 13 Aug 1920, F#: 860F.00/110, *DoS CS 1910-44*. This concern ranged from claims of a Hungarian conspiracy to buy up Slovak land at above market rates, to the SDP split leading to a new communist foundation in Slovakia. It also expanded to other countries including fear of a "monarchist" movement in Bavaria trying to spur uprisings in Czechoslovakia and a group trying to gain Slovak secession into to Poland. "Crane to SoS, No. 298," 22 Sep 1920, F#: 860F.00/127, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Crane to SoS,

of the Czechoslovakist position on the Slovak Question. He regularly promoted Czechoslovakist statements on the matter, from Beneš affirming the need for centralization because Czechs always promoted the Slovaks best interests, to claims by Šrobár that Hlinka maintained no domestic support. Crane regularly went out of his way to absolve Prague regarding Slovakia, blaming the situation mostly on the living conditions, Hungarian and Bolshevik agitation, and vague “administrators,” rather than on Prague’s policy. Accordingly, the “strong” and “efficient” Czechs were solely responsible for order in the region.¹³⁵

Starting in the late 1920s, Crane did begin to shift on the Slovak Question. This swing occurred in conjunction with a Slovak centralist shift toward autonomy caused by growing nationalist pressure. For example, although Crane acknowledged Šrobár’s position that Slovakia was not ready for autonomy, he also pointed out Šrobár’s support for the gradual takeover of the administration and military in Slovakia by Slovaks. Crane also began to acknowledge Slovak complaints over the economy and the poor relationship between the Slovaks and the governing Czech officials. More significantly, he also shifted his view on Hlinka, acknowledging the SPP head as a genuine Slovak leader and commending the Slovak nationalists for not pushing separation from Prague. In the latter stages of his tour of service, he also expressed support for some level of Slovak autonomy, favoring a ‘gradualist’ plan promoted by Masaryk.¹³⁶

No. 236,” 2 Oct 1920, F#: 860F.00/125, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Note on Monarchist Uprising,” 29 Oct 1919, F#: 860F.00/130, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 388,” 11 Jan 1921, F#: 860F.00/150, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 517,” 26 May 1921, F#: 860F.00/174, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 529,” 16 June 1921, F#: 860F.00/177, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 538,” 24 June 1921, F#: 860F.00/178, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹³⁵ “Crane to SoS, No. 77,” 8 Oct 1919, F#: 860F.00/30, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “American Mission to SoS, No. 4792,” 23 Oct 1919, F#: 860F.00/29, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 117,” “Crane to SoS, No. 133,” 26 Nov 1919, F#: 860F.00/53, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 170,” 12 Jan 1920, F#: 860F.00/65, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 168,” 10 Jan 1920, F#: 860F.00/62, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 193,” 16 Feb 1920, F#: 860F.00/75, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Winslow to SoS, No. 80,” 21 April 1920, F#: 860F.00/86, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 248.” “Crane to SoS, No. 192,” 7 Aug 1920, F#: 860F.00/106, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 200.” “Crane to SoS, No. 282,” 18 Aug 1920, F#: 860F.00/114, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 286,” 31 Aug 1920, F#: 860F.00/124, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹³⁶ In a mid-February 1921 report, Steinhardt also provided a fair account of the SPP goals for autonomy. “Crane to SoS, No. 324,” 27 October 1920, F#: 860F.00/135, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 340.”

Despite this shift, Crane would never shake the image that Slovak development necessitated dominance over Slovak affairs by Prague, nor the Czechoslovak ideal. He regularly expressed concern over Slovak reliability and caricatured criticism of Czechoslovakism as “absurd and phantastic (*sic*) ethnographic inventions.” Crane also made clear his opinion that an inability to unite as a Czechoslovak nationality was preventing effective state achievements and forcing the Czechs to administer like a “mini Austria Hungary.” He bemoaned the Catholic influence among the Slovaks who he continued to assert as “yet a simple, untutored, and pious people.” While he supported a gradual, limited level of autonomy for Slovakia, he made clear that the terms as stipulated in the Pittsburgh Agreement were unacceptable. “Complete independence from the Czechs would be a treacherous gift for the Slovaks on account of their lack of a sufficient number of trustworthy, patriotic, and educated leaders.”¹³⁷

The other U.S. official to address Slovakia during Wilson’s term in office was the diplomat Arthur W. Dubois, special envoy to Central Europe, based in Vienna. Unlike Crane, who relied mostly on his sources in Prague, Dubois made periodic visits to Slovakia where he connected with a variety of Slovak leaders. While Crane’s presentations remained consistent with the Czechoslovakist line, throughout his tenure Dubois regularly questioned his sources, particularly those in the central government. After hearing from the moderate Slovak leader Milan Hodža about the threat of separatism and Bolshevism in Slovakia, Dubois followed it up

“Crane to SoS, No. 353,” 1 Dec 1920, F#: 860F.00/143, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 388.” “Crane to SoS, No. 386,” 18 Jan 1921, F#: 860F.00/152, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 388.” “Crane to SoS, No. 399,” 26 Jan 1921, F#: 860F.00/154, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 408,” 2 Feb 1921, F#: 860F.00/156, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 422,” 15 Feb 1921, F#: 860F.00/157, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 472,” 14 April 1921, F#: 860F.00/166, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 496,” 13 May 1921, F#: 860F.00/173, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 509.” “Crane, No. 517.” “Crane to SoS, No. 551,” 30 July 1921, F#: 860F.00/184, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹³⁷ “Crane, No. 340.” “Crane to SoS, No. 344,” 20 Nov 1920, F#: 860F.00/109, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 418,” 8 Feb 1921, F#: 860F.01/110, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 465,” 1 April 1921, F#: 860F.00/164, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane, No. 423.” “Crane, No. 509.” “Crane to SoS, No. 503,” 19 May 1921, F#: 860F.01/126, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 526,” 10 June 1921, F#: 860F.00/176, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Crane to SoS, No. 585,” 13 Oct 1921, F#: 860F.00/190, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

with a personal fact-finding mission, where he met with figures from throughout Slovak society including Hodža, Šrobár, and even Hlinka. Afterwards, he reported that concerns over Magyar influence were overblown, and that many average Slovaks were legitimately upset over Prague centralism. Dubois also openly criticized Šrobár for being a tool of Prague, and recommended that Slovak education come about gradually and without obsessive “Czechization.” Dubois recognized how Magyarization had left the Slovaks sensitive to outside authority and spurred suspicion of the Czechs pursuing a similar policy. He also acknowledged how their separate historical experiences had led the Slovaks to develop a distinct identity and culture, despite similarities in race and language. Moreover, Dubois pointed out how the Slovaks were an extremely religious and conservative agricultural society, and thus suspicious of the modern, secular platforms coming from much of the Prague leadership. Dubois nonetheless praised the Slovak autonomists’ agreement to participate in the government, despite their complaints, and continually reflected optimism on Slovakia’s place in the new state.¹³⁸

Dubois, however, was no less Wilsonian in his attachment to established stereotypes on Slovak development. He regularly represented the Slovaks as without agency beyond the influence of outside forces, presenting the population as apathetic peasants who simply desired to be fed and clothed. He argued, “the great mass of the Slovakian people, as is well-known, is very ignorant good-natured and devout, and is easily made content if given peace, food, and if left undisturbed in the religious pursuits. Being politically ignorant their politics are made by

¹³⁸ Stationed in Vienna, which sits across the Danube from Bratislava, certainly afforded Dubois a much easier time reaching Slovakia than Crane. “Political Conditions in Slovakia,” 8 Sep 1919, F#: 860F.00/24, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubois to SoS, No. 28,” 8 Nov 1919, F#: 860F.00/45, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Situation in Slovakia,” 4 Dec 1919, F#: 860F.00/55, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubois to SoS, No. 64,” 11 Feb 1920, F#: 860F.00/69, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Conditions in Slovakia,” 15 Aug 1920, F#: 860F.00/113, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubois, No. 28.” “Conditions in Slovakia,” 26 Dec 1919, F#: 860F.00/60, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubois to SoS, No. 75,” 2 Mar 1920, F#: 860F.00/79, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Conditions,” 15 Aug 1920.

professional politicians, officials, and the clergy.” The Slovaks would thus be prone, in his view, to any outside help more tolerant to Catholicism and able to provide their basic wants.¹³⁹

This dichotomy was a reflection not predominantly of Dubois’ opinion of the Slovaks, but of his view of the Czechs. He made clear his belief that there was no desire for or threat of Slovak separation, but growing irritation with the Czechs was making such a threat possible. DuBois explained the dissent in Slovakia over Prague-centralism, recognizing how the failure to grant the promised Slovak autonomy, exacerbated by continued troop occupation, sowed legitimate mistrust. He presented the Czechoslovakist policy to make one people of the two as unacceptable to the Slovaks, who mostly wanted a political union with assured cultural protections and he criticized Šrobár and the Slovak Ministry for exacerbating the image locally that Prague ruled over Slovakia. For Dubois, Slovak agitation was seemingly a result of the Czech inability to administer them properly. He claimed that the poor economic situation made the Czechs fearful and “blinded to common sense action,” and paranoia about losing authority encouraged them to over-centralize. In Dubois’ view, “No socialist government ever existed that did not wish to socialize all it can lay hands on—and there is the rub—socialization and Czechization is causing the trouble in Slovakia.” To support this claim, he cited the forced accommodation and local tax funding of Czech administrators, “whose presence is believed by the authorities to be of greater importance to the community than that of the old inhabitant.”¹⁴⁰

Dubois continued to argue that the Slovak Question was correctable, in spite of the weakness and inefficiency in Prague, and he made regular suggestions to deal with the issue.

¹³⁹ “Dubois, No. 28.” “Dubois, No. 75.” “Conditions,” 26 Dec 1919. “Conditions,” 15 Aug 1920. “Radical Socialism and Communism in Slovakia,” 11 July 1920, F#: 860F.00/104, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹⁴⁰ Dubois also criticized Prague for underpaying and undersupplying its troops and officials, leading to corruption, and the forced requisition of Slovak crops and high levels of inflation. He also dispraised the SNPP and SDP for making promises that they failed to carry out, leading to a further sense of unreliability. “Political,” 8 Sep 1919. “Dubois, No. 28.” “Situation,” 4 Dec 1919. “Dubois, No. 75.” “Dubois, No. 28.” “Conditions,” 26 Dec 1919. “Dubois, No. 64.” “Conditions,” 15 Aug 1920. “Internal and Foreign Affairs of Czecho-Slovakia,” 6 Nov 1920, F#: 860F.00/138, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

These suggestions included the removal of Šrobár and the abandonment of Czechoslovakism in order to “accept the Slovak as he is and allow him a hand at his own destiny.” Dubois later argued that Prague must raise the standard of living in Slovakia, convince the priesthood that it is not anticlerical, and dump the mandatory Czechoslovak language law. He also expressed hope for an official agreement, which he felt would help resolve the Slovak Question. Nevertheless, Dubois’ view remained mixed. On the one hand, Dubois declared that ultimately the Slovak claim for autonomy was “just.” On the other, he found it “doubtful whether the Slovak is sufficiently advanced to take upon himself the government of the country. Ignorance and illiteracy is prevalent, along with no experience whatever in self-government.”¹⁴¹

Other officials periodically addressed the Slovaks, mostly following along the same lines. Coolidge’s immediate successor, Albert Halstead, expressed his concern for “these simply minded people,” and emphasized Czech and Slovak differences to push concessions for the Sudeten Germans. The State Department also occasionally consulted Seton-Watson, from whom it took simply that “Slovaks and Czechs are on most cordial terms.” Reports from other officials ranged from those that followed the Czechoslovakist line, emphasizing a sense of unity between the Czechs and Slovaks and praising the Czechs as saviors, to others that suggested that Slovakia would soon fall prey to the usual malicious forces. These types of images also arose in Congress. Senator William Kenyon from Iowa, who was an ardent supporter of the Czechs, regularly promoted the Czechoslovakism. On one occasion, Kenyon called for the independence of Bohemia, including the Slovaks therein, and on another, he asserted a need for the Slovaks to join the Czechs because “the Slovaks have not made the progress of the Czechs,” and needed rescue

¹⁴¹ Dubois recommended opening up free trade with Hungary, since Slovakia’s economic linkages remained based there, and he believed that free trade in the region would help alleviate ethnic difficulties in the region. “Situation,” 4 Dec 1919. “Dubois, No. 28.” “Dubois, No. 64.” “Dubois, No. 75.” “Internal,” 6 Nov 1920. “The Situation in Slovakia and the Movement for Autonomy,” 6 June 1921, F#: 860F.01/128, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

from Hungarian oppression. In the treaty fight, Joseph McCormick also used the Slovaks to display the futility of the treaty, highlighting “religious strife” in Czechoslovakia.”¹⁴²

Conclusion

Although American officials expressed different views on the Slovak Question among them, they framed their view on a strikingly common assumption of the Slovak people as an undeveloped people dependent on more developed outsiders. Prague cultivated this image effectively. Czech nationalists and their sympathizers positioned the Czechs as a modern nation, with a distinct historic tradition of independence, and used images of Slovak neediness and lack of modernity to persuade American officials to embrace the Czech nationalist vision for Czechoslovakia. Lumping the Slovaks into the Czech conception and promoting themselves as the Slovak’s guardians allowed Czech leaders to position themselves as leaders in the uplift and modernization of Central Europe.¹⁴³

This formulation was condemnatory for the Slovaks, as Washington clearly would not have recognized them in a similar vein, due to their lack of an independent historical tradition and their large peasant population. The answer to the Slovak Question for American officials was, therefore, to find the proper guidance for the Slovaks so they would not fall prey to disfavored forces. The only real difference in views among American officials came over

¹⁴² “Mr. Albert Halstead to the Commission to Negotiate Peace, No. 335 & 336,” in *FRUS, PC 1919, Vol XII*, 546-547, 549. “Crane to SoS, No. 8,” 7 July 1919, F#: 860F.01/68, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Seton-Watson to Andrej Hlinka” 11 Oct 1919, in *Seton-Watson*, 303-304. “Shoecraft to SoS, No. 105,” 5 Nov 1919, F#: 860F.00/41, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Winslow to SoS, No. 240,” 30 April 1920, F#: 860F.00/92, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gunther(?) to SoS, No. 5404,” 17 Dec 1919, F#: 860F.00/57, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Illegible to SoS, No. 557,” 8 Aug 1921, F#: 860F.01/129, *DoS CS 1910-44*. 55 *CR*, 2856 (1917) Friday, May 25, 1917. 56 *CR*, 7995-7996 (1918) Wednesday, June 19, 1918. 59 *CR*, 2948 (1920) Monday, February 16, 1920. 59 *CR*, 4120 (1920) Wednesday, March 10, 1920.

¹⁴³ The success of Masaryk in controlling the American viewpoint suggests that presentation and personal relationships remained prominent in guiding American officials in areas where their knowledge is limited. It is probably not coincidental how many national leaders whose movements had little success at Versailles, such as Chiang Kai-Shek of the China and Syngman Rhee of Korea, followed a similar approach to Masaryk’s in their efforts for self-determination afterwards, and achieved much more success by doing so.

whether the Czechs were ready to lead a multinational republic and serve as an effective guiding force for the Slovaks. Where officials such as Coolidge and Dubois were skeptical of the Czechs as administrators, Crane, Kerner and others saw the Czechs as enlightened democrats and embraced the Czechoslovak paradigm.

Slovak nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic worked urgently to counter these images, but were unsuccessful. American officials largely disregarded the Slovak-American population, despite its important role in the formation of the state. The only exceptions were the early reports by Karmazin and Kerner that credited the American Slovaks as “reliable.” The Wilson administration also hardly noticed the Pittsburgh Agreement. A 1921 report by the U.S. Ambassador in Hungary on Hungarian propaganda efforts was seemingly the first acknowledgement of the agreement by an American diplomat.¹⁴⁴ The Slovak autonomists always had a cap on their possible success, given their inability to gain an audience of support in Washington beyond a few Congressmen. The Slovak nationalists tried to build such connections, but Washington would only acknowledge officials approved by Prague. For example, Bonsal recounted that the many letters from American Slovaks and the meetings with Hlinka had influenced him, as well as Edward House, but he said it was not enough to break their sentiment toward Prague. According to Bonsal, the American delegation decided that granting the small nations of Central Europe too much freedom would have led to disaster, and that they could only trust in Czech leadership as democratic allies to the West.¹⁴⁵

Ultimately, this process proved extremely frustrating to the Slovak-American autonomists. They never could break through the harsh reality that those deemed more respectable, such as Czech government officials, academics and journalists, would always have a

¹⁴⁴ “American Mission in Budapest to SoS, No. 1653,” 28 Oct 1921, F#: 860F.01/133, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹⁴⁵ Bonsal, *Suitors*, 156-166.

voice in the echelons of power over those representing a geopolitically weak and economically poor nation. The Slovaks thus had to submit to dependency on the Czechs in order to gain the most self-determination possible. Their lack of an independent influence allowed Masaryk to use them as necessary and then push them aside once he had achieved his goal of recognition of the new state and was ensconced in power. The Slovak-Americans nonetheless did have an impact on their direction of their homeland. They achieved their goal of separation from Hungary. They also had clear success in gaining the attention of Masaryk, having him covet their support, and getting him to sign the Pittsburgh Agreement, a document that had a major impact on the future politics of the state. When this influence dissipated shortly after the end of the war and Prague did not respect Slovak autonomy, they replanted their fight over the Slovak Question against the newly formed government in Prague and began to reestablish transatlantic political activism linking Slovak autonomists in America and Slovakia. Where the Slovaks in Slovakia mostly turned inward, to focus on working to achieve autonomy by forcing change from within, the Slovak-American autonomists would take on the international promotion of the Slovak-Question as their role. They remained idealistic in their goal and faithful that American democratic ideals would eventually lead to the full application of self-determination for their people.

That these American officials largely perceived a lack of political and social development as the most important concern regarding the Slovaks strongly suggests that the Wilsonian paradigm of national self-determination was primarily rooted in ideas of civic nationalism linked to modernization. The implicit discomfort with Slovak Catholicism among American officials and a very clear concern for the spread of Bolshevism in Slovakia, both linked to a perceived lack of modern development among the Slovaks, particularly affirm this case. On the other hand, ethnicity played no explicit role in the American view of the Slovak Question, for American

officials accepted the Slovaks as ethnically equivalent to the more favored Czechs. Moreover, American officials expressed clear and repeated opposition to ethnic nationalism when discussing Slovakia, seeing ethno-national avarice as the primary concern for the region, and pointedly tried to discourage its development. Therefore, blaming Wilson national self-determination for encouraging future nationalist violence seems largely misguided, for most American officials thought that their approach would minimize such sentiment.

Prague's intransigence on the matter likely did more harm than good. Centralization did not make the state any more secure and it created a controversy, the Slovak Question, from which Czech-Slovak relations never fully recovered. The Slovak appeals for autonomy were not radical. The Czechs could have maintained the state, could have still helped Slovak economic development, and would still have complete control over the Czech lands and in areas such as foreign policy. The experience also led many Slovak nationalists to believe they could not rely on the western powers, believing that the centralists had the West duped and unwilling to hear out alternative views. This sense of alienation would have clear consequences when the Slovak Question festered through the interwar period and pushed many Slovak autonomists to risk affiliation with a powerful nation who showed at least nominal interest in their views when Adolf Hitler targeted Czechoslovakia in 1938. Had the United States showed more understanding and interest in the Slovaks during World War I, and pressured Prague to accommodate Slovak desires and grant them more self-determination, it could have helped release at least one point of tension in the highly combustible post-war Central Europe.

Chapter 4

The United States and the Slovak Question during the Interwar Years

In the interwar period, from the 1920s to the Munich Agreement in September 1938, the direction of the Slovak Question established during founding of the Czechoslovak Republic consolidated. Slovaks autonomists on both sides of the Atlantic became entrenched in opposition to Prague, and the transatlantic debate over the Slovak Question expanded in volume. The Slovak autonomists continued to reference the spirit and goals of Wilsonianism to justify their claims for autonomy, coordinating across the Atlantic to pressure Prague to change its stance. Alternatively, Czech nationalists and their Slovak allies polarized the issue as either support for state unity through centralism or support for the destruction of the state through autonomy, in order to discredit the possibility of a common state with domestic autonomy for Slovakia as presented in the Pittsburgh Agreement. The centralists likewise continued to disparage Slovak capabilities for self-government, extended internationally with an image of the Slovak autonomists as a parochial fringe, ignorant of world affairs. The Slovak-American autonomists accepted the primary role of defending the Slovaks internationally, and they remained hopeful of the possibility of convincing American officials to embrace their view. This task nonetheless remained an uphill battle, given their inability to match the resources or direct connections to higher-level American officials maintained by Prague. This process ultimately led the Slovak autonomists to lose faith in the West, in spite of an idealized view of American democracy.

The Slovak Question in the Interwar Period

While conditions in Slovakia stabilized during the interwar period, the fervor of the Slovak Question did not. Some areas improved, such as religious tolerance. Likewise, while the

state school system continued to pressure Czechoslovakism, Slovak Catholics used their own schools to keep Slovak national aspirations alive. Economically, Slovakia faced the same difficulties as the rest of Central Europe and unity with the Czechs did little to alter this situation. The continued dominance of the Czechs in the Slovak civil service became a point of ire for many young, educated, and unemployed Slovaks. Politically, several Slovaks also took prominent positions in the central government, most notably Milan Hodža as prime minister in the 1930s, although contingent on accepting centralism. Prague allowed Slovak nationalists to organize and hold seats in Parliament, but it also continued strict press censorship of nationalist viewpoints and it also regularly pursued smear campaigns against Slovak nationalist leaders.

The Slovak People's Party remained the most popular party in Slovakia and mixed cooperation with opposition to push for Slovak autonomy. The Agrarian Party followed in popular support, and it gradually pushed for more autonomy, albeit in a more deliberate fashion than the SPP. The Slovak National Party, the Slovak Communists, and the Hungarian Parties joined them in support for autonomy.¹⁴⁶ The SPP joined the government in 1927, arranged by Hodža after promises for Slovak autonomy, but Hodža's plan proceeded in a watered-down fashion. The SPP participation lasted only two years before Prague attempted to diminish the SPP by accusing one of its leaders, Vojtech Tuka, of treason, leading to SPP withdrawal from the government. The SPP also supported the selection of Edvard Beneš to the presidency in 1935 after promises of support for Slovak autonomy. After the failure of this promise, the SPP took advantage of the events leading up to Munich to force Prague's hand.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Prague regularly promoted a myth that the majority of the Slovak people opposed autonomy, because the SPP only maintained 30-35% of the electorate in Slovakia. Although it is difficult to determine the true popular support of autonomy based strictly on the electoral support of each party, the support in Slovakia for Prague's version of centralism was probably well in the minority when one considers that the three largest parties—SPP, Agrarian, and CPS—all embraced some level of Slovak autonomy.

¹⁴⁷ For more on this period in Slovak history, see: Jelinek, *Lust*. Johnson, *Slovakia: Education*. James Ramon Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh: University of

The Slovak-Americans also consolidated their positions on the issue. The leaders of the Slovak League of America gave up on Prague and reconciled with those Catholics who had previously abandoned the organization. Hušek and Pankuch likewise formed an adjacent organization, called the Friends of Slovak Freedom (FSF), designed to unite Slovak Catholic and Lutheran nationalists with a singular goal of addressing the Slovak Question. The National Slovak Society and the Slovak Evangelical Union at first embraced the centralist Slovaks, but nationalist pressure ultimately led them to try to moderate between the centralist and autonomist positions. They ultimately embraced the gradualist position of Hodža. In response, the Czechoslovakists established the Slovak National Alliance to serve as the arm of Prague among the Slovak-Americans along with the Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol. Consisting mostly of secularists and some Lutherans, these organizations regularly attacked the SLA for its Catholic and autonomist leanings and promoted a strict unity of the Czechs and Slovaks.¹⁴⁸

The Slovak Question in Transatlantic Publishing and Propaganda

As the Slovak Question became entrenched in Czechoslovak politics, each competing side pursued a voluminous international lobbying campaign to build support in the West for its respective position. The Hungarians, for example, never abandoned their claims to Slovakia and led a campaign for revision of the Trianon Treaty. Their primary international Slovak supporter was Catholic priest Francis Jehlička and his organization, the Slovak Council, founded in 1933. Jehlička had attended the Paris Peace Conference with Hlinka, but decided afterwards that the

Pittsburgh Press, 1994). Felak, "Considerations," 136-162. Mikula, "Politics," 73-88. Rychlik, "Czech-Slovak," 13-26. R.J.W. Evans, "Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks: Some Mutual Perceptions," in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist*, 109-122. Kirschbaum, *History*, 155-184. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 78-106. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 48-86. Krajčovičová, "Slovakia in Czechoslovakia," in *Slovakia in History*, pp 137-156.

¹⁴⁸ Paučo, "Slovaks Abroad," 333-342. Adamec, "Slovak Catholic Federation," 223-232. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 85-87. Pankuch, *History*, 177-186. Stolarik, "Slovak League," 7-35. Alexander, *Ethnic*, 44-69.

Slovaks could not trust the Czechs. Jehlička remained abroad, where he lobbied for a Slovak reunion with Hungary based on Hungarian promises of Slovak autonomy. He attempted to build support from the Slovak-Americans, tried to expose Prague's mistreatment of the Slovaks, and appealed to Slovakia's historical and economic roots in Hungary.¹⁴⁹ Jehlička was able to express his voice abroad, receiving support from Budapest and later Nazi Germany, and he convinced a few figures in the West, most notably the British Lord Rothermere, who campaigned on behalf of Hungary internationally. Jehlička's arguments nevertheless carried little cache in other circles. R. W. Seton-Watson pursued a constant back and forth against Jehlička, and Slovaks and Czechs of different political views on both sides of the Atlantic also unified against Slovakia's return to Hungary. The Slovak autonomists and centralists, for example, collaborated in an open letter denouncing Jehlička. Slovak-Americans likewise continued to lobby against Hungarian claims, reminding about the old Magyarization policy and asserting a Slovak refusal to rejoin Hungary. The Hungarians, thus, remained on the periphery of the Slovak Question, and they gradually lost relevance outside of questions dealing with the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Anthony Pessenlehner, "Czechoslovakia's Right to Statehood Assailed," *Current History (CH)*, 14, 5 (Aug 1921), 845-848. Dr. F. Jehlička: *Kto on je a čo chce* (Cleveland: 1920). Francis Jehlička, *Reply to Mr. R.W. Seton-Watson's Book 'Slovakia Then and Now'* (Vienna, 1932). The Slovak Council, *The Unsolved Slovak Problem* (Vienna: Slovak Council, 1933). The Slovak Council, *Bolševizmus A Slovesná Otázka* (Geneva: Slovak Council, 1936), in: *B: Resolutions, Memoranda, Proclamations*, SI. The Slovak Council, *Should Great Britain go to War—for Czechoslovakia: An Appeal to British Common Sense for the Sake of World Peace* (London: Hazel, Watson, & Viney, 1937). Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom* (London: Slovak Council, 1938), 34-45. "The German Minister in Czechoslovakia (Eisenlohr) to the German Foreign Ministry (Doc 57)," *Documents on German Foreign Policy (DGFP)*, Series D, V2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 132-133.

¹⁵⁰ Pankuch claimed that the sole occasion when the Slovak-American autonomists, Czech-Americans, and Slovak-American centralists came together in common action was in protest against the Rothermere campaign, although a proposed resolution against it almost failed when the two sides sparred over whether the text should declare the Slovaks and Czechs as one nation. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Treaty Revision and the Hungarian Frontiers* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934). "Seton-Watson to Alois Kolisek" (Doc 132) in *Seton-Watson*, 393-396. "The Situation in Slovakia and the Magyar Minority" (Doc 139) in *Seton-Watson*, 409-425. "Seton-Watson to Martin Rázus" (Doc 155) in *Seton-Watson*, 454-455. "Fedor Ruppeldt to Seton-Watson" (Doc 160) in *Seton-Watson*, 465-469. L. C. Orbach, "Czechoslovakia's Place in the Sun," *CH*, 14, 6 (Sept 1921), 944-945. Anonymous, "Another Defense of Czechoslovakia" *CH*, 14, 6 (Sept 1921), 945-946. Adam Poliak, "Czechoslovakia's Right to Statehood," *CH*, 15, 3 (Dec 1921), 499. "Slovakia's Protest" (Doc 156) in *Seton-Watson*, 456-459. "Rezolúcie Vznesené Ustredným Výborom Slovenskej Ligy v Amerike na schôdzi, vzdržiaanej 10 Novembra 1920," *PF: Bielek*, SI. Association of Slovak Newspapermen of America, *Count Albert Apponyi or Revival of Magyar Propaganda in*

The unified opposition against the Hungarians did not stop the fierce conflict between the centralists and autonomists in Czechoslovakia. The Czech nationalist and the Slovak centralists made the Slovak Question a primary component of their international propaganda, and they continued to perpetuate negative stereotypes of the Slovaks to promote the Czechoslovak vision. The official press in Prague released ample publications by Czech nationalist leaders in the English language on the topic. President Thomas Masaryk, for example, made clear his disappointment with the “political immaturity” of the Slovak autonomist movement. Masaryk, who continued to highlight his own Slovak heritage, likewise claimed to have proven his great love for Slovakia by having liberated it from Hungary and he asserted that Slovak nationalists could prove their own love by embracing Prague’s authority. Edvard Beneš, who served as Foreign Minister until succeeding Masaryk in the presidency in 1935, argued that the Czechs and Slovaks remained unified, except for a “fringe minority” working for a return to the pre-war order, and the “dictates of local, provincial, factional and individualist interests.”¹⁵¹ Czech scholars, journalists and officials also contributed to this campaign, mostly through studies of the Czechs that glossed over the Slovaks except to praise how the Czechs had liberated them.¹⁵² For

America (Scranton, Pa.: Bosak Press, 1923), in: *B: Resolutions*, SI. American Citizens of Slovak Origin, *The Refutation to the Arguments of the Hungarian Kossuth Delegation* (1928), in: *The Podkrivacky, Adam Papers*, B: 17, Slovak American Collection, IHRC. Pankuch, *History*, 186-190. “What the Magyars Forget,” *The National Slovak Society (NSS) of the U.S.A. Records*, B:168, F: Slovak League of America (SLA), IHRC. “The Cleveland District Assembly of the SLA to Hoover,” 4 December 1929, F#: 860F.00/306, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹⁵¹ Masaryk, *Making*, 21, 41, 208-211, 338, 361. The Czechoslovak Minister to the United States, Zdeněk Fierlinger, sent a copy of Masaryk’s memoirs to President Calvin Coolidge upon its release. “White House to Frank B. Kellogg, 3 Feb 1928,” *Coolidge Papers*, Series 1, 742. Thomas G. Masaryk, *Masaryk on Thought and Life: Conversations with Karel Čapek*, Reprint ed., trans. M. & R. Weatherall (New York: Arno Press, 1971). “T.G. Masaryk on the Pittsburgh Agreement” (Doc 30) in *Slovakia: Political*, 209-210. Eduard Beneš, *My War Memoirs*, trans. Paul Selver (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), 348, 448, 469, 472-481. Edvard Beneš, *Christmas Message* (Prague: Orbis, 1937), 17. Edvard Beneš, “Of Czechoslovak Unity” in *We Were and We Shall Be: The Czechoslovak Spirit through the Centuries*, eds. Zdenka & Jan Munzer (New York: Ungar, 1941), 164-166.

¹⁵² Kamil Krofta & Jiri Hoetzel, *A Short History of Czechoslovakia* (New York: Robert McBride & Co, 1934), 137-138, 142, 149-152. Kamil Krofta, “Czechs and Slovaks (I)” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 13, 38 (January 1935), 363-371. Kamil Krofta, “Czechs and Slovaks (II)” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 13, 39 (April 1935), 611-626. Josef Borovička, *Ten Years of Czechoslovak Politics* (Prague: Orbis, 1929), 7-8, 13-13, 20-21, 44, 111-112, 119-120, 124-126. Emanuel Čapek, “The Background of Political Parties in Czechoslovakia” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 10, 28 (June 1931), 90-104. Aleš Broz, “Minority Rights in the

example, Czech historian Albert Pražák praised the Czech role in uplifting the Slovaks, and condemned Hlinka and the SPP as tools of Hungary and as part of a Catholic conspiracy to take over Central Europe. Pražák then dismissed the Pittsburgh Agreement as “merely a flight of fancy,” rooted in “immaturity of political judgment and lack of understanding.” Czech journalist Aleš Broz likewise condemned the Slovaks as yet “retarded in their development” versus the “well educated, practical, realistic” Czechs, and praised the direction of the Slovakia under the Czechs for allowing the two peoples to become “one stock, one culture, one nation.”¹⁵³

Centralist Slovaks also contributed to this campaign, including articles by Interior Minister Juraj Slávik and Minister to France Štefan Osuský on the nationality questions in Czechoslovakia, as well as one by Education Minister Anton Štefánek praising Prague’s development of Slovak education. Slovak Social Democrat, and rigid Czechoslovakist, Ivan Dérer’s short book on the Pittsburgh Agreement provided the most thorough effort in English to discredit the Slovak autonomists. Dérer gave the usual claims about a majority of Slovaks embracing the state as constructed, and the claimed “pro-Magyar” sentiment of the Slovak autonomists. He likewise dismissed the Slovak-American signers of the Pittsburgh Agreement as not “true” Slovak nationals, because they lived in America. Dérer argued that the document had meant simply local administrative autonomy, which he claimed Prague had granted. He then poured credit onto the Czechs as the Slovak’s saviors and condemned Slovak autonomy:

We shall therefore never be able to do without the Czech sense of independence, of constitutional rights, and of positive, practical work...In return for their having helped Slovakia when things were at their worst, in return for their having saved our liberty and

Czechoslovak State,” *Foreign Affairs*, 6, 1 (October 1927), 158-160. Ales Broz, “President Masaryk, Creator of the Czechoslovak Republic,” *CH*, 24, 1 (April 1926), 48-53.

¹⁵³ Prague appointed Pražák, a Czech, to serve at Comenius University in Bratislava as its primary historian of the Slovaks. The *Slavic Review* labeled Pražák the “foremost living authority on Slovak History.” Albert Pražák, “Review: The New Slovakia by R. W. Seton-Watson” *The Slavonic Review*, 3, 9 (March 1925), 713-720. Ales Broz, “Czech and Slovak at Odds: Both Sides of the Controversy – From the Czech Standpoint,” *CH*, 22, 5 (Aug 1925), 784-788.

an independent state apparatus, railway and postal communications, and a Slovak system of education at the time when the Slovaks themselves were weak, unprepared, often distrustful and inclined rather to continue to live under their thousand-year yoke than to live in freedom, in return for having shed their blood for our country on the battlefronts in the Great War, and in the fights against Bolshevik Hungary in 1919 and thus saving Slovakia from a new occupation by the Magyars—in return for all this are we to remove the Czechs from Slovakia?”¹⁵⁴

Prague also continued to build support from American and English academics and journalists in perpetuating Czechoslovakism. Seton-Watson, who maintained his notoriety as the preeminent English language scholar of the Czechs and Slovaks, remained a staunch supporter of the idea, boasting how he regularly discredited “cantankerous Slovaks who accused Masaryk and his friends of ‘Czechisation.’” For example, he publically condemned Hlinka and the SPP and repudiated their criticisms of Prague. Seton-Watson also actively denied Slovak agency in Slovak national development. “The Slovaks should therefore be thankful that fate has made them dependent upon a race so efficient, so well-educated and well-disciplined as the Czechs....At the critical moment, the Slovaks made the impression of a helpless animal fascinated by the approach of the boa-constrictor, and Prague was literally the sole hope.” On the Slovak Question, Seton-Watson blamed the “hypersensitive” Slovaks as simply being too parochial, religiously backward and ill developed, and he dismissed autonomist arguments as the “wild talk of extremists.” Even in a work of collected essays designed to “show that the Slovaks themselves have had a much greater share in the reconstruction of their country than is often supposed,” Seton-Watson turned predominantly to centralist Slovaks whose contributions consisted mostly

¹⁵⁴ Juraj Slávik, “The Nationality Question in Slovakia,” *Central European Observer*, 11, 26 (Dec 18, 1933), 463-465. Stefan Osuský, “Why Czechoslovakia?” *Foreign Affairs*, 15, 3 (April 1937), 455-471. Anton Štefánek, “Education in Slovakia,” *The Slavonic Review*, 2, 5 (Dec., 1923), 308-327. Ivan Dérer, *The Unity of the Czechs and Slovaks: Has the Pittsburgh Declaration Been Carried Out?* (Prague: Orbis, 1938).

of self-promotion and praise for the merits of centralism.¹⁵⁵ The philanthropist and writer Kenneth Miller was another avid promoter of Czechoslovakism. “Everything points to the wisdom of a cultural as well as political union between the two nationalities. No matter what the cultural development may be, neither nationality can well maintain its political independence without the other.” He likewise felt that the Slovak Question would disappear with the development of the “slow, passive Slovak,” who yet lacked initiative, and who was prone to immorality and drunkenness, and to “religious vagary or fanaticism.” Other presentations ranged from scholar John Crane, who attacked the “backward ignorance” of the Slovaks for resisting secularization, to YMCA secretary Fred Rindge who criticized a claimed lack of Slovak interest in the arts. Writer C.J.C. Street claimed, “The Slovak dream was always to regain their lost unity with the Czechs and as a united nation to secure the tolerable conditions of existence.”¹⁵⁶

The Slovak autonomists in Slovakia pursued a few efforts during the interwar period to counter this campaign, although they lacked equivalent resources and connections to those held by Prague. The SPP’s most notable effort was the Žilina Memorandum of 1922. Released to the western press and governments, the document asserted its purpose to expose the Slovak Question to the world, beginning with its sensationalist title, “a country doomed to death, a nation in her last agonies implores the civilized world for help.” It decried the failures of Wilsoniaism, which had allowed Prague to “bamboozle” the Slovaks “out of the freedom promised to them.” The text

¹⁵⁵ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 61. “Seton-Watson Open Letter to Hlinka” (Doc 108), in *Seton-Watson*, 343-344. R.W. Seton-Watson, *The New Slovakia* (Prague: Fr. Borovy, 1924), 3, 23-24. “Seton-Watson to Alois Kolisek” (Doc 135), in *Seton-Watson*, 401-402. R.W. Seton-Watson, ed. *Slovakia Then and Now: A Political Survey* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931). When planning the book, Seton-Watson expressed his desire to have an article from a SPP leader, so that Slovak autonomist could not accuse him of one-sidedness. He considered and article on the issue of autonomy, but decided only to allow an article on Slovak religion by Hlinka. “Seton-Watson to Milan Hodža” (Docs 144 & 145), in *Seton-Watson*, 431-432.

¹⁵⁶ Miller was seen as one of the most authoritative writer on the Czechs and Slovaks in America. Kenneth D. Miller, *The Czecho-Slovaks in America* (New York: Doran Company, 1922). John O. Crane, “Church and State in Czechoslovakia” *The Slavonic Review*, 6, 17 (Dec., 1927), 364-378. Fred H. Rindge, Jr. “The Charm of Czechoslovakia” *CH*, 22, 3 (June 1925), 447-450. Robert Machray, “Czechoslovakia a Pioneer in Central European Politics” *CH*, 25, 6 (Mar 1927), 839-843. J. H. Wallis, “The Upbuilding of Czechoslovakia,” *CH*, 14, 5 (Aug 1921), 835-845. C. J. C. Street, *Slovakia Past and Present* (Westminster, UK: P.S. King & Son, 1928).

then went on to explain their issues with the Czechs, discussing every concern from the treatment of religion, the military occupation, the denial of autonomy, to economic exploitation. The memorandum also condemned Czechoslovakism as simply a tool for domination.

The Czechs and Slovaks have been always forming two separate little worlds with a very different character due to their different geographical and economic conditions, their different way of thinking, of feeling and of mind. We have a different view of life, other morals and other traditions; we have a different social structure, different legal rules and different ideas about political economy and culture.

The document ultimately claimed the world could still save the Slovaks if they acted quickly.

The key of the iron cage in which the Slovak Nation is being mercilessly incarcerated lays in the hands of the Great Powers. This memorial is our last expedient and our last weapon... Though only clad in the rags of our torn freedom we nevertheless appear as accusers before the world, charging the rulers of Prague who are still deluding the powers, and the powers themselves for having out of sheer ignorance become their accomplices.

To ignore the Slovak case, thus, would be to support the trampling of liberty.¹⁵⁷

After the Žilina memorandum bore no fruit, the Slovak autonomists pursued fewer efforts to court the west. They made a few sporadic attempts, such as a translation of the SPP program in 1930, written by Jozef Tiso, which outlined the SPPs vision of a Slovak national Christian democracy, and appealed for autonomy as a protection of the Slovak cultural tradition. It argued that the Slovak nation's religious roots encouraged it toward a peaceful self-preservation, unlike other nations that turned toward national chauvinism. Slovak priest and publicist Anton Kompánek also produced an article that emphasized Slovak Christianity as a symbol of Slovak worthiness for self-government. Kompánek believed Slovakia served as an example of how the

¹⁵⁷ “Žilina Memorandum” (Doc 102) & “Covering Letter for the Žilina Memorandum” (Doc 103), in *Seton-Watson*, pp 319-333.

Church and state could find balance in the modern world.¹⁵⁸ These publications, however, remained exceptions, as the Slovak autonomists in Slovakia maintained little faith in western governments, recognizing Prague's stranglehold over their image internationally. They instead relied on the Slovak-Americans to lead the way in their defense internationally.

Nevertheless, a few non-Slovak publications did favor Slovak autonomy. For example, a few historians of the First World War, such as Jan Opočensky and C. A. Macartney, attempted a balanced consideration of the Slovak Question, giving voice to Slovak nationalist concerns. There were also several publications that exemplified the Slovak Question to criticize the broader Versailles system. Writer and journalist E Alexander Powell, for example, highlighted the myriad differences between the Czechs and Slovaks as an example of the precariousness of the region's political stability. Although not particularly admiring of the Slovaks, Powell was highly critical of the Czech treatment of them. He commented, "The Czechs, an energetic, ambitious, progressive, and aggressive people, who outnumber the Slovaks three to one, look with condescension, if not contempt, on their less literate, slower thinking, more easy going partners, whom, if the truth be known, they regard as immensely inferior to themselves." These scholars all argued that the Czechs needed to treat their minorities with more respect and make good on promises for Slovak autonomy for the sake of the survival of the state.¹⁵⁹ A few works were even somewhat favorable to the Slovaks. One such example came from writer Kenneth L. Roberts, who after visiting Czechoslovakia berated, "The Czechs want to socialize everything in sight,

¹⁵⁸ Jozef Tiso, *The Ideology of the Slovak Populist Party* (Prague: 1930). Anton Kompánek, "The Catholic Church in Slovakia" *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 12, 36 (April 1934), 611-621.

¹⁵⁹ E. Alexander Powell, *The Danger on the Danube* (New York: Century Company, 1928), 56-58, 62-68, 72-74. M. W. Fodor, *South of Hitler* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939). Jan Opočensky, *The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Rise of the Czechoslovak State* (Prague: Orbis, 1928), 153-168, 193-214. C. A. MacCartney, *National States and National Minorities* (London: Oxford University, 1934), 117, 201, 208. C. A. MacCartney, *Hungary and her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences, 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University, 1937/1965), 73-148. Frank H. Simonds, *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* (New York: Harper, 1931), 92-101. Isaiah Bowman, *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*, 4th Ed (Yonkers, NY: World Book, 1928). Harold Temperley, "How the Hungarian Frontiers were Drawn" *Foreign Affairs*, 6, 3 (April 1928), 432-447.

and the Slovaks are not poignantly eager to be socialized.” Comparing the Czechs in Slovakia to U.S. Civil War carpetbaggers, he exposed the Czech occupation in Slovakia, their denial of autonomy, and called out Czechoslovakism as a lie. He alternatively praised the Slovaks as “among the most attractive and lovable peasant people of the many I have seen.”¹⁶⁰ An article by journalist Robert Sage, after a visit to Slovakia, likewise chided the Czechs for using claims of generosity as a mirage for domination over Slovakia.¹⁶¹

The Slovak-Americans and International Lobbying on the Slovak Question

Slovak nationalist politician Karol Sidor claimed that despite a continued interest in the homeland, the Slovak-Americans began to lose their “onetime vitality and ardor” during the interwar period. He linked this outcome to greater assimilation and a depleting knowledge of the Slovak language. This claim is somewhat true. The energy of the war years certainly diminished, particularly in the 1930s with the onset of the Great Depression. June Alexander also shows how assimilation became an internal issue for Slovak-Americans, as the older generations battled to assure that their American born progenies maintained links to their ethnic heritage. Sidor, however, understated how much the Slovak-Americans remained at the forefront of the

¹⁶⁰ Robert’s writings are a comedic read. For example, he compared Czechoslovakia to an old sneaker made a canine chew toy to explain its shape on the map, an analogy he found doubly appropriate to explain its cluster of nationalities. He likewise added, “The Czechs are amateurs in some lines of endeavor, but they are highly gifted in the art of rubbing everybody the wrong way.” He was generally very skeptical of the future of Central Europe, declaring, “It is not the custom of Central European nations to turn the other cheek or love their neighbors as themselves or anything like that. Any nation that turns the other cheek in Central Europe is almost sure to have its ear torn off, its eye blackened, and its gold-plated collar button and its moss-agate cuff links purloined before it can say Jack Robinson, or even refer warningly to that august assemblage, the Peace Conference.” His later work on European immigration, alternatively, reads almost like a parody of ethnic stereotypes.

¹⁶¹ Kenneth L. Roberts, *Europe’s Morning After* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1921), 121-173. Kenneth L. Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1922), 28-31. Robert Sage, “There’s no such Nationality as Czecho-Slovak,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan 2, 1930, 6. Felix John Vondracek, *The Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia 1918-1935* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 377-379. Perhaps unsurprisingly, academic works in German were much more likely to sympathize with the autonomists on the Slovak Question. For examples, see: Alexander Szana, *Die Geschichte der Slowakei* (Bratislava: Grenzenbote Verlag, 1930). Robert Nowak, *Der Künstliche Staat: Ostprobleme der Tschecho-Slowakei* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1938).

international efforts to gain recognition of the Slovak Question. Historian Jozef Paučo's interpretation is much more accurate: "For twenty years the Slovak League of America defended the spirit and letter of the Pittsburgh Pact and by using the freedom of the press and the freedom of assembly on American soil, they did so more freely and energetically than the two political parties in their homeland."¹⁶² Based on the volume of publications and direct communications with government officials on both side of the Atlantic, it is clear that the Slovak Question continued to dominate the transatlantic interests of the Slovak Americans, as they bolstered their compatriot's activities within Czechoslovakia by applying pressure on Prague externally.

The Slovak fraternal organizations made constant efforts to unify the Slovaks in America and to keep them linked to their Slovak cultural identity, but also to raise money to help Slovak social advancement and to aid in the fight for autonomy in the homeland. They pursued these efforts through education programs such as national lecture, art and photography tours, but also symbolic actions such as the building of an honorary statue of Štefánik in Cleveland in 1924 and the planting of a Lipa Tree on Capitol Hill in honor of Štefánik in 1934. Slovak-American leaders were particularly concerned about Slovak-American youth losing interest in the homeland and developed many programs to encourage an embrace of Slovak heritage, including 'Slovak days,' ethnically organized sporting events, and efforts to publish more in English.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Sidor, "Slovak League," 59-62. Alexander, *Ethnic*, 93-191. Paučo, "Slovaks Abroad," 333-342.

¹⁶³ Peter Hletko, who became SLA President in the late 1930s, remained particularly focused on this issue, writing many articles calling for young Slovak-Americans not to lose their ethnic heritage. He emphasized how it offered a sense of community and leadership opportunities. For examples, see: "For Slovak Students and Recent Graduates," "Interest our Young Members," & "Assimilation of Slovaks," *PF: Peter Hletko*, SI. The SLA also released many books in English geared toward third and higher generation Slovaks in America, such as a Question and Answer Children's book on the Slovaks. See: A. A. Novajovsky, *Our Slovak Ancestors and their Country* (Yonkers, NY: Vendel Galik & Co, 1931), found in: *B: Slovak League of America*, SI. For more, see: Alexander, *Ethnic Pride*, 93-191. For examples of donations sent for cultural and political activities, see: "Ot. Švec to Podkriavcy, 3 Oct 1938," *PF: Adam Podkriavcy*, SI. "SLA to Jakub Vitostak, 30 Nov 1923," *The First Catholic Slovak Union of America (FCSU) Records*, F:1303, IHRC. "Jan Kocur to Michael Senko, 30 Nov 1926," *FCSU*, F: 1304, IHRC. O. D. Koreff, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: A Short Biography* (Cleveland: Slovak League of America, 1924), 82-83. "SLA to Arthur Colegrove," *NSS*, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC.

The Slovak question remained high on the list of Slovak-American concerns, and the various Slovak organizations produced a flurry of pamphlets and informative documents on the issue. The Pittsburgh Agreement remained at the center of this debate, with Slovak nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic continuing to affirm its legality against the centralist dismissals that it was simply a non-binding text designed to placate the Slovak-Americans during the war. Some of this material came from Slovaks supportive of Prague and its policies. The Slovak-American autonomists, however, produced the vast majority. Their publications looked to inform about the Slovaks, to expose the failed promises of Prague on autonomy, and to defend against the accusations of Prague centralists. The Slovak League remained at the forefront, hoping that exposure of the situation to the American press and public would spur sympathy and support. The League also continued attempts to influence Washington, including the forming of a political advisory committee for influencing politicians toward favorable policies.¹⁶⁴

In many cases, the Slovak-Americans directed these publications at Prague, with the hope of convincing a change in policy. They, nevertheless, would consecutively produce English versions, which they then sent to the American President, members of Congress, the Department of State, and assorted press outlets. For example, in 1921 the SLA wrote to Masaryk calling for the immediate implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement. When Prague did not respond, the League followed up this letter with a more detailed memorandum on November 9, 1922. This document called on Prague to make good on the Pittsburgh Agreement in the name of natural rights and to reward the sacrifices made by Slovak-Americans during the revolution. It highlighted Masaryk's role in the formation of the agreement, and then provided a photograph of the original text as well as a series of letters between the SLA and various Czechoslovak officials

¹⁶⁴ "Telegram to Ivan Bielek on 29 Nov 1934," *NSS*, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. Officially non-partisan, the SLA considered splitting their political committee into Democratic and Republican Party branches in order to maximize influence on each party. "Peter Hletko to John Willo, 2 Sep 1936," *NSS*, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC.

that had promised its implementation to show how promises made to the Slovak-Americans never lived up to reality. The text then defended the legitimacy of Slovak autonomy.

We are convinced that the honest and upright materialization of the Pittsburgh Pact in no way will harm the unity of the State; on the contrary it will mean a considerable reinforcement within and without and make possible united co-operation of all patriotic forces against the elements of disintegration, depriving them of a dangerous weapon, which they cannot effectively employ against the Republic, fanning discontent, mistrust and spreading hatred between both nations comprising the state.

The League made clear, however, that this good will rested “solely upon a sincere Czecho-Slovak reciprocity.” It then gave an alternative:

We feel it is our duty to emphasize that if our sincere and friendly attempt, which has at its heart the welfare, interest and future of the Republic, should fail to meet with success, the Slovak League of America would not be able to prevent the American Slovaks and their factors from turning to the Court of Public Opinion of the civilized world.

While the Slovak autonomists acknowledged the letter, Prague again neglected a response. The SLA then passed a follow up resolution. Asserting that it “fights with fire and sword with everyone who is in favor of autonomy of the Slovak nation,” it admonished Prague as manipulating the world into believing the Czechoslovakist image and for leading a smear campaign to destroy the SLA. It then provided a list of examples of hostility, including efforts to undermine its finances, blackmail, the bullying of Slovak-American leaders and press, and attempts to send government officials to propagandize against them. It once again emphasized how the League had made every effort to resolve the Slovak Question within the confines of the Czechoslovak Republic, but it would soon submit the issue “to the judgment of public opinion of the civilized world,” if Prague continued to treat them with disdain.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ “Aby už raz bolo jasno a aby prestaly rôzne narknutia proti Slov Líge,” PF: Bielek, SI. SLA, *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburgskej Dohody do ústavy Č.-S. Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922).

Many more publications followed. The Friends of Slovak Freedom, for example, released two protests in 1923. These texts defended the validity of the Slovak-Americans as representatives of the Slovak people, and condemned Prague's actions against Slovaks autonomists, including such accusations as "false signatures or resolutions, false numbers of people attending their lectures, insulting the Slovak journalists, insulting the Slovak League as anti-state, and many other lies," as well as criticisms about press censorship in Slovakia. After reading Masaryk's criticism of Hlinka, the Slovak League then produced a pamphlet that challenged the idea that Masaryk personally had liberated the Slovaks, and Prague's claims on the illegitimacy of the Pittsburgh Agreement. It reminded readers of the Slovak-American war contribution, and then remarked how the SLA and the Pittsburgh Agreement were certainly valid in Masaryk's eyes when he needed Slovak-American support in 1918. The document then included a text from former Czechoslovak ambassador Karol Pergler arguing that both the Slovaks and Czechs had unequivocally recognized the Pittsburgh Agreement as valid upon its signing, as well as a note from an American lawyer asserting its validity as a legal agreement.¹⁶⁶

The SLA ultimately made good on its threat to take the issue to the world stage, presenting the Slovak Question to the League of Nations in 1932. It produced a long legal brief, which appealed for a cessation of wrongdoing against the Slovaks and the granting of political and cultural autonomy. It then begged the League of Nations to recognize the Slovaks as an independent nation, to demand the implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement, to conduct an

Both the full Slovak and English versions of this Document are available at: *SLA Cab, F: Memorandum 1922 v Zaume Pitts. Dohoda*, SI. "Memorandum Slovenskej Ligy v Amerike" in *Dokumenty*, Vol 2, 138-144. "An Appeal of the Slovak League of America to All Political Factors of the Czecho-Slovak Republic," *PF: Bielek*, SI.

¹⁶⁶ Friends of Slovak Freedom, "Resolution, November 28, 1923," & "Protest against Censorship and Confiscation of Slovak Publications by the Government in Slovakia" in Pankuch, *Slovaks of Cleveland*, 182-186. Slovenská Līga v Amerike, *V Záujme Pravdy! (In the Interest of Truth!)* (Pittsburgh: P. Jamriška, 1930). Found in: *SLA Cabinet, F: SLA Presidents*, SI. Prague actually responded to these letters, but it simply reasserted the usual rebuttals, claiming that 75% of the Slovaks support centralization and that the Pittsburgh Agreement was simply an American document. "Ohlas Amerického Memoranda u Nás," *B: SLA*, SI.

investigation of ill treatment, and to grant recognition of the Slovaks as a true minority in Czechoslovakia. It pointed out how the Slovak-Americans had made multiple attempts to reach out to Prague to explain their concerns and offer an olive branch toward a solution, but that Prague had ignored their appeals and through censorship had silenced their brothers in Slovakia. The document then went on to argue in detail the history of the founding of the state and the Pittsburgh Agreement, their complaints of ill-treatment against the Slovaks, and their view as to why the Slovaks were an independent people. This appeal was ultimately unsuccessful.¹⁶⁷

Next to these direct appeals, the Slovak-American autonomists also released many publications geared directly toward an American audience. They designed these works to inform about the Slovaks, expose their continued fight for self-determination and to link the Slovak Question to American democratic values. These publications included several biographies of Milan R. Štefánik, a translated history by Slovak historian Joseph Škultety that directly challenged the images of Slovak backwardness and other stereotypes, and a short pamphlet on Czechoslovakism by Slovak-American historian Oľga Hušek warning that the concept meant for the Slovaks “the rejection of their cultural past and the stunting of their future growth.” They also attempted to rally America to their cause by showing their valiance in the face of domination. An SLA article distributed to the American Press, for example, praised how the Slovak-Americans continued to fight even with “the entire machinery of government set against them, calumnies upon calumnies by a government subsidized press, heaped upon the heads of those who take up their cause, and bugbears turned loose to scare those who are not acquainted with conditions.” Slovak American writer John C. Sciranka likewise published a book as head of the Slovak Committee of the Foreign Language Information Service to show how the Slovaks

¹⁶⁷ “To the Supreme Council of the League of Nations at Geneva,” *SLA Cabinet, F: Supreme Council of the League of Nations at Geneva, 1932*, SI.

had embraced Americanism and remained extremely loyal to their adopted home country, where “many of the rights denied in their native country have been theirs unquestioned.” Religion became a major component of Slovak-American advocacy on the Slovak question in interwar period. Slovak-American journalist Stephen J. Palickar published many articles in general Catholic publications, including a five-month long tit-for-tat with Czech diplomat Josef Hanč in defense of Slovak religiosity. He also provided some of the first Slovak-American attempts to link Slovak religiosity to anti-Communism. Palickar likewise attempted to counter pro-Czechoslovak images in the general press, defended Slovak agency, and appealed for a lifting of Prague centralism to give the Slovaks an opportunity to prove their worth in self-government.¹⁶⁸

While most of these publications were shorter, more direct works, the Slovak-Americans released a couple of longer exposes on the Slovak Question. The first, written by Peter Hletko on behalf of the SCF, looked to inform the American people about the Pittsburgh Agreement as an American product in line with “the principles of democracy and self-determination of small nations.” Hletko praised how the Slovak “has an inherent love for liberty and freedom, and enjoys fostering his national spirit,” which had spurred his immigration to the America in a “quest for a land of true liberty,” and he argued that American democracy had allowed the Slovaks in America to assert their national identity as an independent people. He asserted how

¹⁶⁸ Koreff, *Štefánik*. Andrew Slabey, *General Milan R. Stefanik* (Leisenring, PA: Griglak Printery, 1937). Joseph Škultety, *Sketches from Slovak History*, O.D. Koreff, trans. (Middletown, PA: First Catholic Slovak Union, 1930). Slovak Committee, Foreign Language Information Service, *Slovaks under the Stars and Stripes* (New York: Foreign Language Information Service, 1930). “The conflict between Czechs and Slovaks,” *NSS Records*, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. Ol’ga Hušek, *The Czechoslovak Fallacy* (Middletown, PA: Jednota, 1935). “The Slovaks—Past and Present,” in Stephen J. Palickar, *Slovakia: From Hungarian Despotism to Atheistic Czech Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Hampshire Press, 1948), 40-43. Stephen J. Palickar, “Czech and Slovak at Odds: Both Sides of the Controversy – From the Slovak Standpoint,” *CH*, 22, 5 (Aug 1925), 784-786. “A Dark Spot in Czecho-Slovakia,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 43-45. (Originally in the July 1923 *American Catholic Quarterly Review*). “Who is Masaryk?,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 49-51. (Orig: 9 June 1926 *Commonweal*). “Slovakia—whither bound,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 76-83. “Slovak Catholicism vs. Czech Communism,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 84-86. “Slovak Grievance,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 70-72. “President Masaryk and his State,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 61-62. “Scotus Viator Surveys Slovakia,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 72-75. Stephen J. Palickar, *Slovakia of Today (A Lecture)*, December 12, 1933, Columbia University (New York: Slovak Library Association, 1933).

the Slovaks had only joined the Czechoslovak movement on the premise that they would be treated fairly and as equals and highlighted the regular sense of duplicity and condescension the Slovaks felt from the Czechs. Hlekto praised the Pittsburgh Agreement as having resolved these conflicts, before Masaryk ultimately betrayed his promise, and he gave a detailed defense of its validity and of the right of the Slovak-Americans to speak for their nation during the war.¹⁶⁹

The Slovak-American autonomists shortly thereafter produced an even longer book on the topic. Accredited to an anonymous “Autonomist,” it served as the most exhaustive consideration of the Slovak Question in English in the early 20th century. The author placed blame on Czech intransigence for fueling the issue unnecessarily. The book argued that the Czechoslovak revolution relied on American money and manpower and “should the President have failed to dispel the fear and dissatisfaction of the Slovaks through the Moscow and Pittsburgh Agreements, there certainly would not be a Czecho-Slovakia today.” The book then deconstructed Prague’s policies toward the Slovaks, in order to show Czechoslovakism as a means of hegemony. Its author considered every issue from the Czech obfuscation on autonomy, the complicity of the Slovak centralists, the language issue, schools, and the economy, and he explained the claims of Slovak neediness and incompetence, as well as the claimed threat of Hungary, as only a façade to justify Czech dominance. The author then argued that Slovak economic decline came because of Prague’s policies, giving examples such as over-taxation, protectionist trade policies to deindustrialization, arguing that these policies were a deliberate attempt to make the Slovaks economically dependent. He likewise gave examples of Slovak intellectuals to dispute the claim that the Slovaks needed the Czechs to serve that role. He then gave ample detail on the domination of Slovakia’s administration, civil service, education

¹⁶⁹ Slovak Catholic Federation of America, *The Slovaks and the Pittsburgh Pact* (Slovak Catholic Federation of America, 1934). Joseph C. Krajsa, “Dr. Peter Hlekto, Most Elites of American Slovaks,” *Slovakia*, 22, 45 (1972), 57-59.

system, and cultural institutions by Slovak centralists and Czechs, and the press censorship and smear campaigns. Ultimately, he concluded that Czechoslovakism was undermining the state and must be reversed. Although rooted in conflict, all of these presentations nonetheless expressed support for the state, decried secession, and pushed the recognition of the Pittsburgh Agreement as the means of reconciliation. As the ‘autonomist’ described, “The motive that has promoted us to write this work is not one of revenge, nor a desire to arouse bad feeling, but simply to expose falsehood and reveal truth. It is our sincere hope that, the truth being known, it will enable the Czechs and Slovaks to form a more stable union which will promote justice, trust, and good will, and thereby insure national integrity both at home and abroad.”¹⁷⁰

Transatlantic interaction on the Slovak Question

This flurry of publishing was very much a product of the widespread transatlantic interaction between Slovakia and the United States, as Slovak leaders on both sides of the Atlantic travelled between Europe and North America as they attempted to coordinate common political action. In the early 1920s, Prague still had hope of guiding the Slovak-Americans to the centralist cause, despite the sentiment building against it. One major effort was the creation of a Slovak League in Slovakia by centralist Slovaks, designed to serve as a counterpart to the SLA and to build common action. This effort failed, however, after the SPP accused it of copying the name in order to dupe people into regarding it with high merit and, in the growing frustration with Prague, the Slovak League of America refused to participate with it.¹⁷¹ With autonomist sentiment among the American Slovaks sharpening, Prague sent Slovak centralist leader Vavro

¹⁷⁰ An Autonomist, *Slovakia's Plea for Autonomy* (Middletown, Pa: Slovak Literary Society, 1935).

¹⁷¹ Ignác Gessay, *Krátko Dejiny Slovenskej Ligy Na Slovensku: od Založenia po 1. Okt. 1926* (Bratislava: Slovenska Liga na Slovensku, 1926). “Nová ohlávka—starý kôň. Pozor na Slovenskú ligu!” 27 Oct 1924, Bratislava (No 68), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 196-197.

Šrobár to the United States in 1923. While Šrobár attempted to unify the Slovak-Americans behind centralism, his visit had the opposite effect of galvanizing the Slovak-American autonomists. Šrobár received support from sympathetic groups such as the Slovak Sokol, but the SLA and other autonomist organizations boycotted his speeches. Prague sent other figures to agitate for centralism, including Jozef Rudinský, who had turned against the autonomists, and agrarian politician Fedor Ruppeldt. Seton-Watson also reached out to the Slovak-Americans in several letters and later in a visit in 1935, during which he appealed to the Slovak-Americans to encourage the Slovaks in Slovakia against autonomy.

The efforts by centralists did not change the status quo, as the Slovak-American autonomists remained firm in their opinions and openly repudiated centralist arguments. Pankuch, for example, felt that the only result of Šrobár's visit was to destroy Czech-Slovak unity and the internal unity of the Slovak-Americans. Ruppelt in turn complained how even among the Slovak Lutherans he constantly had to fight against autonomist sentiment. With the dividing lines firmly set, the Slovak-American centralists and autonomists quit mutual involvement in each other's organizations and the centralists began a continuous propaganda campaign against the SLA backed by Prague. For example, after Slovak-American autonomists confronted him, Šrobár reportedly lashed out at them as "know-nothing drunkards" and traitors against the Republic. While the Slovaks in America had been legitimate Slovaks when Masaryk needed them during the War, once they became a threat, the centralists began to categorize them as United States citizens, whose influence should not extend beyond America.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Masaryk, for example, used such logic to dismiss the Pittsburgh Agreement, which he called a "local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks," whose "signatories were mainly American citizens, only two of them being non-Americans." Masaryk, *Making*, 208-211. "An Appeal," *PF: Bielek*, SI. Pankuch, *History*, 177-186. "A. S. Ambrose to Seton-Watson" (Doc 126) in *Seton-Watson*, 381-382. Mikuš, "Slovak League," 46-47. Sidor, *Hlinka*, 503-505. "Seton-Watson to Vojtěch Mastný" (Doc 124), in *Seton-Watson*, 375-376. "Odkaz Scotus Viatora Americkým Slovákům" (Doc 125), in *Seton-Watson*, 377-380. "Seton-Watson to Štefan Osuský" (Doc 128) & "Osuskz to Seton-Watson" (Doc 129), in *Seton-Watson*, 385-387. Palickar, "Czech and Slovak." Tomáš

The Slovak autonomists in Slovakia perceived quite differently. Many Slovak nationalist leaders believed that the nation as an ethnic and cultural foundation transcended the state, and offered regular praise of the Slovak-Americans as fighters for Slovak liberty and autonomy. Figures such as Hlinka and Lutheran nationalist leader Emil Stodola openly praised the Slovak-Americans and their role in the fight for autonomy, and argued that their past actions allowed the American Slovaks equal right to speak about the fate of the Slovak homeland. SPP leader Jozef Tiso extolled, “In this (*Pittsburgh*) agreement we see the heritage of our own American brothers, for which we will fight with the honor and the tenacity of the Slovak spirit, which is not intimidated by prison, the malice of the world, nor the cynicism of centralist agents.” Tiso praised the “real Slovak patriots,” working in the “free air of America,” and he even posited that the Slovak-Americans had a better claim to speak for the Slovaks than the Slovak centralists did, because the Slovak-Americans had made the revolution successful with their blood, treasure and propaganda. Slovak scholars also published multiple studies of the Slovak-Americans and their role in Slovak national development.

The Slovak-Americans kept the ‘Wilsonian moment’ alive for Slovak nationalists, even after they lost faith in western governments. There remained among them a high regard of the image of America rooted in their perception of the Slovak-Americans. They saw the American Slovaks as having reached full Slovak self-consciousness, emboldened by American liberty, and they believed that the United States should serve as the ideal model for a democratic Slovakia. Tiso, for example, quoted Herbert Hoover on the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence to praise America’s religious liberty as an example for Czechoslovakia.¹⁷³

Čapek, *Naše Amerika* (Prague: Nákladem Národní Rady Československé, 1926), 113. “Fedor Ruppeldt to Seton-Watson” (Doc 149), in *Seton-Watson*, 441-442.

¹⁷³ “Hlinka on Scotus Viator” (Doc 109), in *Seton-Watson*, 345-353. Emil Stodola, *Prelom: Spomienky, Úvahy, Štúdie* (Praha: L. Mazáč, 1933), 193-194. “Nový výkrik bratov z Ameriky,” 24 Feb 1924, Bratislava (No

Slovak autonomists openly expressed these sentiments through regular trips to the United States. These trips were nonetheless slow to get moving. Prague regularly prevented such trips, including the denial of a passport to Jan Vojtaššák, the first Slovak Bishop in Czechoslovakia, out of concern for his nationalist views and concern that he would agitate for autonomy and collect money for the SPP while in the United States. The barrier broke in 1926 when Hlinka accepted an invitation to visit America from Josef Hušek and the Friends of Slovak Freedom, sponsored by the SLA, the FCSU, and the FCSLU. Hlinka desired to visit the United States to thank the Slovak-Americans in person for their support for Slovak self-determination, to explain firsthand the political situation in Slovakia, and to encourage them to keep fighting. After stalling on the process, Prague ultimately relented, in order to avoid the resulting outrage had they refused, and gave Hlinka a passport to attend the Eucharist Congress in Chicago. Hlinka's visit lasted from June 5 to October 13. Although Hlinka expressed some trepidation Slovak-American centralists would treat him with hostility, Hušek and Anton Kompánek convinced him the experience would prove the opposite. This claim proved true, as Hlinka received hundreds of invitations to speak and overflowing crowds on each occasion. Demand was so high, Bielek had to write an article emphasizing Hlinka's limitations to try to tame expectations. During his visit, Hlinka travelled around the U.S. East and Midwest, visiting local Slovak communities. He regularly attended and held Mass and held meetings with Slovak-American organizations, including the SLA from whom he received an honorary membership. Hlinka visited assorted Slovak-American institutions, surveying Slovak-American newsrooms, printers, schools, and

43), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 157-159. "Pittsburghská dohoda - neplatná?!" 29 May 1924, Bratislava (no 57), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 179-180. "Parliamentary Speech," 25 Nov 1931, Prague (No 164), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 347. "Speech to Public Assembly of the Slovak People's Party," 18 August 1937 & 25 August 1937, Bratislava (No 251 & 252), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 523-524. "Naše národnopolitické palladium," 5 June 1938 (No 260), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 543-544. Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi Druhá Naša Hlava: Život Dr. Jozefa Tisu* (Cleveland: First Catholic Slovak Union, 1947), 182-183. Jozef Rudinský, *V Amerike a Doma* (Ružomberok: Rudinský, 1921). Karol Sidor, *Slováci v Zahranicnom Odboji* (Bratislava : Jednota, 1928). Matica Slovenská, *Slovenskej Verejnosti v Amerike* (Matica Slovenská , 1937). Konštantín Čulen, *Pittsburghská Dohoda* (Bratislava: Kníhtlačiareň Andreja, 1937).

churches, but also devoted time to see other parts of America, such as museums, theaters, parks, and Niagara Falls. He even pursued his favorite pass-time, fishing. Aside from Slovak leaders, he also met various local American leaders from judges, mayors, city councilmen, and state and federal congressmen and senators. Overall, Hlinka visited 80 rallies, gave 200 speeches, and visited more than 100 Slovak parishes. Hlinka's visit spurred a level of excitement and activity among the Slovak-Americans that would never reoccur.¹⁷⁴

Hlinka kept his goal of directly exposing the Slovak Question during his visit. He regularly spoke on the issue, and carried with himself a copy of a censored Slovak nationalist paper as evidence. During his visit, Hlinka could not help but contrast of the image of America with his experience in Czechoslovakia. In one such speech, he made clear that the Slovaks “would prefer not to quarrel with the Bohemians, but when they preach democracy and at the same time practice deceptions and aggression, we have no choice but to oppose them... America is a superior nation and a master democratic republic. It has a splendid constitution which not only guarantees the rights and liberties to the people, but sees that they get them as well.” Hlinka likewise extolled the “firm individuality” that the Slovak-Americans had gained in America, and he highlighted the sense of natural connection between Slovaks and Americans. “A good Slovak who comes to America makes a good American, and all good Slovak-Americans, including the new generations born in America from Slovak extraction will appreciate what they have inherited from their Slovak ancestry. Neither will they forget Slovakia.” In his farewell speech, Hlinka expressed how the Slovak-Americans had filled him with national pride. He affirmed, “I saw large affluence of Slovaks, these Slovaks which under the Tatra suffered from hardship and physical and spiritual want,” and praised how they helped sustain the Slovak nation. He finally

¹⁷⁴ Adamec, “The Slovak Catholic Federation,” 223-232. Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka*, 503-505, 510-511, 543-552. Sidor, “The Slovak League,” 57-59. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 46-47. Jozef Paučo, “75 Years of the First Catholic Slovak Union,” *Furdek*, 5 (1966), 65-74.

asked of them, “do not forget that under the Tatras stand your cradle and your old homeland, our hard-tested and suffering Slovakia!”¹⁷⁵

In the 1930s, the Slovak-Americans had a few more visits from notable figures. One such visit was from the Slovak cultural organization the Matica Slovenská, in 1935. The Slovak-Americans had regular contact with the Matica in the 1920s and there remained regular efforts to create an American branch of the organization.¹⁷⁶ With the outbreak of the Great Depression, however, interest and funding for Slovak cultural programs in America declined. The Matica decided a visit to America was necessary to reverse this process, which they interpreted as the Slovak-Americans becoming too Americanized culturally. The organization’s head, poet Jozef Hronský, led the delegation, but it also included historian Konštantín Čulen, and the artist Jozef Cincik, among others. These figures gave many lectures and supplied ample literature and art, including a donation of libraries of Slovak material to the cities of New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago. While they found that some second and third generations Slovak-Americans had lost touch with Slovak culture, the delegates gave high praise to the Slovak-Americans for the interest they showed in the lectures, music, art and other cultural information the Matica provided. The experience led Čulen to adopt the task of writing a history of Slovak-Americans. The linguist Jozef G. Konus likewise praised how “the Slovak spirit opens up more in free America than the lush fantasies at home could imagine.” When the White House wrote a statement for a Slovak-American information brochure praising the Slovaks as a “healthy minded, freedom-loving and determined people,” the Matica hailed it as evidence of Slovak democratic bona fides. Ultimately, the delegation praised the trip as very much a success, and

¹⁷⁵ Palickar, “Monsignor Hlinka—The Man,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, pp 51-56, 55. Palickar, “My Interview with Msgr. Hlinka,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, pp 56-59. Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka*, pp 543-552.

¹⁷⁶ To see many examples of this communication, see: *The Matica Slovenská, Martin, Slovakia, re: American Slovaks Papers*, IHRC.

took back ample material on the Slovak-Americans for placement in the Slovak National Library. The Matica left satisfied that Slovak culture remained firm in America, although it put pressure on the Slovak-Americans to improve their direct cultural linkages with the homeland.¹⁷⁷

The final major figure to visit America was Jozef Tiso in 1937, with the Catholic cultural organization Spolok Sv. Vojtecha. Much like Hlinka, Tiso held Mass and heard confession during his visit, spoke at public assemblies and met with many American priests, journalists, and Slovak-American leaders. He also attended other broader Catholic events, including the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and met with the Papal delegation in Washington. Tiso made a broad effort to learn about American political life, in order to determine what Slovak leaders could transfer back to Slovakia. He particularly admired American technical prowess in organization and publishing, which he saw as facilitating a more efficient Catholic organization and action, and conceptualized a plan to send young Slovak leaders to America to learn American methods of organization. Tiso also praised the Slovak-American sense of independence and their pride in their Slovak identity. Seeing how the Slovaks had developed on independent terms in the vast American melting pot, Tiso interpreted the Slovak-American's experience as proof of Slovak capabilities and their merit for self-determination. Tiso never gave up his sense of solidarity with the Slovak-Americans, and regularly referenced his visit to affirm his desired direction for the Slovaks.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ "Vianoce Matičnej Delegácie," *Slovensko*, 2, 5 & 6 (Jan-Feb 1936), 87-88. Konštantín Čulen, "Čo Môže Dať Amerika Slovenskej Historii," *Slovensko*, 2, 7 (Mar 1936), 87-88. Jozef C. Hronský, "Matica v Amerike," *Slovensko*, 2, 7 (March 1936), 110-113. Jozef G. Konuš, "Matica v Amerike," *Slovensko*, 2, 7 (Mar 1936), 116-118. Jozef G. Konuš, "Matica v Amerike," *Slovensko*, 2, 7 (Mar 1936), 116-118. Jozef Hronský, "Na Margo Amerického Zapisníka," *Slovensko*, 2, 10 & 11 (June-July 1936), 177-180. Jozef Cincík, "Na Margo Amerického Zapisníka," *Slovensko*, 2, 10 & 11 (June-July 1936), 181-186. "Matičná Vstava v Clevelande," *Slovensko*, 2, 10 & 11 (June-July 1936), 181-184. "President Roosevelt Pozdravuje Slovenský Národ," *Slovensko*, 2, 5 & 6 (Jan-Feb 1936), 79. "Slovenská Amerika sa Hýbe," *Slovensko*, 4, 3 (Nov 1937), 32-33. "SLA to Škultety, 1 June 1935," *PF: Mamatey*, SI. Stolarik, "Slovak League." J.A. Berta, "Slovak America and the Matica Slovenská," *Furdek*, 23 (1984), 163-171.

¹⁷⁸ Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. "Speech about the state account balance from 1926," 23 February 1938, Prague (No 258), in Tiso, *Prejavy*, 533-536.

The Slovak-Americans also made visits to Slovakia. The most significant of these visits came in 1938 in the tense period leading up to the Munich Agreement, when the Slovak League sent a delegation to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Pittsburgh Agreement. Led by its President, Peter Hletko, a medical doctor by trade, the delegation, as a deliberate gesture, made its first formal visit in Slovakia to Hlinka in Ružomberok. The delegation travelled into Slovakia through Poland, in order around Prague and Bratislava, and the Polish government hosted the delegation on their way through. Both the Slovak autonomists and the Slovak centralists sent representatives to corral them before they entered Slovakia. The centralists were, however, sent back early after Warsaw and Slovak-Americans embraced the SPP delegation as the official one. After arriving in Slovakia, the delegation presented the original of the Pittsburgh Agreement to Hlinka and spent the majority of the trip associating with the Slovak autonomists. Its activities included several visits to the Matica Slovenská in Martin, to which it gifted an authenticated copy of the Pittsburgh Agreement and made clear commitments toward transatlantic cultural programs, including joint publications and a transatlantic cultural council. Milan Hodža also led a continued effort to meet and work with the visiting delegation, believing he could convince them to break their close affiliation with the SPP and align with the Agrarians instead. Out of respect, the delegation did meet with centralist officials, including Hodža and Beneš, to whom they encouraged the granting of autonomy for the sake of unity in the very tense times. In a speech in Prague, Hletko made clear their objectives stating, “Our love for Slovakia and the Czechoslovak Republic has induced us to come here. The object of the Pittsburgh Declaration, the original of which we have brought with us, is not to weaken but to strengthen the Republic.” When describing his meetings, Hletko said that Hodža promised a movement toward autonomy, yet Prague still rejected them. Likewise, Dérér was extremely critical of the Slovak-Americans

during their visit, accusing them of having been brainwashed. He also dismissed them as representing a small, vocal minority, and smeared them as deliberate Hungarian, German, or Polish agents, if not otherwise simply duped by the machinations of these neighboring rivals.¹⁷⁹ Dérer complained, “This delegation, composed most of autonomists, expressed its separatist convictions during every opportunity, expressed anti-Czech interests, made light of work of the Czechoslovak government successes in Slovakia, ironized Czechoslovak oriented Slovaks.” He was also extremely derisive of Hletko, accusing him of not being truly Slovak, having been born in the United States, and as being “politically inexperienced, unknowledgeable about the conditions of Europe, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia.”

The SLA visit culminated in the Jubilee Congress for the anniversary of the Pittsburgh Agreement on June 4, 1938 in Bratislava, a massive rally where Hlinka, Tiso, and Hletko, among others, gave speeches. A large facsimile of the Pittsburgh Agreement surrounded on each side by the American and Slovak flags served as a backdrop. In his speech, Hletko presented the original copy of the Pittsburgh Agreement to the crowd, and praised the attention given to the agreement. A formal proposal by the SPP in the Czechoslovak parliament to amend the constitution to implement Slovak autonomy then followed the event. The centralists, led by Hodža, held a counter rally two days later. They declared the rally more ambiguously as a celebration of the Slovak farmer, although Prague and the centralists promoted the event afterwards as a pro-state rally in opposition to autonomy. The SLA delegation also attended this celebration and Hletko gave a speech, simply affirming that the SLA continued to work for Slovak freedom. Hletko later claimed that the delegation warned the Czech and Slovak leaders they had met about the need to come to accommodation on the Slovak Question, in favor of autonomy, fearing that the issue

¹⁷⁹ Dérer was convinced the SLA was part of a Polish conspiracy to absorb Slovakia, led by Karol Sidor. The SLA, however, openly rebuked Polish calls for absorption of Slovakia during their stop there.

might become larger with Hitler rattling the saber. He claimed, however, that no one took this warning seriously. The delegation departed shortly before Hlinka's death in August 1938, but the SPP sent a piece of earth from Hlinka's graveside over to America.¹⁸⁰

American Diplomats and the Slovak Question

Washington broadly stayed detached from Central European politics in the interwar period. Its relationship with Prague, however, remained extremely friendly. The Czechs produced several publications in English during the interwar period praising the linkages between the two countries. The two governments also pursued several symbolic gestures of unity, including the establishment of an American Institute and the building of a statue of Woodrow Wilson, both in Prague.¹⁸¹ Lewis Einstein, who followed Crane as Ambassador in 1921, wrote to Masaryk upon taking office, comparing the Czech's work to the American Revolution and referring to Masaryk as the George Washington of Czechoslovakia. He later complimented Masaryk as an example of moderation and tolerance in a region marked by national hatreds. Einstein also praised Beneš as a pragmatic leader, and at a farewell dinner in Einstein's honor held by Beneš in 1930, Einstein praised Czechoslovakia profusely as a beacon of progress in Europe and likewise extolled Beneš as an admirable statesman. When Masaryk passed away in 1937, President Roosevelt sent his regards, proclaiming, "his high idealism, his

¹⁸⁰ It is unclear the exact amount of participants in each rally, but most accounts reflected similar participation rates (around one hundred thousand each) and photos of the Slovak Jubilee show a massive crowd. The urn containing the soil is still on display at the Slovak Institute in Cleveland. Ivan Dérer, *Slovenský Vývoj a ľudácká zrada* (Prague: Kvasnička a Hampl, 1946), 183-189. "Visit of American Slovak Delegation to Jubilee Congress, Bratislava; Slovak Demands for Autonomy," 6 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/534, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Wilbur Carr to SoS, no 122," 9 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/518, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Farmers' Day at Bratislava; Demonstration of Slovak Branch of Czechoslovak Agrarian Party," 10 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/531, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Narodna Politika Roku 1938: Ked Bol P. Hletko na Slovensku," *B: Karol Sidor – Diplomat 1901-1958 – Vol 2, SI. Hletko*, "The Slovaks," 5-54. Pavel Kukliš-Kunovský, *Ako je na Slovensku?: Z Vlastných Skúseností Napísal a Vydal v Mesiaci Júni 1940 v Pittsburghu, Pa., U.S.A.* (Pittsburgh : Národné Noviny, 1940), 4-7. "Po Odchode Delegátov Slovenskej Ligy v Amerike," *Slovensko*, 5 (1939), 16-17. Sidor, "The Slovak League," 59-62.

¹⁸¹ The statue, a gift from the Czechoslovak National Council of America, was placed in a park across from Wilson Station, near Hoover Avenue.

untiring efforts for peace, and his intimate association with this country due to his former residence here have endeared him to the American people.”¹⁸²

U.S. diplomats in Prague in general considered the Slovaks much less than they did during the founding of the state, and, at least initially, their positions on the Slovak Question did not radically alter. A report done by the Department of Education on Czechoslovakia followed the usual lines, dismissing the Slovaks as badly educated and praising Prague for taking over the “backward and hopelessly inadequate” schools in Slovakia and making them “progressive.” The U.S. State Department, under pressure from Prague, also pushed immigration services to use the term ‘Czechoslovak’ over the terms Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovakian when categorizing immigrants from Czechoslovakia. When Einstein took over as Ambassador, he addressed the Slovak question much less than his predecessor. Einstein nonetheless viewed the issue with more urgency, remarking that it remained one of “the dark points in the future of this Republic,” and he made clear that the issue was not likely to go away. Nevertheless, he embraced early on many of the standard Czechoslovakist ideas. In a report on the Slovak question, Einstein claimed that Hlinka had been “very violent as leader of the separatist movement,” and affirmed Masaryk’s view on the Pittsburgh Agreement as an illegitimate document as well as the claim that most Slovaks preferred centralism. Einstein argued that only education was necessary to solve the Slovak Question and praised the Czech efforts: “At present the great mass of Slovaks inert and

¹⁸² Jaroslav Kose, *America in Czechoslovakia* (Prague: Kalina & Dolensky, 1922). Vaclav Partl, “American Influence on Political Thought in Czechoslovakia” in *The American Political Science Review*, 17, 3 (Aug 1923), 448-452. “Einstein to Masaryk, 17 December 1921,” B: 2, F: 9, *Lewis Einstein Papers, 1808-1968 (LE Papers)*, Collection Number 01116, American Heritage Center (AHC), University of Wyoming. Einstein, though, recognized that Beneš was more popular abroad than he ever was internally in Czechoslovakia. “America and CS,” B13, F1, *LE Papers*, AHC. Lewis Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, Lawrence E. Gelfand, Ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 197-198, 201-204. “Beneš to Einstein, 20 Jan 1930,” B2, F4, & “Summary of Einstein Dinner, 28 Jan 1930,” B10, F14, *LE Papers*, AHC. “Beneš to Einstein, 23 Jan 1923,” & “Masaryk to Einstein, 26 Feb 1923,” B2, F4, *LE Papers*, AHC. “Woodrow Wilson,” B10, F14, *LE Papers*, AHC. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1592,” 9 July 1928, F#: 860F.413/3, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Roosevelt to Beneš, 14 Aep 1937,” OF, F: 536, *Czechoslovakia 1933-1939*, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDR), Hyde Park, New York.

illiterate are an easy prey to the agitation of their leaders many of whom are Magyars or Magyarized.” He did criticize Czech officials, however, for “tactlessness” on Slovak religiosity and difficult economic conditions. Einstein also remained overly concerned about the believed Hungarian and Communist threat in Slovakia. Einstein’s aide, and Charge d’ affairs, Frederick F.A. Pearson, presented likewise, asserting, “the Czechs who are culturally more advanced than the Slovaks have deemed it their duty to lead the latter from their cultural wilderness.”¹⁸³

Pearson was nonetheless also very critical of the Czech approach to Slovakia, as several diplomats under Wilson had been. He showed a clear understanding of the economic difficulties in Slovakia and he criticized the Czechs for showing no tact concerning Slovak issues. Pearson also presented options to resolve the Slovak Question, including Slovak autonomy, believing that the Slovak Question was the most important issue in the state. He argued, “its solution depends I think less on particular remedies, though these are doubtless essential, than on the spirit in which they are applied—on the development of a large-mindedness among the Czechs which will permit the viewing of the Slovak problem in terms of the national as distinguished from the purely Bohemian or local interest.” By the end of the 1920s, Einstein became fond of the Agrarian Party and resultantly shifted his view on the Slovak Question. Reports from the embassy show a clear support for the effort to have the SPP join the government, and although there were early concerns about reconciling autonomist demands, the embassy ultimately embraced Milan Hodža’s view on the Slovak Question. Einstein supported Hodža’s plan for

¹⁸³ In a rarity regarding the Slovaks, Undersecretary of State William Phillips actually responded to Einstein, expressing interest in the topic and commending the report. Teresa Bach, *Education in Czechoslovakia*, Department of the Interior Education Bureau, Bulletin No. 39 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 5-6. “SoS to Secretary of Commerce”, 14 Aug 1924, F#: 860F.401/1, DoS CS 1910-44. “Einstein to SoS, 10 Mar 1922,” & “Einstein to SoS, 24 Mar 1922,” B5, F9, *LE Papers*, AHC. “Einstein to SoS, No. 909,” 4 Sep 1925, F#: 860F.00/236, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 308,” 19 Dec 1922, F#: 860F.01/146, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “William Phillips to Einstein,” Date Unk, F#: 860F.01/146, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, 3 May 1928,” B7, F13, & “Einstein to SoS, 5 June 1929,” B7, F16, *LE Papers*, AHC. “Einstein to SoS, No. 166,” 16 June 1922, F#: 860F.00B/5, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Pearson to SoS, No. 951,” 28 Nov 1925, F#: 860F.00/239, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

gradual autonomy, gave some positive statements about Hlinka, and criticized the Czechs for their lack of understanding of many issues in Slovakia. Einstein likewise praised the Agrarian coalition for being more conciliatory and accommodating, adding that “much of the unrest and dissatisfaction in Slovakia had been caused by the centralizing tendencies of Prague. The hope is expressed that the new plan will provide a cure for this without impairing the essential unity of the State.” Einstein also encouraged a *modus vivendi* between Prague and the Vatican in order to ease Czech-Slovak relations.¹⁸⁴

Next to the formation of the government in 1927, the issue that most interested the American Embassy in Slovakia was the arrest and trial of Vojtech Tuka for treason. From Prague, Charge d’Affaires John Sterett Gittings wrote a report in response to the trial. On one hand, he openly defended Hodža from charges made by Czech nationalists of Hodža’s complicity on the issue, praising him as the important reconciler of the Slovak nationalist and centralist viewpoints. On the other, he was extremely damning of the Slovak autonomists. Gittings praised Prague for amending past mistakes in Slovakia, and returned to the usual claims of Slovak anti-modernism, stating, “The level of culture in the two sections is quite distinct. That of the Czechs is reasonably high; of the Slovaks, distinctly low...there is no point in complete autonomy for Slovakia, because that region has not enough individuality or identity to require it.” Defining the issue as simply a ruse created by the Hungarians, he added, “Slovak politicians

¹⁸⁴ Einstein also praised Hodža as a “man of undoubted ability” and an “expert parliamentarian.” “Pearson to SoS, No. 951.” “Einstein to SoS, No. 1605,” 23 July 1928, F#: 860F.002/46, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 987,” 25 Feb 1926, F#: 860F.00/242, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “John Sterett Gittings to SoS, No. 1133,” 3 Nov 1926, F#: 860F.00/256, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1181,” 1 Dec 1926, F#: 860F.00/259, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1185,” 6 Jan 1927, F#: 860F.00/262, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1196,” 24 Jan 1927, F#: 860F.00/264, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1218,” 15 Feb 1927, F#: 860F.00/265, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, 4 Jan 1928,” B7, F12, & “Einstein to SoS, 29 July 1929,” B7, F17, *LE Papers*, AHC. After he left Prague, Einstein regularly wrote on Czechoslovakia and largely maintained the same mentalities. He praised the “educational and civilizing mission” in Slovakia, but also criticized the hostility built by the Czechs while attempting to “uplift their poor Slovak brethren.” Likewise, when writing his memoirs much later, Einstein affirmed how recognition of the Slovaks as an autonomous nation was central to the success of the state, ultimately referring to Slovakia as a “Czech Ireland.” “CS Problem,” B8, F6, *LE Papers*, AHC. Einstein, *Diplomat*, 197-198.

are generally out for self, and much of their agitation is due to personal grievances and selfish interest rather than motivated by real statesmanship.” He ultimately decided that the Czechs would solve the issue with further education, because the Slovaks were in no way distinct from the Czechs. The Czechs just needed to treat the Slovaks like “spoiled children.” Contrarily, Albert Washburn, U.S. Ambassador in Vienna, addressed the issue with more skepticism. In his report, he gave a balanced view of the SPP and pointed out how Slovak officials, including Hodža, were tracked by Prague’s secret police whenever entering Vienna. He also expressed doubt whether there was any evidence against Tuka other than his support for autonomy. Washburn was also the only official to attempt an in depth look at the Pittsburgh Agreement, although he provided nothing more than an explanation of the text and a moderately informed description of its history. Einstein also took a more measured tone. While he did not directly question the validity of the charges, he noted how “a clear dividing line between treason and the wish for autonomy in a country such as Czechoslovakia is not always easy to establish.” He nevertheless gave his impression that the timing of the trial was terrible and that it stirred up the Slovak Question when it appeared to be receding. He criticized the decision, feeling it would have remained prudent just to let the accusations pass and to keep the SPP in the government.¹⁸⁵

After the trial, Gittings continued his line of analysis, adding that “the Slovak Clericals can be counted on to furnish the comedy (and sometimes the tragedy) element,” before later giving a theory that being an “eastern” culture the Slovaks “still exist on a tribal basis, with one leader or chief. Hlinka is the ruler of his flock; and, as he controls the party machinery his will (or his word if others influence him) goes.” Washburn, alternatively, provided the most detailed

¹⁸⁵ Gittings admitted, and expressed regret that he completed his report based solely on sources in Prague, but he made no effort to correct for this bias. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1746,” 28 Feb 1929, F#: 860F.002/55, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1748,” 4 Mar 1929, F#: 860F.00/286, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Albert H. Washburn to SoS, No. 2109,” 15 Feb 1929, F#: 860F.00/284, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Washburn to SoS, No. 2153,” 28 Mar 1929, F#: 860F.01/175, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1848,” 31 July 1929, F#: 860F.00/290, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

report on the trial, giving arguments on both sides. Washburn argued that the evidence seemed extremely flimsy and the charge baseless and he appeared to accept the argument that Tuka had no desire to break up the state, but had simply desired autonomy to “do away with the century-old belief that the Slovaks were an inferior nation.” Likewise, Washburn highlighted a source extremely critical of the political prudence of the trial: “Czech politicians in recent years had tried desperately to convince the world of the firm union between Czechs and Slovaks. It will be very hard now to keep up this sham.”¹⁸⁶

In the 1930s, interest in the Slovak Question waned among American officials. Einstein’s successor, Abraham C Ratshesky, rarely addressed the Slovaks. The only notable report on the Slovak Question in the early 1930s was one by Charge d’Affaires Harold Shantz, who complained about Hlinka “taking over” a Prague organized celebration at the first Slavic Christian Church in Nitra. He otherwise just complained about how Berlin and Budapest viewed internal instability in Czechoslovakia with glee.¹⁸⁷ In the first term of Roosevelt’s presidency, the only American officer in Prague was Charge d’Affaires J. Web Benton. Benton showed more interest on the Slovak Question, providing fairly detached reports on the SPP reconciling with Prague, on Beneš’ open claims against Slovak autonomy, and on Hlinka’s continued push on the issue. He expressed clear support for Hodža’s rise to Prime Minister, expressing his belief that Hodža would convince the SPP to join the government again and that he would unify the state against the German threat. Benton later reported with some disappointment when these

¹⁸⁶ Washburn’s reports suggest that he’s receiving information from Austrian sources, which likely accounts for his more favorable view of the Slovaks. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1879,” 1 Oct 1929, F#: 860F.002/59, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1885,” 11 Oct 1929, F#: 860F.00/297, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Washburn to SoS, No. 2325,” 4 Nov 1929, F#: 860F.00/304, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹⁸⁷ “An Appeal of Slovak Autonomy Made at Church Celebrations at Nitra, Czechoslovakia,” 19 Aug 1933, F#: 860F.00/347, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Ratschesky only really addressed the Slovaks in context of the Hungarians. See: “A. C. Ratschesky to SoS, No. 108,” 13 Sep 1930, F#: 860F.4016/16, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Ratschesky to SoS, No. 119,” 26 Sep 1930, F#: 860F.00/311, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Ratschesky to SoS, No. 218,” 7 Feb 1931, F#: 860F.00/320, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

negotiations broke down, making clear that the centralists refused to bend on the SPPs demands for autonomy.¹⁸⁸ In 1937, with Czechoslovakia in crisis over the German question, Roosevelt sent seasoned State Department official Wilbur J. Carr to Prague as Ambassador. Entering at a tense time, Carr gave regular reports on Slovakia. He reported how the SPP remained loyal to the state but continued to push for autonomy. He asserted, based on discussions with officials in Prague, how this was unacceptable, because “2/3s of Slovakia” remained in support of centralization. In a follow up report, he quoted several centralist Slovaks about how “wholesome and correct” Slovak nationalism was one that sided with the Czechs and begging “all sincere and true Slovaks,” to “join the front of the old Slovak warriors, the front of Czechoslovak patriots.” Giving his own analysis, Carr added that “all told it appears that the Slovaks are being thrown more and more upon their dependence and association with the Czechs on a ‘sink or swim’ basis,” as autonomy would lead to Slovakia’s absorption by its neighbors. Carr continued to praise Hodža and even sent Washington a copy of Hodža’s book *The New European Situation*. Otherwise, he simply tried to diminish the SPP.¹⁸⁹ The moderation in sentiment among American diplomats reflects how the Slovak autonomists had the ability to shift American views when given the opportunity. Although the use of negative stereotypes remained an effective tool

¹⁸⁸ William Phillips praised Benton for serving this role faithfully and with limited support. “Phillips to J. Web Benton,” 28 June 1934, F#: 860F.00/3636, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak Peoples Party Desirous of Joining Government Coalition,” 24 April 1934, F#: 860F.00/361, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “M. Beneš & Democracy,” 9 May 1935, F#: 860F.00/387, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “New Czechoslovak Coalition Government Formed on June 3, 1935,” 4 June 1935, F#: Missing, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Parliamentary Debate on the Prime Minister’s Statement,” 2 July 1935, F#: 860F.00/400, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “New Prime Minister,” 31 October, F#: 860F.002/77, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Negotiations between Dr. Hodža and Slovak People’s Party for Entrance of Latter into the Coalition Break Down,” 2 July 1935, F#: 860F.00/400, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

¹⁸⁹ “Wilbur H. Carr to SoS, No. 46,” 26 March 1938, F#: 860F.00/464, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Press and Parliamentary Repercussions to Prime Minister Hodža’s Speech with Special Regard to Minority Problems,” 31 March 1938, F#: 860F.00/475, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Further Parliamentary Debate with Particular Reference to the Question of Slovak Autonomy,” 5 April 1938, F#: 860F.00/482, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hodža’s Speeches,” 26 April 1938, F#: 860F.00/473, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Wilbur H. Carr to SoS, No. 127,” 13 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/524, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Wilbur H. Carr to SoS, No. 127,” 13 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/524, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Elections in Czechoslovakia,” 15 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/532, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Leadership of the Slovak People’s Party Following Death of Mgr. Hlinka,” 7 Sep 1938, F#: 860F.00/563, *DoS CS 1910-44*. For more on Carr, see: Peter Bridges, “Mr Carr goes to Prague,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 8, 3 (1997), 187-198.

for Prague centralists, where Slovak autonomists could present a figure seen as moderate, such as Hodža, they could slowly shift sentiment in their direction. This possibility remained dependent, however, on American officials being willing to consider their views, as did some diplomats.

Maintaining the Status Quo: Washington and the Slovak Question in the Interwar Period

Washington proved a different case entirely. To the frustration of the Slovak autonomists, this widespread information effort and flurry of transatlantic activity barely registered among U.S. officials in the American capital. This lack of consideration was not due to negligence on the part of the Slovak-Americans, who wrote federal government officials with regularity. In many cases, these letters were general statements of support or declarations of loyalty to America. For example, the NSS wrote to Calvin Coolidge affirming its support for the American President and calling for an “Americanism” based on “patriotism of the lofty ideals” not on “patriotism of language.” Hoover also received letters, including one from a group of Chicago Slovaks affirming their “loyalty to those high ideals expressed in the Constitution of the United States.” Even after his failure in reelection, the FCSU passed a resolution in support of Hoover in his effort to deal with the problems facing the country. On the same day, they produced a similar one for President-elect Franklin Roosevelt.¹⁹⁰ Like many other Americans, Slovak-Americans wrote numerous letters to Roosevelt. Most of these letters were simply statements of support for his general efforts in the Great Depression and for specific New Deal programs. Many Slovak-American groups also asked for statements from the President for reading at celebrations or for inclusion in honorary publications. A few letters also attempted to invite the President,

¹⁹⁰ “NSS (NY and Philly Branches) to Coolidge, 16 Nov 1925,” *Calvin Coolidge Papers*, Microfilm, Series 1, No 742 (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1959). “Czechoslovak Protective Society to Coolidge, 27 Sep 1926,” *Coolidge Papers*, Series 1, 742A. “Slovak Day and Commemoration of 50th Anniversary of Milan R. Stefanik Comitee to Hoover,” 16 Sep 1930, F#: 860F.00/314, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “FCSU to Hoover, 27 Jan 1933,” in *FCSU Records*, F: 1470, IHRC. “FCSU to Roosevelt, 28 January 1933,” in *FCSU Records*, F: 1349, IHRC.

unsuccessfully, to cultural events. In one case, a Slovak group wanted to give Roosevelt some traditional Slovak pottery and poetry, while another invited him to attend a Slovak art exhibit in New York City.¹⁹¹ In most cases, the White House responded with pro forma responses, but did provide some statements in the name of the President for use at events and in publications.¹⁹²

In most cases, it is difficult to determine how much heed the United States government paid to the Slovak-Americans. One clear case, however, was an “Open Letter” to Masaryk in 1923 that the Slovak Catholic Federation in America also sent to President Coolidge, members of Congress, all of the embassies in Prague, and to the American press. The document started with an image of Masaryk approaching the Slovak-Americans as equals during the war, to which they responded with loyalty and support. Masaryk then betrayed them, treating the Slovaks “in step-mother fashion, nay, even like slaves,” having lured them into “an invisible net of imperialistic aspirations, renounced openly that which is to every nation and to us ‘ignorant’ Slovaks inviolable, priceless, sacred.” It bemoaned that the Slovaks again felt endangered in their national existence, and how the Czechs mislead the world on the issue, and it appealed for Masaryk “to acknowledge and fulfill that which you had promised us, the American Slovaks,” for the sake of Czech-Slovak unity and the security of the state.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Visiting representatives of the Slovak Academy of Arts and Sciences first attempted to meet with Roosevelt and provide these gifts. A group of Slovak-Americans then attempted to follow through with the help of Representative Patrick J. Boland from Pennsylvania. The White House alternatively tried to arrange a visit with Eleanor Roosevelt, although it is not clear whether this occurred.

¹⁹² “FCSU to Roosevelt, 4 Feb 1935,” in *FCSU Records*, F: 1497, IHRC. “FCSU to Roosevelt, 6 Sep 1934,” *Official File (OF)*, F: 536, Czechoslovakia 1933-1939, FDR. “Slovak Day festival in Wilkes-Barre, PA to Roosevelt, 4 April 1934,” *OF*, F: 536a, Czechoslovakia, FDR. “SCFA to Roosevelt (via Richard Bulkley), 1 June 1933,” *President’s Personal File (PPF)*, F: 639, Slovak Catholic Federation of America, FDR. “SKS to Roosevelt, 10 Sep 1936,” *PPF*, F: 2774, Slovak Catholic Sokol, FDR. “FCSLU to Roosevelt, 25 April 1936,” *PPF*, F: 3440, First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union, FDR. “NSS to Roosevelt, 5 May 1934,” *PPF*, F: 6124, National Slovak Society of the U.S., FDR. “Michael Bosak to Patrick J. Boland, 31 Dec 1936,” & “SLA to Roosevelt, 31 Oct 1938,” *OF*, F: 536a, Czechoslovakia, FDR.

¹⁹³ Slovak Catholic Federation of America, *Open Letter to Thomas G. Masaryk, President of the Czechoslovak Republic* (Slovak Catholic Federation of America: 1923). Found in: “Einstein to SoS, No. 611,” 20 February 1924, F#: 860F.01/162, *DoS CS 1910-44*. The New York Times even actually reported on the letter. “Slovak Protest to All Nations,” *New York Times*, Mar 12, 1924, 34.

This letter elicited a response from the Slovak-American centralists. The National Slovak Society, the Slovak Sokol, and assorted editors produced a counter response to Masaryk, which they then sent to Coolidge and Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. This document followed the standard lines promoted by Prague, asserting open support for the idea that the Czechs and Slovaks were one nation. It criticized the SCF letter for having “a spirit of narrow sectarianism,” in contrast to “the great majority of the American Slovaks,” who supported Masaryk “heart and soul.” The document praised Masaryk and the Czechoslovak state for bringing cultural and economic development to Slovakia and it exemplified the centralist Slovaks in the government as a sign of Czech inclusiveness. The text also apologized for Czech administration of Slovakia, dropping the usual line about how Slovakia lacked enough competent officials. It then claimed that Prague had carried out the Pittsburgh Agreement in full, adding an extremely dubious claim that “during the war neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks demanded self-determination for each separately; they demanded self-determination for the Czechoslovaks.” Einstein also provided a report on the SCF letter, misrepresenting it as “a violent indictment of Czech policy in Slovakia,” and praised Prague for “accomplishing there a work of civilization. By introducing education and schools in a population where a high degree of illiteracy existed, by bringing in public hygiene, orderly justice and a better fiscal system, they are laying the foundations for the future.” Accordingly, the Slovaks only needed proper education to unify with the Czechs. Ultimately, “Only one thing can be excluded, which is Slovakian autonomy.”¹⁹⁴

In another case, Adam Podkrivacky as President of the FCSU wrote to John Hickerson, acting Chief of Western European Affairs. Podkrivacky complained about the U.S. Consul General in Prague sending out letters and circulars to Slovakia for aspiring immigrants in the

¹⁹⁴ National Slovak Society, et al., *An Open Letter to Thomas G. Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia* (1924), in “Joseph Janček to Coolidge,” 3 May 1924, F#: 860F.01/164, *DoSCS 1910-44*. “Einstein to SoS, No. 611.”

Czech language, and he asked that these documents instead be in Slovak. He also requested that the State Department use the hyphen when writing ‘Czecho-Slovakia.’ Finally, Podkrivacky supplied Hickerson a copy of an autonomist political pamphlet, in order to “acquaint better with the political situation just as it exists between the Slovaks and the Czechs in Czecho-Slovakia.” Hickerson forwarded the letter to the embassy in Prague and asked for a report on the Slovak Question in order to draft a response. Benton responded, declaring the letter unacceptable due to the threat posed by Czechoslovakia’s neighbors. He also made the usual ethnographic arguments, adding how “Czech culture has contributed measurably to the advancement of Slovakia,” and predicted the issue would eventually dissipate. Benton dismissed the pamphlet as simply “anti-government propaganda,” based on “arguments which are without ground,” and argued that the Slovaks were given equal status, highlighting the centralists in the government. “Scrutiny justifies the assumption that the Slovaks enjoy equal rights with the Czechs, but the request for autonomy, in the sense of a separate parliament as mentioned in the Pittsburgh Pact, is something that no truly patriotic and far-seeing Slovak could at present afford to advocate.” Finally, Benton accused Podkrivacky of having “transgressed the bounds of propriety and courtesy,” by suggesting a change of the department’s policy. He added, “I assume that the Department will pay no further attention to his communications, but it seems not inopportune to observe that Czech is the official language of this country.”¹⁹⁵

The dismissal of Slovak-American pleas stood in contrast to a disproportionate concern among American officials about the pro-Hungarian Slovaks living abroad. The Rothermere campaign spurred some interest, and while some Americans expressed some sympathy to it, including chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee William Borah and publisher William

¹⁹⁵ “Adam Podkrivacky to John Hickerson,” 29 March 1937, F#: 860F.01/181, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Movement for Slovak Autonomy,” 30 April 1937, F#: 860F.01/184, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

Randolph Hearst, the U.S. Embassy in Prague wrote rather profusely about how the Slovaks remained opposed to a return to Hungary. When the exiled nationalist communist Slovak Vince Mihalus created an exile Slovak government in 1928, the State Department gave him disproportionate consideration, even though he held little popular support in Slovakia. Jehlička reached out to Washington, calling for support against “Czech tyranny” and requesting support for recognition of the Slovaks as a minority in the League of Nations. The Czechoslovak embassy directed the State Department in its response, simply informing U.S. officials that Jehlička only organized a “small number of Slovak renegades, mostly of Hungarian origin.”¹⁹⁶

The only visit to the United States by a Slovak official to garner much attention from Washington was Šrobár’s in 1923. Einstein provided advance notice of the visit, praising that it was “doubtless intended to counteract the seditious anti-Czech propaganda which has been going on for some time both in Slovakia, where it is fomented by Magyar intrigues, and among the Slovak clericals in the United States.” Although, he noted that the Slovak autonomy movement remained “noisy and violent in its methods but unaided it can do little and it is not at present causing here any serious concern.” Several Slovak-American autonomists wrote to the State Department to complain about Šrobár’s visit, including one from a Slovak-American World War I veteran asking the Department to halt Šrobár’s lectures for sowing discord among the Slovaks in the United States. The most notable letter, however, came from John Porubsky on behalf of

¹⁹⁶ Czechoslovak Ambassador Vladimir Hurban exchanged several letters with Hearst on the issue, facilitated by the State Department, eventually convincing Hearst to no longer give a voice to Rothermere and his supporters. “Einstein to SoS, No. 1355,” 30 July 1927, F#: 860F.4016/4, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “J. Butler Wright to SoS, No. 62,” 15 Oct 1927, F#: 860F.4016/9, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Vladimir Hurban to William Randolph Hearst,” 27 May 1937, & “Hurban to Cordell Hull,” 4 June 1937, F#: 860F.00/437 & 438, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Council of State of Slovakia to SoS,” 6 Nov 1928, F#: 860F.01/171 & 172, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Nelson Torsler Johnson to Einstein,” 28 Jan 1929, F#: 860F.01/171, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1747,” 28 Feb 1929, F#: 860F.01/173, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Gittings to SoS, No. 1756,” 9 Mar 1929, F#: 860F.01/174, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Washburn to SoS, No. 2153,” “Einstein to SoS, No. 516,” 20 Sep 1923, F#: 860F.00/214, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “SoS to Geneva and Prague,” 30 July 1933, F#: 860F.00/345, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Prentiss B. Gilbert to SoS, No. 650,” 8 Aug 1933, F#: 860F.00/346, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “SoS to Geneva and Prague,” 29 Aug 1933, F#: 860F.00/346, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

the Slovak Newspapermen. Porubsky criticized Šrobár's claimed "cultural visit" as a ruse to propagandize on behalf of Czechoslovakism. He presented it as part of an effort by Prague, "To inoculate the masses of our people in America as a contracting party with such misconception and ethnographical nonsense," and to discredit the Pittsburgh Agreement. Claiming that Šrobár "forgot the scope of his mission even forgot himself in outbursts against leading Slovak American gentlemen calling them vile names unworthy a man of his position," Porubsky requested Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes to have him removed from the country.¹⁹⁷

This effort also spurred a response by Prague and its allies in the United States. These letters, in an organized campaign, all repeated versions of the same arguments. They complained that the opposition to Šrobár consisted of "Jesuits and Bolsheviks" and other "enemies of the state" that were working for Czechoslovakia's destruction. Šrobár was, alternatively, a great statesman fighting against them to bring cultural development to Slovakia. They also personally targeted Porubsky and the Slovak Newspapermen. "The Great majority of intelligent American Slovaks are heart and soul in accord with Dr. Šrobár's patriotic works; only the ignorant and reactionary masses are ignobly and ignorantly supporting the destructive work of Rev. Porubsky's and his few brawling associates." Likewise, the Slovak Sokol, which had arranged Šrobár's visit from the American end, took credit for the visit, praising how Šrobár had "proved to the Slovaks of America that any fears as to the future of their former country are unfounded." The Department only sent back formulaic verification of receipts to all of these letters, with the exception of one to John Zeman of the Slovak Sokol thanking him for "setting forth the real purposes of the visit." William Phillips then requested President Coolidge to meet with Šrobár

¹⁹⁷ "Einstein to SoS, No. 502," 29 Aug 1923, F#: 860F.01/148, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "John Porubsky to Charles Evans Hughes," 31 Oct 1923, F#: 860F.01/149, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Jno J. Nedorostek to Hughes," 13 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/150, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

during his visit, calling him “one of the five men who founded the Republic of Czechoslovakia,” to which Coolidge obliged.¹⁹⁸

In 1937, Francis Dubosh attempted to arrange a meeting between officers of the SCFA, Jozef Tiso, and President Roosevelt, with the help of Monsignor Michael J. Ready at Catholic University. The White House staff expressed support for this meeting, but Roosevelt wanted to first confirm with the State Department so as not “to get mixed up in a Slovak controversy.” After consulting with Czechoslovak Ambassador Vladimir Hurban, the State Department reported that the embassy made no official complaint, but that they themselves discouraged the visit “of the opinion that these persons are not of sufficient prominence for the President to receive them.” After a back and forth in consideration of the issue, the White House ultimately declined, claiming that the President was simply too busy.¹⁹⁹

The U.S. Embassy took interest in the SLA visit to Czechoslovakia in 1938, and Wilbur Carr agreed to meet with the delegation. Carr reported that the visit was cordial and that the delegation affirmed to him that its visit was simply to promote good will and it did not desire to interfere in domestic issues in Czechoslovakia. Carr then stated that the SLA’s visit to Czechoslovakia annoyed Prague, due to the enflamed minority issues of the time, but that Czechoslovak officials tried to maintain good will with the delegation, although this sentiment

¹⁹⁸ “V. Kralicek to Hughes,” 12 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/151, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Josef Joscak to Hughes,” 14 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/154, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Henry S. Russek to Hughes,” 15 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/156, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Clement Thrisky & Joscak to Hughes,” 15 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/152, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Michael Kovalovsky to Hughes,” 16 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/157, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “John Zeman to Hughes,” 18 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/153, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Michael Olsavicki to Hughes,” 19 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/155, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “W. R. Castle to Association of Slovak Newspapermen of America,” 6 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/149, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “J. Butler Wright to Kralicek,” 20 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/151, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Castle to Joscak,” 20 Nov 1923, F#: 860F.01/154, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Castle to Zeman,” 1 Dec 1923, F#: 860F.01/153, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “William Phillips to G. Bascom Slemph,” 12 Nov 1923, & “Slemph to Phillips, 12 Nov 1923,” *Coolidge Papers*, Series 1, 742.

¹⁹⁹ “Roosevelt to M. H. McIntyre, 22 Oct 1937,” “McIntyre to George F. Summerlin, 23 Oct 1937,” “Spruks to Summerlin, 27 Oct 1937,” “McIntyre to Roosevelt, 29 Oct 1937,” “McIntyre to Summerlin, 3 Nov 1937,” *PPF*, F: 639, Slovak Catholic Federation of America, FDR. For more on Roosevelt and immigrant groups in general, see: Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

“lacked a ring of sincerity.” Accordingly, Hletko admitted to Carr that the timing was not the best, but that it was not by design, since they had come simply for the anniversary celebration. Carr expected no harm from the visit. While Carr described the autonomy proposal and reported statements by Hletko and Jozef Hušek complementing the support of the Pittsburgh Agreement among the Slovaks, he countered by providing the text of an anti-autonomy speech by Dérér and a section of Masaryk’s memoirs. Carr then misrepresented the Slovak-Americans as having felt embarrassed for having been “utilized by the Hlinka Party for partisan and election purposes.” While Carr reported on both of the two rallies, he praised the Farmer’s Day as turning into “a spontaneous demonstration of Czechoslovak unity, homage to Beneš, and allegiance and confidence in its leader,” hostility to autonomy, and featuring a much larger participation.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

Overall, during the interwar years the United States showed only minimal interest in Slovakia, in line with a rather detached view from East Central Europe broadly. The one exception continued to be Slovaks living in the United States. While Prague worked to keep the Slovak-Americans at a distance, the Slovak-American autonomists worked around Prague through a direct relationship with Slovak autonomists in Slovakia. Without an ability to influence Washington, however, they had no means of breaking through to push Prague toward changes on the Slovak Question. Again, it is clear that the influence of centralist elites played a major role in controlling the image of Slovakia among American officials. While a figure such as Hodža could shift the American view somewhat, American officials reacted to Slovak autonomists on both sides of the Atlantic with dismissal, when not outright hostility, due to the successful campaign

²⁰⁰ “Carr to SoS, no 112,” 31 May 1938, F#: 860F.00/510, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Visit of American Slovak.” “Carr to SoS, no 121,” 8 June 1938, F#: 860F.00/517, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No 122.” “Farmers’ Day.”

by Prague to disparage Slovak autonomists leaders. The Slovak autonomists, however, continued their fight and never gave up a sense of possible achievement. They still saw America and the American vision as the best hope for Slovakia, linked to positive images of American democracy fostered by the Slovak-Americans and transferred to Slovak nationalists in Slovakia. The restrictive Wilsonian vision established during the war, which preferred the Czechoslovak concept, nevertheless remained firmly fixed in most American minds. This mentality in the end abetted a wasted opportunity. Slovak nationalists had a positive view of America, and when looking for external support saw the United States as their ideal. Had the United States reciprocated, it might have played a role toward easing national hostility in at least one part of Czechoslovakia in the period that ended in Czechoslovakia's disintegration. Instead, seeing no hope in western governments, the Slovak nationalists turned toward a government that expressed a willingness to consider their plight, in Nazi Germany.

Chapter 5

The United States and the Diplomacy of the First Slovak Republic

In the late 1930s, the issue of the treatment of the Germans in the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia reached a fevered pitch and threatened war. With the goal of maintaining peace, the West European powers intervened diplomatically to achieve a resolution on the issue. After much debate, Germany, supported by Britain and France, forced Czechoslovakia to an agreement at a hastily called meeting in Munich on September 29, 1938. The Munich Agreement formally handed the Sudetenland to Germany, in return for a German promise to respect the integrity of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Supporters of the agreement, most notably British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, praised the agreement for maintaining peace in Europe through the policy of appeasement. Others, including the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union denounced the agreement, although they did not prevent it. The Munich Agreement failed when, on March 16, 1939, Germany invaded Czechoslovakia. With the formal outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, former Czech president Edvard Beneš then formed an exile government to fight for the reestablishment of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia with support from the Allies.²⁰¹

While most of the Slovak centralists supported Prague, and eventually followed Beneš into exile, Slovak nationalists took advantage of the opportunity. With Prague on the ropes and desperate to maintain what remained of the state, the Slovak People's Party presented the Žilina Memorandum on October 6, 1938, demanding immediate Slovak autonomy. Prague accepted the demand. The agreement maintained Czechoslovakia, but allowed Slovak self-jurisdiction with its own provincial parliament and local administration. As the majority party in Slovakia, the SPP

²⁰¹ See: Lukes, *Czechoslovakia*. Edward Taborsky, *President Edvard Beneš: Between East and West, 1938-1948* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1981). Theodore Procházka, *The Second Republic: The Disintegration of Post-Munich Czechoslovakia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 87-111. Keith Eubank, "Munich," in *History*, 239-252.

formed a provincial government and selected nationalist politician and Catholic priest Jozef Tiso as its first premier. This system remained for a little less than a year. Prague led a military intervention in Slovakia on March 11, 1939 to dispose of leaders that it determined too pro-German. This decision provided Hitler a justification to invade Czechia, which occurred five days later. While Germany converted Czechia into the puppet Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Hitler provided Slovak leaders with an ultimatum: embrace German designs and receive nominal independence, or accept the same fate as the Czechs or, alternatively, a return of Slovakia to Hungary. Faced with this choice, the Slovak parliament declared independence on March 14, forming the independent Slovak Republic.

This period is the most controversial and debated point in Slovak history, and spurs particularly strong historiographical divisions. In its most polarizing form, this divide falls between those who perceive the government under Catholic Priest Jozef Tiso as traitorous ‘clerical-fascists’ who sold-out the Czechoslovak state to the Nazis for their own dictatorial power ambitions and those who see Tiso and his cohorts as political realists who scraped a certainly degree of political freedom out of an impossible situation. The ample literature in English on the theme mostly tries a nuanced treatment of these two views. The works more critical of the wartime regime, such as those by Yeshayahu Jelinek, James Ward, and Ivan Kamenec widely hold the wartime government accountable for its association with Germany, authoritarian government, and separation from the Czechs, although they each separate this government from earlier, more traditional Catholic nationalists. They each argue that the wartime government consisted of a radical fringe that used the Munich crisis to come to power, buoyed by German support, although they disagree over the levels of popular support and the likelihood

of alternate courses of action.²⁰² Other works have given the Slovak state more benefit of the doubt, particularly those of Stanislav Kirschbaum, Tatjana Tönsmeier, and Milan S. Ďurica. These scholars argue that the Hlinkaists only abandoned support for Czechoslovakia after Germany threw the situation into flux, and show how the isolated Slovaks lacked viable alternatives to their choices. They also emphasize the Slovak Catholic nationalist's relationship with Germany as based on minimizing German influence, and argue that the Tiso government was less radical than critics often charge, having protected Slovak domestic interests and freedoms throughout the war. They likewise place much emphasis on distinguishing between the Catholic nationalists and leaders supported by Germany such as Vojtech Tuka and Sano Mach. Scholars of both branches universally accredit the decision to independence to earlier debates over the Slovak Question, versus simply German manipulation.²⁰³

Judging the validity of these arguments from a domestic Slovak perspective is not within the purview of this study, although my stance falls somewhere between the two perspectives. Given their prior experiences, condemning the Slovak nationalists for not falling on their sword for Prague mostly just offers a scapegoat for Prague's failings on the nationality questions. The critics also underappreciate the near impossible situation facing Slovak leaders as a small people alone in a region of threatening hostiles and Hitler's domination of Europe. The casual labeling of 'clerical fascism' also neglects the fact that many of the Slovak national leaders supported

²⁰² James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1939-1945* (Boulder, Colo.: East European quarterly, 1976). Ivan Kamenec, *On the Trail Of Tragedy: The Holocaust in Slovakia* (Bratislava: H&H, 2007). Jörg Hoensch, "The Slovak Republic, 1939-1945," in *History*, 271-295. Jörg K. Hoensch, *Die Slowakei und Hitler's Ostpolitik: Hlinkas Slowakische Volkspartei zwischen Autonomie und Separation* (Köln: Böhlau, 1965). Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 121-150. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 111-149.

²⁰³ Tatjana Tönsmeier, "The German Advisers in Slovakia, 1939-1945: Conflict or Co-operation?" in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist*, 169-184. Tatjana Tönsmeier, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei: Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003). Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "The Slovak Republic, 1939-1945" in *Reflections*, 89-109. Kirschbaum, *Slovakia*, 185-204. Milan S. Ďurica, *The Slovak Involvement in the Tragedy of the European Jews* (Abano Terme: Piovan, 1989).

ideologies closer to Christian Democracy before the war, and they did seem to work genuinely toward keeping as much Slovak freedom as possible in a near impossible situation. The more sympathetic view of the Slovak state, rooted in Slovak nationalist desires to find positive meaning for the Slovaks first period of independent statehood, should in turn not minimize the degree to which the state was in the end a dictatorship. Likewise, the state ultimately accepted German demands and the moral culpability that came with it, most notably the Slovak participation in the roundup and expulsion of Jews.

The diplomatic perspective nonetheless shows that the Slovak Catholic nationalists made a concentrated effort to assert their own will and to weaken the German hold over Slovakia, but a lack of external support eliminated alternatives to German designs. Given the tenuous situation in Central Europe, the Catholic nationalists proved extremely effective in political diplomacy, being able to finagle some degree of independence as a small state surrounded by enemies and a domineering overseer in Nazi Germany. Likewise, while foreign affairs were an area where Berlin demanded strict compliance, this did not stop Slovak leaders from attempting to develop an independent foreign policy. As part of this effort, Slovak leaders attempted to reach out to the United States. Nevertheless, their affiliation with Germany was a devil's bargain that killed any chance of western support. Furthermore, the Slovak Republic was anathema to the Czechs and Slovaks in exile, and Former President Edvard Beneš had the means and knowledge of how to appeal to Allies. Using the past negative paradigms about the Slovaks now linked to the image of Nazi collaboration, the Czechoslovakists quite easily convinced Washington to oppose any conception of Slovak independence. This situation condemned the Slovak state to fend for itself, and the United States missed an opportunity to weaken German influence in Central Europe.

American Diplomats and the Slovak State

American diplomatic reports on Slovakia clearly show that the prevailing assumptions of Slovak dependency on the Czechs remained firm in the minds of American officials. As such, they refused to acknowledge the possibility of a genuinely self-determinant Slovak state. American officials viewed the state as secretly run by Germany, and repeatedly predicted that Slovakia was on the brink of partition or formal takeover by the Germans.

In the months preceding Munich, the situation with Germany took precedence, and the Slovak Question largely fell off the American radar. Ambassador Wilbur Carr expressed hope of the Czechs and Slovaks rallying together before Munich, and later noted displeasure when it did not occur. Nevertheless, when the Slovaks took advantage of the opportunity to gain autonomy, American officials took interest. U.S. Military Attaché Truman Smith called attention to the Slovak questions as “the most important live issue in Europe,” due to its central position and the claims on Slovakia by multiple countries. Carr actually presented the granting of autonomy as a positive in his first report on the subject. He praised it as the Slovaks deciding, “to cast their lot with the Czechs” and resisting foreign temptations. Carr nevertheless quickly shifted toward the sensationalized view of the Slovak autonomists promoted by the Czech nationalists. Carr dismissed Slovak autonomy as unnecessary, a result of German machinations, and the Slovaks as incompetent without Czech guidance. “The Slovak leaders are said to be concerning themselves far more with the outer trappings than with the responsive exercise of power. They have squandered a good portion of the funds they have received from the Czech government for current needs...Irresponsible anti-Czech elements continue to dominate political life in various parts of Slovakia.” In his most detailed report on the topic, Carr bemoaned how despite assumptions of unity between the Czechs and Slovaks, the opposite proved true. Accordingly,

“The Czechs were thus again caught between the Germans, who were demanding an authoritarian regime, and the Slovaks, who were determined that any such regime should not have any real authority over Slovakia.” Carr complained that autonomy proved “profound and far reaching and appears to be entirely disproportionate to the population and actual importance of Slovakia and perhaps to its ability, thus far unproven, to govern itself alone.” He likewise criticized Bratislava’s irreverence toward Prague, because “the Slovaks are taking what resembles a child-life delight in playing with a new toy.” Carr was, however, the only American official to predict that Slovakia would become an independent state.²⁰⁴

Taking a greater interest in Czechoslovakia following Munich, Washington sent George Kennan to aid Carr in Prague as Secretary of Legation from late 1938 through 1939. Kennan’s strength in geopolitics was on display in this post, and he generally gave an accurate reflection of how Slovakia fit into broader Central European politics. He made an effort to learn about conditions in Slovakia and even met with some Slovak leaders. Nevertheless, an ardent support of Czechoslovakism led Kennan to dismiss the Slovaks from any strategic considerations. He did not mask his personal interpretation of the Slovak autonomists as simply collaborationists, who had exploited the Czechs in order to gain autonomy. “Everything that the Czechs have tried to teach them during these twenty years they have flung back into the Czechs faces.” In his view, the Slovak leaders had “a riotous time playing at fascism,” otherwise wholly dependent on

²⁰⁴ “Carr to SoS, No. 222,” 22 Sep 1938, F#: 860F.00/555, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 226,” 23 Sep 1938, F#: 860F.00/559, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Report by Military Attaché in Germany (Smith), 5 Oct 1938,” & “The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the SoS,” 12 Oct, 1939,” *FRUS, 1938, VI* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 716-720, 723. “Carr to SoS, No. 285,” 7 Oct 1938, F#: 860F.00/567, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Developments in Czechoslovakia since the Munich Agreement,” 31 Oct 1938, F#: 860F.00/596, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 329,” 12 Nov 1938, F#: 860F.00/572, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 333,” 18 Nov 1938, F#: 860F.00/575, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 340,” 29 Nov 1938, F#: 860F.00/579, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Review of Czechoslovak Internal Developments since Munich,” 20 Dec 1938, F#: 860F.00/580, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak Autonomy Act and Recent Elections in Slovakia,” 21 Dec 1938, F#: 860F.00/586, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

Germany, lacking “the prerequisites for an independent political existence,” while “making awful fools of themselves” dreaming of a future as an autonomous state.

In January 1939, Kennan followed up Carr’s detailed report on the Slovak Question with one of his own. He appealed to the “well known” lack of development in Slovakia and he affirmed, “It thus fell to the Czechs, who had a far larger educated class, who were politically more mature, and whose spoken tongue is almost identical with Slovak, to provide a small army of administrators and educators and to assume extensive responsibility for the development of the Slovak population.” While Kennan praised the Czechs for doing much good for Slovakia, he criticized them for failing to train the Slovak intelligentsia adequately, leaving a younger generation of Slovaks “whose loyalty to the Czech state was slight and whose knowledge of the outside world was even slighter,” and that became easy prey for German machinations. He dismissed the Slovak leaders as lacking any concrete ideas for rule, equating the autonomist movement to “the pranks of a headstrong child who has been given a new toy.” He bemoaned that the shift away from Czech culture had destroyed Slovakia’s cultural development, marked by “higher learning establishments almost depleted of competent personnel.” He ultimately predicted Slovakia’s destiny was to become a helpless German satellite, as “its native leaders are so sadly lacking in experience, in imagination, in breadth of view, and in depth of purpose that they cannot hope to maneuver successfully for very long.” In turn, the eventual German invasion would “have to be regarded as an inevitable reversion to the natural state of affairs.”²⁰⁵

The Slovak Declaration of Independence March 14, 1939 spurred the most interest among American diplomats of any event in Slovakia history. The event caused ample confusion

²⁰⁵ George F. Kennan, *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), intro, xiii-xxv. “Kennan to SoS, 8 Dec 1938,” in *From Prague*, 7-9. “Kennan to SoS, 6 Jan 1939,” in *From Prague*, 11-13. “Report on Conditions in Slovakia,” 14 Jan 1939, F#: 860F.00/596, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Kennan to SoS, 17 Feb 1939,” in *From Prague*, 42-55.

and uncertainty within U.S. embassies across Europe as to its consequences for the future of the continent. American officials provided piecemeal second-hand details about events within Slovakia that overall praised the necessity of the initial Czech intervention, and presented the Slovak nationalists as having simply sold out to Germany. Accordingly, they perceived that Germany was dictating events in Slovakia irrespective of the Slovaks themselves.²⁰⁶

In Prague, Carr provided the ‘blow-by-blow’ account of the event. Examining debates over conditions for loans to Slovakia from Prague and the continued stationing of Czech troops in Slovakia, Carr openly warned about the Slovak Question likely leading to Slovak secession. Carr complimented Slovak nationalist politician Karol Sidor for an idea to make Czechoslovakia a federative system closer to Americas. Carr believed such an approach “would have the virtue of creating clarity in a political system which is now conspicuous for its vagueness and its contradictions,” and he affirmed at one point the need to uphold the terms of the Pittsburgh Agreement promising Slovak autonomy. Yet, Carr still criticized Slovak calls for proportional representation in the central government, “in view of the generally lower standard of education

²⁰⁶ The French and British saw the matter as an internal affair between the Czechs and Slovaks and chose not to intervene. The Soviets condemned the event, but took no action. The Polish and Hungarians expressed support for Slovak self-determination, but were upset that it occurred under German auspices and not their own. Among many other reports, see: “Slovakia,” 11 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/852, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Raymond Geist to SoS, No. 166,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/614, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Geist to SoS, No. 167,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/618, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Geist to SoS, No. 181,” 17 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/680, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Geist to SoS, No. 183,” 17 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/686, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Geist to SoS, No. 198,” 24 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “The Present Disorders in Czechoslovakia,” 13 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/819, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Brewster H. Morris to SoS,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/627, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Morris to SoS,” 18 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/695, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “William Phillips to SoS, No. 90,” 16 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/674, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “William Bullitt to SoS, No. 474,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/613, sec 2 & 5, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Bullitt to SoS, No. 476,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/624, sec 1 & 3, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Bullitt to SoS, No. 477,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/625, sec 1 & 2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Bullitt to SoS, No. 480,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/626, sec 1, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Herschel Johnson to SoS, No. 337,” 15 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/655, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Alexander Kirk to SoS, No. 121,” 19 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/706, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Howard K. Travers to SoS, No. 43,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/602, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “John Montgomery to SoS, No. 47,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/623, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Recent Events in Czechoslovakia as Depicted at Budapest,” 23 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/804, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Anthony Biddle to SoS, No. 997,” 10 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/733, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 18,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/629, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 20,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/636, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 19,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/641, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 24,” 16 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/666, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

and political experience in Ruthenia and Slovakia,” and he lauded the Slovaks who “realize that the existence of Slovakia can be secured only within the outline of the present Czechoslovak Republic.” Carr also criticized “sensationalist” reports in Britain and Germany over conditions in Slovakia, although he expressed belief that the threat of Slovak separation was rooted in internal issues and not simply German manipulation. After the Slovak Declaration of Independence, Carr stated his expectation that Slovakia would end up in the same situation as Czechia.²⁰⁷

Carr left Prague after the breakup of Czechoslovakia and Washington did not replace him. Consul General Irving N. Linnell became the lead American diplomat in Prague. Admitting the obscurity of the Slovak situation, Washington contacted Linnell for more information. Linnell responded that he remained in regular contact with the Slovak Consul in Prague and that he had exchanged letters with Slovak ministers in Bratislava. He affirmed that Slovakia was nominally independent, although it had given up some sovereign rights to Germany. He likewise added that the Slovaks continued to act internally without German guidance. Nevertheless, he recognized the shadow of German power over the Slovaks and their necessary capitulation when pressured. His reports gradually shifted to defining a “routine” German occupation in Slovakia. He noted confusion and doubt among the Slovaks over their future, and his reports eventually shifted to marking Slovakia as a vassal state, and as “ripe for partition.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ “Slovak – Czech Relations,” 9 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/739, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 18,” 10 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/600, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 19,” 12 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/604, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 21,” 13 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/606, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 23,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.01/197, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 24,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/611, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 26,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.01/196, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 45,” 16 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/673, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

²⁰⁸ Linnell also reported on many other specific issues such as the creation of Slovak passports, currency and a national bank, the border disputes between Slovakia’s neighbors, land reform, and Slovak anti-Semitism. Linnell also recognized by mid-June that the main role of German troops in Slovakia was for the impending invasion of Poland. “Department of State to American Consul in Prague,” 12 April 1939, F#: 860F.01/214A, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Linnell to SoS, 14 April 1939,” in *From Prague*, 119-121. “Linnell to SoS,” 15 April 1939, F#: 860F.01/213, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Linnell to SoS, 17 April 1939,” in *From Prague*, 122-124. “Linnell to SoS, 18 April 1939,” in *From Prague*, 125-128. “Linnell to SoS,” 26 April 1939, F#: 860F.00/845, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

Kennan also remained in Prague and made periodic reports on Slovakia. He openly chided the Slovaks for “treachery,” and he asserted that there was nothing obscure about Slovakia; it was simply a puppet state. He analogized Slovak independence to a dog on a leash, allowed freedom to roam, but given a return tug when headed in the wrong direction. Nevertheless, he presented the Slovak leaders as willing fascists, inclined to proceed “close to the heels of their master.” He presented the general population as unhappy with their situation. He praised the Protestants as pro-Czech, but also noted communist and pan-Slav support for the Soviet Union, as well as Slovak nationalists linked to Sidor who pushed limits to German control. Nevertheless, he expected none of these groups to act to change the situation. Overall, he concluded that Germany had no concern about whether Slovakia succeeded and predicted that the Germans would likely absorb Slovakia or trade it off to Hungary in the near future.²⁰⁹

The total amount of coverage drew down precipitously after the initial flurry in March, particularly after the formal outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939 consumed the American focus. American officials reported on various events, such as the Hungarian invasion of southern Slovakia and Ruthenia in early April, the texts of Slovak-German treaty of protection, and the foundation of the Slovak Constitution. Linnell reported on Slovak claims of trying to establish a constitutional government that was not authoritarian, which he accredited as true in terms of its application of a separation of powers. Nonetheless, he also criticized its undemocratic components, including the powers it accorded the SPP as well as its treatment of minorities, particularly the Jews.²¹⁰ Afterwards, American officials reported mostly about Slovak

“Conditions in Slovakia,” 15 May 1939, F#: 860F.00/855, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Political Notes from Prague Bohemia,” 16 June 1939, F#: 860F.00/883, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Bridges, “Mr Carr.”

²⁰⁹ “Notes on the occupation and Slovak Split, 21 Mar 1939,” in *From Prague*, 80-83. “Conditions in Slovakia,” 2 May 1939, F#: 860F.00/858, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Conditions in Slovakia,” 13 July 1939, F#: 860F.00/895, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

²¹⁰ Overall, American officials recognized the prevalence of Slovak anti-Semitism, but they also showed how the influence of Nazi Germany raised its intensity. Where Slovak anti-Semitism would have led without Nazi

officials and internal politics, focusing on the conflicts between the Catholic nationalists and the pro-German factions and their competing political maneuverings.²¹¹

After the United States entered the war on December 7, 1941, reportage on Slovakia dried up among government sources. Washington removed its diplomatic officials from Prague, and for the first two years of America involvement in the conflict, only Leland Harrison in Bern provided sparse reporting on Slovakia. Anthony Biddle became the formal ambassador to the exile governments in London, including Czechoslovakia, on February 11, 1941, although he reported little on the Slovaks before Rudolf Schoenfeld replaced him on January 28, 1944. Schoenfeld showed more interest in Slovakia, giving periodic reports on events there. American intelligence agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) also made periodic reports. American reports continued to focus on internal Slovak politics, as well as brief, periodic reports on the Slovak expatriation of Jews. By 1944, American accounts focused almost entirely on Slovak resistance to Germany, and

German influence is difficult to say, and it is a hotly contested topic among historians of the Slovak Republic. For examples of different views, see: Ward, *Priest*, 202-245. Kamenec, *Trail*. Tönsmeier, "German Advisers," 180-183. Kirschbaum, *Slovakia*, 196-200. Ďurica, *Slovak Involvement*.

²¹¹ Ambassador Alexander Kirk in Berlin provided most of the technical details on the Slovak government, and reported on Slovakia as much as American officials in Prague did. Hungary invaded southern Slovakia in order to absorb of Hungarian populated regions there. The Slovaks fought against this invasion, but Germany reneged on its promise to defend Slovakia, so long as Hungary did not move beyond the Hungarian populated regions. "Linnell to SoS, 3 April 1939," in *From Prague*, 106-110. "Dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia: Hungarian Participation therein and resulting Situation," 5 April 1939, F#: 860F.00/836, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Conditions," F#: 860F.00/858, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Text of Treaty between Germany and Slovakia concluded March 23, 1939, Concerning Conditions of Protection Accorded by the Reich to the Slovak State," 22 May 1939, F#: 860F.00/860, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 679," 20 July 1939, F#: 860F.011/10, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 686," 22 July 1939, F#: 860F.011/11, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "The New Slovak Constitution," 24 July 1939, F#: 860F.011/12, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "New Slovak Jewish Law," 10 May 1939, F#: 860F.016/70, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Transmitting a Translation of a Law Regarding Jewish Enterprises and Jews Employed in Enterprises in Slovakia," 24 May 1940, F#: 860F.016/91, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 3790," 30 Aug 1940, F#: 860F.016/92, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Anti-Semitic Measures in Slovakia," 6 Sep 1940, F#: 860F.016/93, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 686," 22 July 1939, F#: 860F.011/11, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 949," 29 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.00/900, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 1546," 3 Oct 1939, F#: 860F.00/906, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 1843," 26 Oct 1939, F#: 860F.001/124, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Composition of Present Government of Slovakia," 1 Feb 1940, F#: 860F.00/933, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Resignation of Herr Sano Mach from the Leadership of the Hlinka Guard in Slovakia," 7 June 1940, F#: 860F.00/952, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS, no. 3288," 30 July 1940, F#: 860F.00/966, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Reporting Recent Changes in the Government of Slovakia," 9 Aug 1940, F#: 860F.00/958, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

explaining the ways in which different Slovak political groupings were positioning for German defeat. Schoenfeld praised that the Slovaks were “united in a hidden or open opposition to the Germans,” adding, “this statement applies even to government circles in Bratislava.” Reports praised the success of Allied radio and print propaganda in Slovakia, and an OSS report recommended that Slovakia should be the route for smuggling in shortwave radios into former Czechoslovakia, due to its lax police control. Nonetheless, American diplomatic officials lacked many substantive sources from within Slovakia, and based almost all of their reports on information provided by the exile government. As such, their reports were more reflective of the biases of the exile government than a reflection of the situation in Slovakia, including claims that Catholicism was losing prestige due to Tiso, high levels of pan-Slav sentiment, and that 80-90% of the Slovak population wanted a return to pre-war Czechoslovakia.²¹²

Next to the sporadic general reports, a few officials produced longer surveys of the Slovak state, and they provided mixed views. Diplomat Harry N. Howard, for example, toed the Czechoslovakist line, describing the breakup of Czechoslovakia as entirely the fault of the Slovaks. Howard presented the Slovak nationalists as having converted fully to Nazi principles, applying the term ‘clerical fascism.’ He contrarily praised the Protestants in the state as supporters of Prague as well as the centralist Slovaks in exile such as Rudolf Viest, Ján Lichner,

²¹² This percentage was an arbitrary statistic peddled in exile Czechoslovak propaganda. “J. E. Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, Jr.,” 7 Mar 1942, F#: 860F.001/126, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Leland Harrison to SoS, no 2146,” 18 May 1942, F#: 860F.4016/96, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 384,” 16 Jan 1943, F#: 860F.01/485, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 4748,” 5 Aug 1943, F#: 860F.4016/99, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 5451,” 3 Sep 1943, F#: 860F.00/1010, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Use of Radio Receivers by Resistance Groups in Europe: Czechoslovakia,” 4 Dec 1943, *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports, Part IV, Germany and its Occupied Territories during World War II*, Microfilm, ed. Paul Kesaris (Washington D.C.: University Publications of America, 1977). “Cordell Hull to Roosevelt, 28 Jan 1944,” *OF*, F:5487, Rudolf E. Schoenfeld 1944, FDR. “Harrison to SoS, no 1126,” 28 Feb 1944, F#: 860F.00/1817, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Attaching a Report on the Situation in Czechoslovakia,” 6 April 1944, F#: 860F.00/1022, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Attaching a copy of report titled, ‘Situation in Czechoslovakia,’” 7 April 1944, F#: 860F.00/1023, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Conditions in Slovakia,” 13 May 1944, F#: 860F.00/1025, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Political and Economic Conditions in Czechoslovakia,” 12 July 1944, F#: 860F.00/7-1244, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Political Conditions in Slovakia,” 17 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.00/8-1744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 5490,” 23 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.01/8-2344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 5863,” 6 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-644, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

and Juraj Slávik. Howard concluded that the twenty years in Czechoslovakia had given the Slovaks “an education which has now been completed by the experience of living under a totalitarian regime,” and as a result, “there is evidence of an increasingly friendly feeling toward the Czechs.” An American clerk in Bern, Nathalie C. Grant, likewise produced a detailed “fact-book” of information and statistics on the Slovak state, for which she received a special commendation from the Department of State. An OSS report on the organization of the Slovak State produced late in the war, however, provided the most descriptive and balanced interpretation. Its writer acknowledged the long struggle for autonomy by the Slovak nationalists and accredited the Slovak alliance with Germany to strategic necessity in the face of German pressure. The writer also recognized how Slovakia was legitimately independent in much of its domestic affairs, and how the Slovaks worked around German control wherever possible. He noted that the Slovak ran all administration, so there was never a sense of occupation for Slovaks, and that the Slovaks benefitted economically from the relationship with Germany including an improved industry, low employment, and a buoyant agricultural sector. In spite of these components, the report concluded that Slovakia was still effectively a protectorate state equivalent to Bohemia and Moravia. It ascertained that Slovakia was so weak and dependent on German support that the Germans did not need an elaborate control system.²¹³

Events in Slovakia largely caught American officials off guard, based on what they had previously believed about Czech-Slovak unity, although the established narrative continued to pervade their thinking and the Slovak affiliation with Germany dissuaded any reconsideration. While American officials acknowledged Slovak claims of independence, they never accepted

²¹³ “Independent Slovakia, 12 Oct 1943,” *Harry N. Howard Papers (HH Papers)*, B:1, F:Czechoslovakia – Central and Southeastern Europe (3 Folders), Harry S. Truman Library (HT), Independence, Missouri. “Memorandum of Information on Slovakia,” 10 April 1944, F#: 860F.00/4-1044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “German Military Government over Europe: Slovakia,” 3 Jan 1945, *OSS, Part IV*.

them as legitimate. Just about all officials dismissed Slovakia as a puppet state, or close to becoming one. In his final report on Slovakia, Carr affirmed, “unmistakably that Slovak declaration of independence was the result of German intrigue and dictation and not the voluntary expression of the will of the Slovaks.” American official John Bruins likewise expressed that German control over Slovakia was “as extensive as that normally exercised by a great power over a protectorate.” Linnell dismissed the Slovaks for having “probably overrated the benevolence of their German protectors.” Kennan’s final report on Slovakia chastised hyperbolically that no government “placed itself more promptly or more thoroughly at the disposal of Germany” than Slovakia. Kennan affirmed no doubt that Berlin treated it as a territory under its control, and that Slovakia was economically dependent, due to “the primitive peasants who constitute the bulk of the population of the country.” Never did American officials acknowledge any semblance of Slovak agency in maintaining their limited independence.²¹⁴

The English Language Press and the Slovak Question

These images presented by American officials are unsurprising in context of the broader campaign to paint the Slovak Question in the framework of the Czechoslovakists in exile. The steady propaganda campaign to diminish the Slovak Question during the interwar years became a deluge following Munich. Academics and journalists sympathetic to the exile government

²¹⁴ Slovakia’s submission to Germany was no more thorough than other states, distinguishable only in that it happened earlier because Czechoslovakia was among Hitler’s first targets. “Linnell to SoS,” 25 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/768, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “John Bruins to SoS,” 22 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/737, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “John Bruins to SoS,” 22 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/739, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Report by the Embassy’s Military Attaché on the Occupation of Bohemia and Moravia,” 25 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/818, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 1084,” 10 June 1939, F#: 860F.00/881, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 123,” 16 June 1939, F#: 860F.00/875, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to SoS, No. 130,” 20 June 1939, F#: 860F.00/879, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “The New Slovak Constitution,” 24 July 1939, F#: 860F.01/12, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Phillips to SoS, no. 140,” 20 Feb 1940, F#: 860F.01/324, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Montgomery to SoS, no. 3288.” “Kirk to SoS, no. 173,” 30 July 1940, F#: 860F.01/348, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “German Treatment of Slovakia,” 30 December 1940, F#: 860F.01/364, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Morris to SoS, no. 3849 & 3850,” 23 Oct 1941, F#: 860F.00/982, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

abetted this process in a variety of works. R.W. Seton-Watson continued to produce histories showing Slovak dependency on the Czechs, and praising Czechoslovakism as the defining order for the Czechs and Slovaks. Seton-Watson, for example, dedicated his final historical survey of the Czechs and Slovaks to “The Czech people: Loyal and steadfast.” He justified a lesser treatment of the Slovaks for “the simple reason that for one thousand years Slovakia had no separate history of her own,” while likewise criticizing attempts to define the two as separate peoples. He rehashed the centralist criticisms about the Pittsburgh Agreement, and he scoffed that it exemplified “a clear proof of political immaturity and inability to interpret a more than usually explicit document.” Seton-Watson then commended “leading” Slovaks for their “strongly Czechophil and centralist views,” and likewise praised Prague centralism, “without whose help the work of regeneration and the maintenance of certain minimum standards would have been altogether impossible.” He condemned the Slovak autonomists, including Hlinka, as at best naïve, or as hypocrites supporting ideas that “would have produced immediate chaos,” or at worst “an irreducible minimum of fanatics immune from every argument.” Seton-Watson concluded with a recrimination of the Slovak state as a fascist regime.²¹⁵

Many other scholars and journalists followed suit. On one hand, they emphasized the inferiority of the Slovaks compared to the Czechs. For example, British foreign correspondent George E. R. Gedye praised the “industrious Czechs” for rescuing the Slovaks from the primitivism of the “entirely priest-ridden and backward Slovak peasantry.” British journalists Joan and Jonathan Griffin likewise asserted, “The Slovaks were always vassals. They had a fantastic peasant art, but politically they were children.” Historian S. Harrison Thomson produced a history of Czechoslovakia, which justified Prague centralism because “the Slovaks

²¹⁵ “The Slovak Question” (Doc 175) & “Seton-Watson to Fedor Ruppelt” (Doc 185), in *Seton-Watson*, 496-500, 536-537. R.W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), 250-263, 305-306, 310-336, 377-378.

had been much less prepared for the responsibilities of independent political existence than the Czechs.” These works thus ignored any sense of Slovak agency. International law scholar Rudolf Schlesinger justified that Slovakia, “seems incapable of existing without any outside support.” British Journalist Cecily Mackworth likewise dismissed the Slovak state a cheap facsimile of Nazi Germany. As such, the Slovaks were clamoring for a return of their Czech liberators. American Journalist Andre Visson gave the image of the Slovaks waiting on Beneš as their savior, “convinced that in postwar Czechoslovakia, even without the hyphen, the Slovaks of Slovakia would find fair and satisfactory solutions of their legitimate aspirations.” These figures furthermore presented the Slovak Question as an erstwhile non-issue, fabricated by Germany and an insignificant minority of Slovak agitators. Thompson, for example, held that the Slovak Question “was never considered a leading problem within the republic where the local conditions in Slovakia were generally known...Vital separatism in Slovakia between Versailles and Munich can be dismissed as a fantasy.” The Slovak autonomists were therefore attacked as vicious, unappreciative, traitors to their Czech benefactors. The Griffins chastised accordingly: “Vain, ignorant, dishonest, unscrupulous, cruel, like children that pluck the wings of flies, the Slovak Autonomists destroyed carelessly all that the Czechs and loyalist Slovaks had done in Slovakia.” Mackworth concluded that the Slovak autonomists had simply “disliked the progressive, democratic regime introduced by Masaryk in 1918.”²¹⁶

²¹⁶ These arguments generally referenced components such as German advisors in Slovakia, Slovak-German trade, German troops stationed in Slovakia, or similar state organizations between Germany and Slovakia. They, however, ignored any evidence showing Slovak differentiation. Mary N. Hawes, “Slovak Autonomy,” *Washington Post*, 11 June 1938, X9. G.E.R. Gedy, *Betrayal in Central Europe: Austria and Czechoslovakia, the Fallen Bastions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 408-410, 487. Joan & Jonathan Griffin, *Lost Liberty: The Ordeal of the Czechs and the Future of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 186-188, 199-200, 239-240. Rudolf Schlesinger, “Slovakia—Today and Tomorrow” *Contemporary Review*, 156 (July/Dec, 1939), 203-209. Cecily Mackworth, *Czechoslovakia Fights Back* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1942), 11-13, 44-54, 98-99. Andre Visson, *The Coming Struggle for Peace* (New York: Viking Press, 1944), 115-127. S. Harrison Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 196-233, 291-293. Preston

There remained a few exceptions. Some works were descriptive, without appealing to stereotypes and some gave voice to Slovak concerns. Many of these works came from scholars who were openly sympathetic to the Czechs and the Czechoslovak state, but still willing to hold Prague accountable for its failings on the nationality questions. The well-known pacifist Nicholas Murray Butler, for example, criticized the United States for not holding Prague to its promise at Versailles to organize Czechoslovakia on the Swiss model. British writer Robert Birley likewise criticized the Czechs for inadequately appreciating Slovak concerns. Embracing the idea of a federalized Central Europe, Rudolf Schlesinger later showed a willingness to recognize Slovak independent identity, shifting his earlier one-sided view, and he criticized Prague centralism. He even expressed a belief that the Žilina Agreement might have proven effective, had the Czechs and Slovaks established it in less tense circumstances.²¹⁷

Only a few works sympathized with the Slovak autonomists. Historian Walter Phelps Hall dismissed the idea of Czechoslovakism as having been a mistaken concept and doomed to the failure. British diplomat Nevile Henderson, who had served as Ambassador in Berlin during Munich, also openly criticized the Czechs for their “incredibly shortsighted and domineering in their treatment of the Slovaks,” which played into Hitler’s hands and abetted the destruction of the state. Linguist Alois R. Nykl likewise called on Prague to respect Slovak self-determination for the sake of unity of the Czechs and Slovaks and peace in Europe. Nykl also rebutted claims that Slovak autonomy equated support for fascism, and dismissed Czechoslovakism as an

Benson, *Unknown Country: The Story of Czechoslovakia* (London: The Czechoslovak, 1942). Brackett Lewis, *Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 4th ed. (New York: Czechoslovak Information Service, 1943), 55-59.

²¹⁷ Nicholas Murray Butler, *Why War?: Essays and Addresses on War and Peace*, Reprint Edition (Port Washington NJ: Kennikat Press, 1968), 19-85. R. Birley, *Czechoslovakia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 26-27. Rudolf Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1945), 298-304, 311-315. Walter Millis, *Why Europe Fights* (New York: Morrow and Company, 1940), 237-239.

unnecessary concept that only created antagonism in most Slovaks. He expressed support for Slovak autonomy and called for a plebiscite to resolve the issue:

If they really think that they can do better as an independent unit, after their past experience, let us leave them alone and be friends just the same, instead of eternally bickering...If they decide, by a real, not a fictitious majority, to achieve peace and collaboration in Czechoslovakia, very well. But if the Slovaks will join the fold with a hyphen and a capital S, I certainly do not see why they should be denied the privilege. And if they prefer to be left alone, let us leave them alone in accordance with Wilson's self-determination and more recently in accordance with the Atlantic Charter."²¹⁸

The Czechoslovak Government in Exile and the Slovak Question

The dominant support for the Czechoslovak image in the general English language press was only a supplement to the saturation of propaganda produced by the exile government during the war. This material, ranging from speeches to monographs to political pamphlets, coordinated and repeated almost verbatim the centralist viewpoint of the Slovak Question. Utilizing the groundwork established during World War I, it advanced images of Slovak primitiveness and dependency on the Czechs, asserted national unanimity between the Czechs and Slovaks, and dismissed the Slovak autonomists as an extreme minority unrepresentative of the Slovak people. The linkage of the Slovak state to Nazi Germany then further benefited these claims. According to centralist propaganda, Slovak dependency had made them an easy victim of German domination. Likewise, the Slovak autonomists proved their treachery and were now openly fascist, and the Slovak people were now once again clamoring for liberation through the return of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak state.

²¹⁸ Nevile Henderson, *Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937-1939* (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1940), 209-211. Walter Phelps Hall, *World Wars and Revolutions: The Course of Europe since 1900* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1943), 102, 229. Alois R. Nykl, "Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia" in *Slavonic and East European Review*, 22, 4 (1944), 99-110.

Beneš himself published much of this propaganda material. In various texts, Beneš presented the Slovak Question as a non-issue dredged up by Hitler and the Magyars, which had destroyed the natural order between the Czechs and Slovaks. He affirmed, “Nationhood can be carried to absurd limits...their efforts to destroy Czechoslovak unity by creating a separate state of Slovakia have been pitiable. Between Czech and Slovak regions there are natural and inseparable bonds.” Beneš likewise made clear his design to reestablish the pre-war state, with the same status for the Slovaks, for “the free development of the Slovak people can be assured only through collaboration with the Czechs and within the framework of the free Czechoslovak Republic.” He highlighted Slovaks working for him as an example of Slovak support for his return to power, while dismissing the “the so-called Slovak Quisling traitor government” as a façade under Gestapo control. After the United States joined the war, these images evolved to fit the contours of the Allied nations. Czechoslovakia, as represented by Beneš, stood with the Allies, while, standing with the Axis alliance, the Slovak state was their unquestioned enemy. Within this polarized view, the Slovak people stood in full support of the exile government.²¹⁹

Concurrently, Czech politician Hubert Ripka produced the most detailed Czech nationalist interpretation of the Slovak separation in English. He gave an image of the Slovaks as unified behind the pre-Munich state, and he presented the Slovak and Ruthene autonomists as unrealistic idealists who exploited Prague’s difficulties for their “small and backward provinces.” In reality, according to Ripka, the Slovaks and Ruthenes “were not politically mature enough for such a far-reaching autonomy as they achieved in November, 1938....these provinces awoke to

²¹⁹ Edvard Beneš, *The Fall and Rise of a Nation: Czechoslovakia 1938-1941*, ed. Milan Hauner (Boulder, Co: East European Monographs, 2004), 29, 55, 70-71. Edvard Beneš, *Czechoslovakia's Second Struggle for Freedom* (London: Czechoslovak Independent Weekly, 1941), 29. Edvard Beneš, *Nazi Barbarism in Czechoslovakia* (Chicago: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1940), 25-26. Edvard Beneš, *Edvard Beneš in His Own Words: Threescore Years of a Statesman, Builder and Philosopher* (New York: Czech-American National Alliance, 1944), 2-9. Eduard Beneš, *Future of the Small Nations and the Idea of Federation* (New York: Czechoslovak Information Service, 1942), 8. Eduard Beneš, “Czechoslovakia Plans for Peace,” *Foreign Affairs*, 23, 1 (October 1944), 26-37.

independent life only in 1918, when the majority of the people were illiterate and completely backward in national and political consciousness.” While he praised the Czechs for uplifting these regions, he blamed Prague for allowing the Slovaks to forget their Czech saviors:

It was indeed the Czechs and a handful of Slovak patriots who made possible the cultural, economic and social progress of the Slovak people...The Autonomists' demand was, in fact, to be exclusive master in a house which was built mainly by the efforts of the Czechs...Unlike the Prague Government, which contained a number of genuine patriots and distinguished experts, the power in Slovakia was mostly in the hands of persons whose moral qualities were questionable and whose administrative abilities were lacking; opportunism and greed, eagerness for a comfortable life without any exertion, were camouflaged behind the slogan of Slovak nationalism and Christianity.”

Accordingly, the Slovak state only survived propped up by Germany, while Hitler allowed the Slovaks to “play at having an independent government.”²²⁰

A pamphlet released by exile foreign minister Jan Masaryk, son of Thomas Masaryk, presented similar images. Whereas “among the more politically advanced elements of Czechoslovakia the totalitarian idea made little headway,” in Slovakia it “developed most rapidly.” While on one hand Masaryk claimed the Slovaks were resisting, committing sabotage, and reading illegal publications, on the other he presented Slovakia as passively “resigned herself to her fate,” waiting for an Allied rescue. The exile government also continued to utilize the Slovak centralists in its midst. Juraj Slávik, exile minister for the interior, praised how the more advanced Czechs had saved the Slovaks during World War I, and interpreted the division of the state as a trial that would ultimately reunite the two peoples in stronger unity. Slovak publisher and diplomat Alexander Kunoši likewise released a pamphlet in which he declared, “the Czechoslovak program was the Alpha and Omega ...even if they were less advanced or less

²²⁰ Hubert Ripka, *Munich: Before and After*, trans. Ida Šindelkova & Edgar P. Young (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), 142-143, 241-245, 255-260, 359-372, 390-393.

politically conscious than the Czechs, (*they*) knew where they ought to stand in time of liberation or crisis. The Slovaks were dominated by the idea of Czechoslovak unity.” Likewise, the Slovaks desired a firm Czech hand, for “there was no doubt whatever that the Slovaks were politically backward and needed a period in which to acquire political education and a riper experience.” Accordingly, the autonomists “lived by slogans and delighted in appealing to the religious and national prejudices of uneducated inexperienced Slovak men and women. Simple peasants under the immediate influence of their village priest were easy victims...they knew that they were appealing to a generation which had little or no sense of history.” Slovak Communist Vladimir Clementis also became a major propaganda agent for Beneš late in the war, and continued the image of the Czech savior: “without this help the Slovaks would never have been able to develop culturally and nationally in the miraculous way in which they have done in Czechoslovakia.”²²¹

These examples were among the multitude released by the exile government and individuals and organizations close to it. These sources repeated the same established narratives ad hominem. The Czechs were the saviors of the undeveloped and dependent Slovaks. Thus, the Slovaks maintained a desperate desire to return to the pre-Munich order. In contrast, the independent Slovak leaders had never been “real Slovaks,” simply demagogues “who suspected that the attempts of the Czechs to raise the intellectual level of the masses might deprive them of their influence.” Otherwise, they were unknown, irrelevant figures put into power by Germany. Only those Slovaks working for Beneš were legitimate Slovaks. The Slovak state was a puppet state and the government a clone of the fascist model. By the end of the war, this propaganda

²²¹ Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Czechoslovakia Fights Back* (Washington D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1943), 16-21, 76, 81, 145-159. Juraj Slávik, “Slovaks Hope and Fight,” *Central European Observer (CEO)*, 20, 22 (Nov 12, 1943), 354. Alexander Kunoši, *The Basis of Czechoslovak Unity* (London: Dakers, 1944). Vladimir Clementis, “The Slovak ‘State’: How it was Born and How it will Die,” *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 4, 4 (Jan. 1945), 341-349.

also began to condemn Slovak anti-Semitism, often marking it as part of the Slovak character, while ignoring equal participation for the final solution in Bohemia and Moravia.²²²

The Exile Government and the United States

This abundance of propaganda material reflected the ample resources Beneš and the exile government possessed for influencing the view of American officials. It is thus hardly surprising that the typecast images of Slovak Question transferred easily into American reports on the topic. Beneš and his colleagues, as former government officials, likewise benefitted from direct access to American officials. Beneš and his followers reached out to Washington for support early and often following Munich. After fleeing into exile, Beneš moved to Chicago, where he gave his first major speech following the breakup of Czechoslovakia on March 19, 1939. In this speech, Beneš praised America as a bastion of liberalism and tolerance, cheered the historic American-Czechoslovak relations, and made a direct call for Washington to support his exile movement. Czech propaganda outlets likewise emphasized the historic relationship between the United States and Czechoslovakia. Officials from Beneš to Czechoslovak Ambassador to the United States Vladimír Hurban contacted President Franklin D. Roosevelt and assistant Secretary of

²²² Vojta Beneš, *The Tragic Fate of Czechoslovakia*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Czech-American National Alliance, 1940), 6, 14. Vojta Beneš, *The Mission of a Small Nation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1941), 34-38, 51, 57-58. Josef Hanč, "Czechs and Slovaks Since Munich" *Foreign Affairs*, 18, 1 (Oct 1939), 102-115. "Slovak News – Memorandum by Dr. Čaplovič" (Doc 196), in *Seton-Watson*, 562-567. Bernard Batt, *The Czech Struggle Against Nazism* (New York: American Friends of Czechoslovakia: 1940). Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Two Years of German Oppression in Czechoslovakia* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1941), 16-19, 88-90, 122-137. Jozef Linhart, "Slovakia's Progress," *CEO*, 16, 20 (30 Sep 1938), 307-309. "The New Political Structure of Czecho-Slovakia," *CEO*, 16, 25-26 (16 Dec 1938), 393-394. "'Independent' Slovakia," *CEO*, 17, 2 (16 Feb 1940), 14. "Two Champions of Slovak Independence, part 1," *CEO*, 17, 6 (16 April 1940), 50. "Two Champions of Slovak Independence, part 2," *CEO*, 17, 8 (16 May 1940), 66-67. "A Letter from Slovakia," *CEO*, 17, 8 (16 May 1940), 68-69. "What Czechoslovakia Meant for the Slovaks," *CEO*, 17, 10 (15 June 1940), 87. Jan Čaplovič, "Germany and Slovakia," *CEO*, 17, 10 (16 Aug 1940), 129. Pavel Macháček, "Slovakia: A Mournful Anniversary," *CEO*, 18, 6 (15 March 1941), 64-65. Henry Ward, "Hungry Slovakia," *CEO*, 18, 22 (31 Oct 1941), 313. Josef Hanč, *Tornado Across Eastern Europe: The Path of Nazi Destruction from Poland to Greece* (New York: Greystone, 1942), 39-42, 198-199. Joseph Roucek, "The Czechoslovak Party System" in *JCEA*, 1, 4 (Jan. 1942), 428-445.

State Sumner Welles affirming their solidarity with America against Germany. The exile organizations also sent propaganda material to American officials, described as the “official account” of what had occurred during the breakup of the state.²²³

American officials, in turn, openly reciprocated this outreach. Where leaders in London and Paris soured on Beneš, most officials in Washington continued to support him and his vision for Czechoslovakia, instead of considering alternative approaches. President Roosevelt released a statement opposing the Munich Agreement, and in March 1939, both Roosevelt and Welles responded to Czechoslovak pleas with statements that affirmed American solidarity with Czechoslovakia and that asserted that Washington would not recognize the breakup of the state. Shortly after, Roosevelt sent a personal letter to Beneš affirming the same. Many American officials, including Carr, Bullitt, Biddle, and John G. Winant, openly supported this stance and maintained relationships with exile officials. When Congressman Adolph Sabath sent Secretary of State Cordell Hull a copy of an article claiming that the State Department opposed Beneš, Hull refuted it unequivocally. Beneš likewise had lunch with Roosevelt in May 1939, where Roosevelt confirmed America’s non-recognition of the new order in former Czechoslovakia. The United States formally recognized the exile government as the legitimate government of Czechoslovakia on July 31, 1941, and Washington offered it lend-lease funds. When America entered the war, Beneš wrote to Roosevelt declaring that the exile government had declared war

²²³ The University of Chicago invited Benes to serve as a visiting professor, after his flight from Czechoslovakia. Eduard Beneš, *An Appeal to the American People* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Roundtable, 1939). “America and Czechoslovakia,” *CEO*, 16, 10 (May 13, 1938), 147-148. “America is With Us,” *CEO*, 17, 9 (June 1, 1940), 83. “Hurban to Roosevelt, 20 June 1941,” *OF*, F:536, Czechoslovakia 1940-1945, FDR. “Transmitting Publication ‘The Basis of Czechoslovak Unity,’” 12 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.01/8-1244, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Frank Balek to Stimson, February 2, 1945” in *Henry Lewis Stimson, Microfilm edition of the papers of Henry Lewis Stimson in the Yale University Library*, ed. Diane E. Kaplan (New Haven: Yale University Library Manuscript and Archives, 1973). “Memorandum of Conversation (MoC): Desire of Dr. Beneš to visit the United States, 8 Mar 1943,” & “MoC: Proposed visit of Dr. Beneš to Washington, 22 Mar 1943,” *Sumner Welles Papers (SW Papers)*, B:161, F:7, Czechoslovakia, 1933-1943, FDR. “Edvard Beneš to Roosevelt,” 16 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/713, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Vladimir Hurban to Sumner Welles, 16 Mar 1939,” *President’s Secretary’s File (PSF)*, Diplomatic Correspondence, Czechoslovakia: 1938-44, B:28, FDR. “Hamilton F. Armstrong to Roosevelt, 20 April 1939,” *PSF*, B:28, FDR. “Beneš to Welles, 12 Mar 1940,” *SW Papers*, B:161, F:7, FDR.

on the side of the United States. Roosevelt responded that this act deeply moved him. Beneš visited the United States again in March 1943 to sew up support, meeting with Roosevelt and several foreign policy officials, before delivering a speech to the U.S. Senate. In a letter in October 1944, Roosevelt praised that the “Czechoslovaks” could “look forward confidently to the celebration of future anniversaries in the full enjoyment of unsuppressed freedom.” America saluted their efforts, for “the close ties and deep sympathy between the democratic peoples of Czechoslovakia and the United States have never ceased to find concrete expression since the days of President Masaryk and President Wilson.” Beneš expressed to Seton-Watson his sense of satisfaction over the American response, and for treating his organization warmly. Jan Masaryk likewise praised Roosevelt and Hull as the exile government’s biggest supporters.²²⁴

The correspondence between American and Czechoslovak officials only minimally addressed the Slovak Question. When it did, Czech officials simply repeated the same paradigms of a Slovak inability for self-government and a Slovak urgency for the return of the pre-Munich state. One Czech diplomat informed Chief of European Affairs Jay Pierrepont Moffat that because the Slovaks were poor and dependent on Prague, the Slovak state would not survive. In a memorandum to Welles describing his plans, Beneš dismissed how “no serious statesmen thinks

²²⁴ “Roosevelt to Leaders of Czechoslovakia, Germany, Britain, & France, 26 Sep 1938,” *OF*, F:536, Czechoslovakia 1933-1939, FDR. “Statement by the Acting Secretary of State,” 17 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/748, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Roosevelt to Beneš, 27 Mar 1939,” *PSF*, B: 28, FDR. “Bullitt to SoS, No. 508,” 18 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/689, sec 1, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Carr to SoS, No. 55,” 19 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.48/52, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to Juraj Slávik, 29 Mar 1941,” & “Biddle to Slávik, 21 May 1941,” *Juraj Slávik Papers (JS Papers)*, B:4, F:32, HIA. “John G. Winant to SoS, 24 July 1941,” *PSF*, Safe File, Czechoslovakia, B: 28, FDR. “Beneš to Roosevelt, 20 Dec 1941,” & “Roosevelt to Beneš, 27 Dec 1941,” *OF*, F:536, Czechoslovakia 1940-1945, FDR. “MoC: Beneš & Welles, 22 Mar 1943,” *SW Papers*, B:161, FDR. “Sabath to Hull,” 24 May 1943, F#: 860F.001/139, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hull to Sabath,” 29 May 1943, F#: 860F.001/139, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Edvard Beneš, *Czechoslovak Policy for Victory and Peace* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Service, 1944), 16-20. Beneš, *Beneš in His Own Words*, 131-134. Beneš, *From Munich*, 182-183. Beneš, “Czechoslovakia Plans.” “President Beneš’ Address to the US Senate,” *CEO*, 20, 11 (May 28, 1943), 169. “Roosevelt to Beneš, 27 Oct 1944,” *OF*, F:536, Czechoslovakia 1940-1945, FDR. “Notes on the Czech and Slovak Emigration” (Doc 208) in *Seton-Watson*, 587-591. CMFA, *Czechoslovakia Fights Back*, 177-178, 194-196. Edward Taborsky, “Politics in Exile, 1939-1945,” in *History*, 322-341. M. Evangela, “The White House and the Slovaks,” *Slovakia*, 15, 38 (1965), 51-63. Hauner, “Beginnings,” 111. David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt’s America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 42-48.

of an independent Slovakia, and about this matter there will not be the least dispute between free Czechs and the overwhelming majority of Slovaks.” In a later meeting with Winant in London, Beneš added that almost all Slovaks swore loyalty to the exile government. After America entered the war, these commentaries became more prevalent. Hurban sent Hull a report on conditions in Slovakia that listed essentially every component of Slovak society as supporting Beneš, for Slovakia “cannot be salvaged economically unless speedy help comes from the Czech lands.” Accordingly, he claimed, “the majority of Slovakia has a feeling of guilt toward the Czechs,” and “all reports concur in stating that much distaste exists for any discussion of autonomy.” Hurban followed this letter with another citing anonymous Slovaks that praised Prague centralism, because autonomy “would lead the Slovak people into the same situation in which they are now.” The exile government later sent a similar message to Schoenfeld asserting that the Slovaks had ceded all authority to the exile government, as well as one from Beneš that promised to treat those who did not uphold to Czechoslovakism “mercilessly.”²²⁵

Ultimately, United States officials embraced the view that the Slovak Question was the internal problem of Czechoslovakia. American officials embraced the image of the Slovak Republic as an illegitimate state at war with them and determined that the exile government remained the true representatives of the Slovaks. On the matter, Beneš stated his approval:

The reception accorded me as the head of an Allied state by President Roosevelt and by the Senate and Congress of the United States entirely fulfilled the expectations of the Czechoslovak Government abroad as well as of the people at home. Moreover, the conversations which I had with official persons showed once more that the United States

²²⁵ “MoC, Karel Breyška & Pierrepont Moffat,” 14 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.48/52, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Beneš to Welles, 12 Mar 1940,” *SW Papers*, B:161, F:7, FDR. “Report on the Question of the Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile,” 10 April 1941, F#: 860F.48/52, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Biddle to James Clement Dunn,” 23 June 1943, F#: 860F.001/159, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hurban to Hull,” 5 April 1943, F#: 860F.00/1002, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hurban to Hull,” 31 July 1943, F#: 860F.01/499, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Report on the Situation in Czechoslovakia,” 16 Feb 1944, F#: 860F.00/1016, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Address delivered by President Beneš before the Czechoslovak State Council on February 3, 1944,” 12 Feb 1944, F#: 860F.001/180, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

*recognized nothing of what happened at the time of Munich and afterward, and that all frontier changes, whether they concern Slovakia, Hungary or the so-called Sudeten Germans, are invalid. It filled me with confidence, also, to know that on all other questions, both political and non-political, our views did not differ in principle from those of American statesmen and of the American public.*²²⁶

The Diplomacy of the Slovak State

The diplomacy of the Slovak Republic offers a stark contrast to the exile approach. Where the exile government had to gain acceptance of its view and then bide its time until an Allied victory, the leaders of the Slovak state had to maneuver within the domineering shadow of Nazi Germany, while trying to counteract the negative images of the state abroad. The Slovak autonomists were largely political idealists whose primary goal was Slovak self-determination. They nonetheless approached this goal with a high degree of realism. They openly recognized their precarious position as a small state in a complicated and conflict-ridden region. They were, thus, willing to take any route to achieve and to protect Slovak autonomy. Most Slovak autonomists were happy with the Žilina Agreement, which met the goals originally established in the Pittsburgh Agreement. Thus, they held firm to the common state with the Czechs, until events pushed them otherwise. Their willingness to protect Slovak autonomy by any means ultimately pushed them into the arms of Germany, the only major power to consider their views.

German leaders schemed multiple options for Slovakia, including having it share the fate of the Czechs or bestowing it to Hungary or Poland. The Germans ultimately decided on an independent Slovak state due to the diplomatic efforts of Slovak officials. Peppered by German coercion after Munich, Slovak leaders from Jozef Tiso, Vojtech Tuka, and Ferdinand Ďurčanský

²²⁶ “Radio Broadcast by President Beneš on his recent visit to the U.S., and Czechoslovak Foreign Relations,” 30 June 1943, F#: 860F.001/153, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Beneš, *Czechoslovak Policy*, 16-20. Beneš, *From Munich*, 182-183. Beneš, “Czechoslovakia Plans.”

met on several occasions with German officials, including Hermann Göring, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and even Hitler himself. These Slovak leaders appealed to the justness of their cause for national self-determination, Slovakia's economic potential, and the benefits of a strategic cooperation in order to persuade Germany of the necessity of their independence. Resultantly, German leaders decided to treat Slovakia differently from Czechia, and assertively shot down determined Hungarian appeals to return Slovakia to Hungary. Nevertheless, Germany never committed a formal decision on the matter until late February 1939, and remained skeptical that the Slovak government would abandon Prague. The Slovak autonomists also debated the issue extensively, and upheld the relationship to Prague until forced otherwise. The decision by Prague to intervene militarily in March 1939 set German actions into motion.²²⁷

After temporary premier Karol Sidor told the German envoy in Bratislava that Slovakia planned to remain with the Czechs, Hitler called Tiso to Berlin to clarify the situation. Hitler informed Tiso that they he was willing to support Slovak independence, but he would have to reconsider his view if what he heard from Sidor was true. If Slovakia wanted and declared independence, he would support it. If it wanted to stay with Prague, however, Hitler would "leave the fate of Slovakia to events for which he was no longer responsible." Tiso thanked Hitler and returned to Bratislava, where he relayed the message to the Slovak Diet. Preceded by a symbolic vote of loyalty to the Czechs, the Diet made its formal declaration of independence on March 14, followed by a formal request to Germany for military protection.²²⁸

²²⁷ According to German records, Prague made its decision after Ďurčanský told the Czech foreign minister that he had met with German officials.

²²⁸ Hitler also told Tuka a month earlier that he could never support a policy that emboldens the Czechs and that Slovakia's future would be "dark" if it remained attached to the Czechs. "The German Charge d' Affaires in Czechoslovakia (Hencke) to the German Foreign Ministry (Doc 543)," *DGFP*, D, V2, 852-853. "Charge d' Affaires in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 29)," *DGFP*, D, V4, 32. "Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 38)," *DGFP*, D, V4, 39. "The Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 39)," *DGFP*, D, V4, 40. "Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 45)," *DGFP*, D, V4, 46-49. "Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Personal Staff (Doc 62)," *DGFP*, D,

Slovak independence thus ultimately came about as a geopolitical imperative. Slovak Ambassador to Germany Matúš Černák highlighted how despite being a very small country, instead of sitting back and complaining about their situation the Slovak Nationalists had “acted and taken risks” to achieve the best possible outcome for Slovakia. Slovak Foreign Minister Ferdinand Ďurčanský likewise described Slovak autonomist actions on independence as a scramble to try to salvage the best-case scenario in an impossible situation. He concluded, “The Slovak politicians who had acted in Slovakia’s name did not consider independence as a way out but as the most advantageous solution available to our nation,” by offering them international standing while preventing complete occupation by either Germany or their other neighbors. Germany offered the Slovaks the carrot of nominal independence with subservience to German policies in some areas, with the stick of complete occupation like Bohemia and Moravia or absorption by Hungary. The Slovak leaders knew that independence without the support from a great power would lead to their invasion. Thus, they accepted the devil’s bargain in the hope of preserving as much self-determination for the Slovaks as possible. Germany, in turn, made this deal as a means of using Slovakia as a counter example of German benevolence to contrast with its strident policy in Bohemia and Moravia. Slovakia became the token example for states that “behaved,” while the Czechia served as the opposite.²²⁹

V4, 73-77. “Conversation between Göring and Ďurčanský (Doc 68),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 82-83. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff (Doc 72),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 86-92. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff (Doc 73),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 92-93. “President of the Slovak Government to the German Foreign Minister (Doc 89),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 100-111. “Note by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 112),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 142-143. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff (Doc 168),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 209-213. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Secretariat (Doc 120),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 151. “Doc 168,” *DGFP*. “Charge d’ Affaires in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 180), (Doc 183), & (Doc 184),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 226-227, 229-231. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff (Doc 202),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 243-245. “The Slovak Minister President to the Führer & Chancellor (Doc 209),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 250. “Memorandum by the Head of Political Division (Doc 212),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 252-253. “Circular of the State Secretary (Doc 227),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 262-263. “Circular of the State Secretary (Doc 10),” *DGFP*, D, V6, 10-11. “Treaty of Protection between Germany & Slovakia (Doc 40),” *DGFP*, D, V6, 10-11.

²²⁹ “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff (Doc 286),” *DGFP*, D, V8, 326-329. Ferdinand Ďurčanský, “The Political Background of the Origin of the Slovak Republic,” in *Slovakia in the 19th*

Slovak leaders such as Tiso, Ďurčanský, and Sidor fully understood the precariousness of this relationship, and that their status remained at the mercy of German whims. Nevertheless, the characterization of Slovak nationalists as a complacent tool of German domination remains inaccurate. German foreign policy documents show that the Slovaks remained firm in keeping the footprint of the Germans troops in Slovakia as limited as possible. The Slovak government agreed to the stationing of German troops only within a narrow strip on their northern border, and openly asserted a right to sovereignty over this territory, including the need for the Slovak army to remain there and clear assurances that Slovaks in these territories remained under Slovak jurisdiction and not German. They likewise expressed concern about German troops alienating local populations and exploiting Slovak resources, and requested a lighter German military footprint. They also complained openly that the stationing of these troops hurt their image abroad, giving the exile government ammunition to promote the image of Slovakia under occupation. Amazingly, up to the outbreak of the war, German officials conceded on these requests. Germany scaled down its military footprint and allowed the Slovak military in the areas where Germany had stationed troops, even against the complaints of its own military. It did so in order to maintain credibility to the claim of true Slovak independence.²³⁰

Nevertheless, several German officials began to harp about how their relative leniency was bringing Slovakia into conflict with German interests, and with the start of the war, the level

& 20th Centuries, 124-155. Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. Constantine Čulen, "President Tiso and America," *Slovakia* 11, 2 (Sep-Dec 1961), 58-60. Karol Sidor, *Šesť Rokov Pri Vatikáne* (Scranton, PA: Obrana Press, 1947). Joseph Staško, "Štefan Osuský's Attempts to Establish Contacts with Slovakia in 1939: A Personal Memoir," *Slovakia*, 32, 58-59 (March 1958), 9-33. Jelinek, *Parish Republic*, 17-31. Hoensch, "Slovak Republic, 271-295. Kirschbaum, *Slovakia*, 185-204.

²³⁰ "The Consul General and Charge d'Affaires in Slovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 95)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 114-115. "Memorandum by the Head of Political Division (Doc 117)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 146. "Conference with the Slovak Ministers in the Foreign Ministry on April 19, 1939 (Doc 235)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 294-295. "The Charge d'Affaires in Slovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 554)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 755-762. "Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 611)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 840-841. "Memorandum by the Secretary of State (Doc 696)," *DGFP*, D, V6, 952-953. Tönsmeier, "German Advisers, 169-184. Tönsmeier, *Dritte Reich*. Kirschbaum, "Slovak Republic" in *Reflections*, 89-109. Valerián Bystrický, "Slovakia from the Munich Conference to the Declaration of Independence," in *Slovakia in History*, 157-174. Ďurica, *Foreign Policy*, 6-26. Vnuk, "Prvé kroky," 169-199.

of independence granted to the Slovak government gradually declined. The Slovak government conceded operative control over its military to Germany before the invasion of Poland, under agreement that Berlin would not use Slovak troops outside of Slovakia. In return, the Germans rejected Hungarian claims on Slovakia and rewarded the Slovaks with territories from Poland. The Germans also continued to respect a relative freedom over domestic issues by the Slovak government, although they began to force strict compliance on certain areas, most notably in meeting Nazi standards on the treatment and eventual exportation of Jews. Germany also consumed large amounts of Slovak resources, particularly agriculture, forestry and minerals, but also Slovak manufactured goods, and gained control of up to 64% of overall capital in Slovakia. The German officials also never fully trusted the Catholic nationalists, including Tiso, who continued voice that Catholicism should serve as the guiding principle for Slovakia in contrast to the vision offered by Nazi Germany. The Germans did consider removing the Catholic influence in politics, and pro-German faction in Slovakia, led by Tuka and Mach, encouraged a German overthrow of Tiso and his government. Eventually, in August 1940, Hitler called Tiso, Tuka and the other Slovak leaders to Berlin, where he ordered the restructuring of the Slovak government to remove several Catholic nationalist leaders in favor of Tuka, Mach, and their allies. Hitler allowed Tiso to stay in office, however, due to his relative popularity among Slovak Catholics. From this point on, Berlin progressively whittled away at Slovak governing independence.²³¹

²³¹ “Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 187) & (Doc 401),” *DGFP*, D, V7, 195, 395-396. “The Director of the Political Department to the Legation in Slovakia (Doc 214),” *DGFP*, D, V7, 229-230. “Memorandum by the Director of the Political Division (Doc 222),” *DGFP*, D, V7, 236. “The Minister in Slovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 237),” *DGFP*, D, V7, 252-253. “The Foreign Minister to the Legation in Hungary (Doc 67),” *DGFP*, D, V8, 63-64. “Memorandum, by the Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department (Doc 185),” *DGFP*, D, V8, 201-202. “Memorandum (Doc 286),” *DGFP*. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat (Doc 360),” *DGFP*, D, V8, 412. “Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 409),” *DGFP*, D, V8, 476-477. “Minute by State Secretary Keppler (Doc 2),” *DGFP*, D, V9, 16-17. “Memorandum by the Minister to Slovakia (Doc 17), (Doc 205), & (Doc 263),” *DGFP*, D, V10, 16-18, 268-269, 375-376. “Conversation between the Führer and Slovak President Tiso in the Presence of the Reich Foreign

Throughout this process, the Slovak diplomats and foreign policy leaders put forth every effort to act as an independent state. The first Slovak foreign minister, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, made this approach a priority of his leadership. A scholar of political science and international law before his political career, he was a strict political realist, who framed the decisions of the Slovak government from Munich on as the natural act of a nation working in its own political interests. He held the view that the Slovaks had, to their own peril, too often acted in the interest of other nations with the hope of being rewarded. As Foreign Minister, he tried to arrange a foreign policy independent of Germany and with the outbreak of war, to maintain Slovak neutrality. On the war, he claimed, “it was unthinkable for me to have the Slovak Republic drawn into a conflict on whose origin, course and determination Slovakia could have no influence.” He gave instructions to Slovak diplomats abroad to uphold and promote a policy of neutrality and he likewise ordered the military to treat any POWs placed in Slovakia in the manner of a neutral country. Slovak diplomat Joseph Mikuš claimed that the Slovak diplomatic corps actively worked to carry out this policy, and praised it as the most independent branch of the state. According to Jozef Staško, who served as liaison between the Slovak state leaders and the Slovaks in Western Europe, Ďurčanský also worked to arrange an independent overseas cultural and political organization in the West, focused on publishing. This organization would have the opportunity to criticize Germany while also still appealing for Slovak independence. These cultural efforts never materialized, however, due to German scrutiny.²³²

Minister, Slovak Minister President and Foreign Minister Tuka, Minister of the Interior Mach, and Minister Killinger, (Doc 248),” *DGFP*, D, V10, 345-348. “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Ministry (Doc 393),”²³² Ďurčanský, “Political.” J.M. Kirschbaum, “Prof. Dr. F. Ďurčanský—Politician, Scholar and Fighter for Slovakia’s Independence,” *Slovakia*, 17, 40 (1967), 153-160. Mikuš, “Diplomatic Service,” 38-41. Milan S. Ďurica, *The Political Activities of Dr. Jozef Kirschbaum in 1939-1945 as Described in Secret German Documents* (Abano Terme: Piovan, 1988). Staško, “Osuský’s Attempts.” Ďurica, *Foreign Policy*, 6-26. Vnuk, “Prvé kroky,” 169-199

In many respects, the independent-mindedness of the diplomatic corps was due to it serving as the landing spot for Catholic nationalists distrusted by Germany. The most notable case of this situation was Sidor, whom Tiso assigned as ambassador to the Vatican after Hitler decided Sidor was untrustworthy. Sidor retained support in Slovakia, however, and from his position kept regular contact abroad with the Slovak-Americans and Slovak exiles. The Germans later considered demanding his removal from Rome, attacking him as a proponent of “international Catholicism,” but ultimately relented. This case occurred again with Jozef Kirschbaum, who was general secretary for the SPP, before Berlin forced his demotion to the diplomatic corps in July 1940 for his support of Ďurčanský. The Germans became annoyed with other officials, including Konštantín Čulen, who after becoming head of propaganda came under German scrutiny for making anti-German statements while in the United States and predicting a western victory in the conflict. Mikuš likewise claimed that Hitler regularly became angry at the activities of the Slovak diplomats, notably when they arranged trade agreements without German consent, and that Hitler ultimately sent German advisors to watch over them.²³³

Ďurčanský’s policy, needless to say, did not sit well with German officials. German Secretary of State Wilhelm Keppler criticized that Ďurčanský “attempts to put on airs as if Slovakia were a great power and hardly in need of German good will.” Another official attacked Ďurčanský as “not pro-German,” for attempting to move Slovakia toward a more flexible foreign policy. Tuka, furthermore, openly denounced the policy of Slovak neutrality to German officials, which he excused as a “short-sighted” act done by young politicians. The German ambassador in

²³³ Nazi leaders distrusted Sidor due to his closeness to the Polish. German documents state that they accepted Tiso’s proposal, rather than completely purge him from government service, only because he had immediately released the Slovak leaders arrested during the purge by Prague. Sidor, *Šest Rokov*. Mikuš, “Diplomatic Service.” Ďurica, *Political Activities*. Staško, “Osuský’s Attempts.” Charles Murin, “In Honor of Joseph M. Kirschbaum,” in *Slovak Politics: Essays on Slovak History in Honor of Joseph M. Kirschbaum*, ed. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (Cleveland: Slovak Institute, 1983), xii-xviii. “Memorandum by the Head of Political Division (Doc 191),” *DGFP*, D, V4, 236-237. “Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department (Doc 309),” *DGFP*, D, V9, 420-422. “Memorandum (Doc 263),” *DGFP*. “Memorandum (Doc 393),” *DGFP*.

Slovakia pushed for changes for several months, before Hitler finally responded. Irrked by a letter from Ďurčanský to the Italian government asserting Slovak neutrality, Germany officials raided the Slovak embassy in Rome, where they discovered efforts to negotiate British recognition of Slovak neutrality. Ďurčanský's policy ultimately led Hitler to demand the reorganization of the Slovak government in August 1940, leading to Ďurčanský's dismissal. Expelled from office, Ďurčanský nevertheless continued to fight for Slovak autonomy independently. Tuka took over as Foreign Minister, and led Slovakia further in line behind Germany, despite continued resistance among Slovak diplomats. Slovakia joined the Tripartite Pact, and then later followed Germany into the war against the Soviet Union.²³⁴

The Slovak Republic and the United States

The Slovak diplomats based their strategy upon the normalization among the nations of the world of the idea of an independent Slovakia. They hoped that by building independent relationships with the West, they could balance the Western powers off Germany to wiggle their way into some form of neutrality, in order to assure the continued existence of their state against the threat of both Germany and the Czechoslovak exile government. The United States was a major part of this strategy. This effort to achieve foreign policy independence was nonetheless difficult given the German shadow looming over them, due to both the threat of German reaction and the image of subservience that accompanied the Slovak-German relationship.²³⁵

²³⁴ The Nazi's also accused Ďurčanský, who also served as interior minister, of not enforcing anti-Jewish policy to German standards, instead treating them "as valuable and indispensable fellow citizens." Ďurčanský, "Political." Kirschbaum, "Ďurčanský." "Keppler (Doc 2)," *DGFP*. "Memorandum (Doc 309)," *DGFP*. "Memo by Minister Killinger (Doc 407)," *DGFP*, D, V9, 537-540. "Memorandum (Doc 17)," *DGFP*. "Memorandum (Doc 205)," *DGFP*. "Memorandum (Doc 263)," *DGFP*. "Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Ministry (Doc 393)," *DGFP*, D, V11, 693-698. "Minister in Slovakia to the Foreign Ministry (Doc 656)," *DGFP*, D, V12, 1059-1060. "Foreign Minister to the Legation in Slovakia (Doc 672)," *DGFP*, D, V12, 1081. "Memorandum by the Dirigent of the Political Department (Doc 500)," *DGFP*, D, V13, 823-825. Vnuk, "Prvé kroky," 169-199.

²³⁵ Mikuš, "Diplomatic Service," Ďurica, *Political Activities*. Staško, "Osuský's Attempts."

This approach depended firsthand on obtaining recognition of the Slovak state abroad. The Slovak Republic achieved diplomatic recognition from twenty-seven states, including Germany, Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and Poland. Mikuš claimed that the state also proved successful in establishing firm economic and cultural relations with the states with which it had relations.²³⁶ As part of this process, the Slovak government put considerable effort toward establishing formal relations with the United States. Along with their overarching goal to have America legitimize their status and offer a balance to German influence, Slovak officials hoped to facilitate good will with a country they viewed fondly and with which they had important connections through the Slovak-Americans. Washington, however, did not reciprocate this sentiment. Ďurčanský made the first formal request to Washington after the Slovak Declaration of Independence, which the State Department filed away unanswered.

This coldness did not dissuade Bratislava, which continued to reach out to the United States. Ignored by Washington, they responded by having their ambassadors in recognized countries reach out to their American counterparts. Slovak ambassadors in Berlin and Budapest contacted the American embassies there, stating a desire for an economic relationship and affirming that the Slovak government had no interest in conflict with United States. The ambassador to Budapest then followed up with a personal request from Tiso for recognition. This process continued in Rome, where the Slovak ambassador requested a personal interview to argue that Slovakia was truly independent and not controlled by Germany. He complained about an American requirement to re-label Slovak-produced goods entering the United States as “made in Germany” rather than Slovakia, and he likewise affirmed that Bratislava was willing to uphold all previous agreements made between the United States and former Czechoslovakia. Later, the Slovak ambassador in Bucharest called on the American ambassador to encourage recognition.

²³⁶ The Allied states all later rescinded recognition after going to war with Nazi Germany.

He appealed to the large number of Slovaks who had immigrated to the United States as a point of unity and practical necessity for normalized relations. The Slovaks continued this practice as late as March 1940, when the Slovak ambassador informally stopped by the American embassy in Moscow. The American ambassador agreed to relay to Washington the Slovak desire for formal relations before sending the Slovak away. Slovak officials also continued to petition against the exile government as false representatives of the Slovak people.²³⁷

Even though American officials acknowledged the widespread recognition of the Slovak Republic in Europe, Washington remained firmly committed to non-recognition. Washington established a policy to recognize de facto German control over Czechoslovakia, but not de jure. In doing so, it continued to recognize pre-war Czechoslovakia territorially, but officially as under German occupation. Accordingly, it categorized Slovakia legally as part of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. On March 17, 1939, Ambassador Carr wrote to Washington stating that no Czechoslovak officials remained that he could communicate with, and he requested his recall from Prague. Washington obliged, giving Carr instructions to close the American embassy. It left open only the Consulate General under Linnell to handle consular duties. The consulate in Prague continued to serve officially for Slovakia. Likewise, Washington continued to recognize pre-Munich ambassador Vladimír Hurban as Czechoslovak ambassador to the United States.²³⁸

²³⁷ "Ferdinand Ďurčanský to U.S. Department of State," 14 March 1939, F#: 860F.01/211, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Relations between Slovak Representatives and American Embassy," 17 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/231, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Montgomery to SoS, no. 117" 23 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/232, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Question of De Facto Recognition for Slovakia," 7 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.01/264, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Phillips to SoS, no. 234," 26 June 1939, F#: 860F.01/249, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Call of New Slovak Minister to Romania upon American Minister," 28 September 1939, F#: 860F.01/285, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. 311," 19 March 1940, F#: 860F.01/326, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "J. Edgar Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, Jr.," 20 Oct 1941, F#: 860F.01/423, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Mikuš, "Diplomatic Service." Ďurica, *Foreign Policy*, 35-37.

²³⁸ "John Bruins to SoS," F#: 860F.00/737. "Aide Memoir from British Embassy in Washington, D.C.," 12 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/239, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Kirk to SoS," 18 Sep 1939, F#: 860F.01/270, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "The Acting Secretary of State (Welles) to Secretary of the Treasury (Morgenthau), March 17, 1939," "The Acting Secretary of State (Welles) to the German Charge d'Affairs in Washington (Thomsen), March 20, 1939," & "Instruction to the Minister (Carr) Accredited to Republic of Czechoslovakia, March 20, 1939," in *Documents on American Foreign Relations, January 1938-June 1939*, eds. S. Shepard Jones & Denys P. Myers (Boston: World

For Washington, the working reality in Slovakia thus became the “so-called Slovak state.” When approached by the Argentine ambassador on the matter of Slovak recognition, Moffat replied that the United States viewed Slovakia as under German occupation and would therefore not communicate with the Slovak government. In response to the repeated Slovak overtures, the State Department sent an internal memo affirming its policy that there was no possibility of American recognition so long as the “German occupation” continued in Slovakia. It gave no credence to Slovak independence, asserting that it considered Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia as under de facto administration of Germany. It refused to budge on this policy, “despite the hardships that may be suffered because of the non-existence of an American consular office in Slovakia, both by those residents in Slovakia and in the United States.” It then ordered all officials not to respond to Slovak inquiries.²³⁹

The United States dealt with many logistical issues because of this policy, and officials received many confused letters on matters, such as how to deal with international business contracts, how to approach documents produced in Slovakia, and on mailing to Slovakia. In most cases, the Department of State sent out a form letter stating its lack of recognition and providing little other clarification. It did accept, however, interaction based on the conceptualization of Slovakia still being part of Czechoslovakia. For example, it signed off to the Postmaster General on mail to Slovakia, so long as it was addressed to “Slovakia” and not to the “Republic of Slovakia.” The most problematic logistical issues arose concerning the movement of people. The necessity of working through the American consulate in Prague proved difficult. The

Peace Foundation, 1939), 301-304. “Carr to SoS, No. 51,” 17 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/691, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Green H. Heckworth to Robert J. Clare, Jr.,” 5 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/230, *DoS CS 1910-44*. This approach was common for much of Central and Eastern Europe. Washington continued to recognize the exiled Polish government, and never recognized the wartime Croatian state, although it recognized other states, such as Vichy France.

²³⁹ “MoC: Slovak State,” 18 April 1939, F#: 860F.01/218, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum on Slovakia,” 17 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.01/268, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Unk to Roosevelt, 5 April 1939,” *OF*, F:536, CS 1933-1939, FDR.

consulate had limited connections in Slovakia and individuals had to proceed through the de facto separate state in Bohemia and Moravia to reach it. The American Consulate in Vienna, which was closer to Slovakia than Prague, appealed to Washington about the many complaints over the lack of consular services. The American Jewish Congress also sent complaints over this situation, for Jews trying to flee to the United States from Slovakia could not cross into Bohemia and Moravia to reach the American consulate to complete their applications. The Department received many requests for an American consulate in Bratislava, but held firm that everything had to continue functioning through Prague. It would not recognize the Slovak state.²⁴⁰

With the United States deliberately ignoring them, the outreach to individual embassies was the best option for Slovak leaders. Bratislava was not in a strong position to wage a direct propaganda campaign toward the United States comparable to that pursued by the exile government, which had its resources based in the west and direct contacts with American officials. The Slovak state produced a few works published abroad, such as a national history of the Slovaks by historian František Hrušovský. They also received some propaganda support from Germany, although these works were mostly in the German language. Slovak leaders such as Tiso and Ďurčanský also regularly gave speeches directed toward international audiences. They pleaded for support on the Slovak Question on its own merits, in terms of the right to Slovak self-determination and the threats posed to it by Slovakia's larger neighbors, and not based on Slovakia's perceived relationship with Germany. They likewise attempted to expose the images

²⁴⁰ According to James Ward, the Slovak Republic sent about 58,000 Jews to Germany during the Second World War less than 1,000 of which survived. Ward, *Priest*, 235. "Pierrepoint Moffat to Philip A. Levy," 5 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/224, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Heckworth to Alfred S. Homes," 21 Oct 1939, F#: 860F.01/282, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Linnell to SoS," 6 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/226, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Harry E. Carlson to SoS," 18 Nov 1940, F#: 860F.01/363, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "James A. Farley to SoS," 13 May 1939, F#: 860F.01/227, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Cordell Hull to SoS," 27 June 1939, F#: 860F.01/227, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Farley to SoS," 14 July 1939, F#: 860F.01/259, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Farley to SoS," 29 Dec 1939, F#: 860F.01/309, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Walton Moore to Farley," Date Unk, F#: 860F.01/309, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Carlson to SoS," 4 Feb 1941, F#: 860F.01/371, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Stephen Wise to George Messersmith," 4 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.4016/79, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Messersmith to Wise," 18 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.4016/80, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

propagated by the exile government as falsehoods to affirm that the Slovaks were happy with independence and did not desire reunion with the Czechs. American officials noted and reported on these speeches, although they simply dismissed them. The Slovak government also sent Čulen to the United States in 1938 to build a working relationship with the Slovak-Americans and to try to counter negative images. Although Čulen was successful in the former goal, he had no success in the latter before Bratislava recalled him. As press secretary, Čulen released several articles and radio broadcasts into the west, denouncing the right of the exile government to speak for the Slovaks and trying to appeal to the idea that the independent state had acted to achieve the best-case scenario in an impossible situation. Ultimately, the Slovak-American nationalists continued the role they had embraced during the interwar period as the primary organizers of autonomist propaganda in the United States, and the Slovak state left the task in their hands.²⁴¹

The Slovak State and “War” with the United States

During the war, the Catholic nationalist leaders in Slovakia continued to view the United States favorably, as they were rooted in their sense of connectedness to America through the Slovak-Americans. They concentrated on avoiding conflict with the United States. According to Čulen, “the Slovaks did not hate America, and never could. Too many of them had been to America and tasted of the fruits of liberty and freedom.” Tiso likewise perceived Slovakia’s geopolitical position as forced by the circumstance of a small state stuck in the midst of great power conflict, one that placed Slovakia tragically on the opposite side from the United States.

²⁴¹ Michael Schwartz, *Die Slowakei: Der Jüngste Staat Europas* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Goldmann, 1939). Karl Megerle, *Germany and the End of Czecho-Slovakia* (Hamburg, 1939). František Hrušovský, *Die Geschichte der Slowakei* (Bratislava: Verlag ,die Slovakische Rundschau, 1941). “Kirk to SoS, no. 508, sec 1&2,” 17 June 1939, F#: 860F.00/876, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Kirk to SoS, no. 1738,” 18 Oct 1939, F#: 860F.01/278, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum (Doc 360),” *DGFP*. “Report,” F#: 860F.00/596, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Czechoslovak London Government’s Proclamation Denounced,” *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:5, HIA. Gregory Ference, “Introduction,” in Čulen, *History*, xxiii-xxvii.

He bemoaned counterfactually that had the United States been its direct neighbor, Slovakia would have happily agreed to become a protectorate of it instead of Germany. Staško likewise claimed that Tiso remained optimistic that the West would ultimately recognize the justness of Slovak self-determination and the Republic. Accordingly, the Slovak Catholic nationalists excused American hostility to the Republic, blaming Washington's stance on the exile government. Čulen summarized this sentiment: "America was not at war with Slovakia—Beneš was. And unfortunately, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was gullible enough to trust Beneš."²⁴²

When the United States entered the war in December 1941, the sentiment to remain neutral still held firm for many Slovak Catholic nationalists. The issue of a Slovak declaration of war though proved complicated. The primary evidence is a communiqué released by the Slovak national press service in the name of Foreign Minister Tuka, declaring war on the United States. The exile government highlighted the communiqué as a legitimate declaration. As President, Tiso, though, discredited the communiqué after its release and explicitly asserted no desire for war against the United States. The Slovak diplomatic corps also continued to believe strongly in Slovak neutrality, and openly denounced Tuka's communiqué. The Slovak Republic deliberately avoided military engagement with the western Allies, although they openly declared war against the Soviet Union and participated in the conflict there. Qualifying Slovakia's war status remains, therefore, a matter of perception. The Catholic nationalists argued that Slovak was never at war against the United States—and legally they were probably correct. Nevertheless, Washington assumed that, having signed the Tripartite Pact, Slovakia was at war with it. As such, America was at war with the Slovak Republic, whether or not it reciprocated.²⁴³

²⁴² Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. Čulen, "Tiso and America." Staško, "Osuský's Attempts," 9-33.

²⁴³ Notably, American officials paid no particular attention to the debate over Slovak declaration of war during the conflict. It was only after the war, in the debate over the treatment of the former Slovak state leaders, that Washington considered the debate over the Tuka communiqué, ultimately accepting it as a legitimate declaration.

Čulen and Kirschbaum, both of whom remained in close contact with Tiso, later recounted how, as a small nation in the midst of a great power conflict, Tiso and they felt trapped by circumstance. Čulen expounded, “the fact is that President Tiso and the Slovaks were well aware of their hapless situation (*in the war*)—a situation they had not created or asked for.” They complained that the Slovaks had declared independence in peacetime and never with the designs of war. The leaders of the state could not renounce independence without betraying the principles to which they remained firmly committed. They likewise saw surrendering to the Soviet Union as leading to the destruction and submission to communism of Slovakia, first by the Germans in retribution, and then later by the communists. They felt confined to hoping that the Western Allies would treat the Slovaks justly after the war. Tiso continued to pronounce publically a policy of following whichever state promised the Slovaks the most freedom, and expressed hope for this role to fall to the United States. Tiso and his close compatriots believed that if they came under American occupation after the war, the Americans would see firsthand the Slovak capability for independence and allow it to continue.

As such, they continued to reach out to American officials. The Slovak Ambassador to Spain reached out to his American counterpart in September 1944 to complain that the Slovaks were not getting equal treatment in the exile government. He emphasized how the Slovaks had proven their ability for independence, and requested that American officials approach the Slovak League of America to serve as mediators between the United States and Slovak officials. Tiso also funded Kirschbaum and Ďurčanský to go abroad to fight for Slovak independence internationally. Likewise, after Germany shot down American bombers over Slovakia, Slovak officials arranged the soldiers’ detainment with deliberate care, providing ample sustenance, and

“Political Intelligence Summary – Czechoslovakia” (Doc 213), in *Seton-Watson*, 598-599. Kirschbaum, *History*, 205; Mikuš, *Slovakia*, 131-132; Toma & Kovac, *Slovakia*, 127. Mikuš, “Diplomatic Service.”

allowing them to move around more freely and to pursue recreational activities. When the Germans demanded their extradition, Slovak officials stalled, allowing the Americans to remain in Slovakia for the duration of the war. Čulen claimed that their hope was for these soldiers to obtain a good image of Slovakia and express it to American officials after the war.

When the United States did not reciprocate these efforts, the Slovak leaders expressed a sense of disappointment. They decried that Washington had embraced Slovak submission to Beneš, and noted a sense of injustice when the United States bombed Slovakia and not Czechia. Tiso likewise bemoaned his inability to reach out to the Slovak-Americans to express his sense of mutual relations between Slovakia and the United States. Slovak leaders, nevertheless, excused Washington. According to Čulen, they conceptualized that, “it was not America bombing them, but Dr. Beneš, whose military advice prevailed in Washington. Of course, the Slovaks were hurt, but they suffered without blasting off against America.” When the Slovak government formally surrendered, it did so to the United States. In their letter of surrender to the U.S. Army, they appealed to America as “the homeland of which is living about one fourth of our nation and accepts the democratic principles of the Government of the people, for the people, and by the people,” while asking for protection for themselves and the people of Slovakia.²⁴⁴

Conclusion

Without reciprocation and support from the West, particularly the United States, the Slovak efforts at neutrality were doomed to failure. When later reflecting on these events, Ďurčanský was extremely critical of the West. He attacked the lack of concern for the Slovaks as

²⁴⁴ Joseph M. Kirschbaum, “My Last Diplomatic Report to the President of Slovakia,” *Furdek*, 11 (1972), 81-87. Čulen, “Tiso and America.” Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. Ďurica, *Political Activities*. “Report from Slovakia – 26th January, 1942” (Doc 216), in *Seton-Watson*, 496-500. “Carlton Hayes to SoS, no. 8823,” 8 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-844, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Report,” F#: 860F.00/1022. “Situation,” F#: 860F.00/1023. “Surrender of the Slovakian Government to the American Army” (Doc 44) in *Slovakia: Political*, 243.

a betrayal of Wilsonian principles. Ďurčanský felt that western support emboldened Beneš, giving the Czech leader no impetus to come to terms with the Slovaks before or after the war. By embracing Prague centralism, he argued that Beneš and the West forced the Slovaks into the hands of Germany, which he continued to defend as the only realistic response for the Slovaks given their precarious situation. He chided the West for hypocrisy in directing so much disdain toward Slovakia at the end of the war, after having given them no options beforehand. Ďurčanský ultimately rationalized this sentiment as a sign of the West having little real interest or concern for Central Europe beyond using it as a wedge between Russia and Germany.²⁴⁵

Ďurčanský's claims certainly have merit. It was clear that Slovak Catholic nationalists favored the United States to Germany, and through their policy of neutrality regularly reached out to the United States to no avail. The stereotypes of the Slovaks established during the foundation of the state perpetuated and were exploited by the exile government to dissuade any sense of complexity in Slovakia, beyond the view of the Slovak government as simply Nazi puppets lording over the Czechoslovakian Slovak population and at war with the United States. This image then rubbed off onto those Slovak officials working for neutrality. Exile propaganda, for example, continued to produce hit pieces against Ďurčanský even after his expulsion from power. Seton Watson singled out Ďurčanský as "the most extreme member of the Tiso government" and the "chief exponent of a Germanophil policy." Mackworth condemned Sidor as a false prophet, just "naïve and ambitious, jealous of Tiso and unwilling to compromise himself in any way." Jan Masaryk likewise chided Slovak officials in diplomatic posts overseas reaching

²⁴⁵ Ďurčanský, "Political Background."

out to the Western Allies. He asserted that the exile government would not forgive them, for “Slovak autonomism, influenced by traitors, must share the guilt of Munich.”²⁴⁶

American diplomats likewise did nothing to dissuade these sentiments. After meeting with Slovak leaders shortly before independence, Kennan reported on the Slovak strategy: “They are a robust lot; their nerves are strong and they do not look unnecessarily far into the future. They believe that they are playing a smart game and exploiting the favor of the Reich to their own advantage wherever it suits them.” Kennan, however, dismissed this sentiment because of Slovakia’s geopolitical weakness. Kennan noted possible anti-German sentiment in Bratislava, although he gave no specifics, nor any advice on how Washington might exploit it. He criticized Ďurčanský, for example, as leading the “pro-German” faction. Kennan meekly defended Sidor, as “actually a strong Slovak patriot,” although he dismissed Sidor as an avenue for American support because of Sidor’s autonomist sentiment. Kennan otherwise only noted the Slovak Lutherans and the Slovak communists as avenues for German opposition. He dismissed the communists as tools of Moscow, and while he praised the Slovak Lutherans as supporters of Czechoslovakism, he dismissed them as viable option to challenge German dominance. American officials acknowledged clear tensions between the Slovak Catholic nationalists and Berlin, but never conceptualized these tensions beyond validation for their prediction that Berlin would soon eliminate the Slovak state. For example, when Berlin expelled Ďurčanský as foreign minister, Linnell reported on the event with no explanation of the reason.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Seton Watson, *History*, 377-378. “Notes of a Conversation on the Slovak Situation” (Doc 193), in *Seton-Watson*, 555-557. Mackworth, *Czechoslovakia Fights*, 44-54. CMFA, *Czechoslovakia Fights*, 145-159. Čaplovič, “Germany, 129. Pavel Macháček, “Further Champions of Slovak Independence,” *CEO*, 18, 4 (Feb 17, 1941), 43-44.

²⁴⁷ “German Treatment of Slovakia.” “SoS to Morris, no. 1718.” “Phillips to SoS, no. 140.” “Montgomery to SoS, no. 3288.” “Kirk to SoS, no. 173.” “Morris to SoS, no. 3849 & 3850.” “The New Government in Czechoslovakia,” 3 Dec 1938, F#: 860F.00/587, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Report,” F#: 860F.00/596. “Conditions in Slovakia,” F#: 860F.00/858. “Reporting Recent Changes,” F#: 860F.00/958.

It was not until the longer reports late in the war that American officials acknowledged the efforts by Slovak Catholic nationalists to limit German influence. The report by Nathalie Grant openly acknowledged Tiso's affirmations toward avoiding war with the West. Both the reports by Harry Howard and the OSS reported that Tiso and the SPP wanted to organize a state based on Christian principles, and had only embraced National Socialism to mollify the Germans. The OSS report even gave credit to the Slovak leaders as having continually stalled the process of Germany domination, and acknowledged their regular efforts to circumvent German foreign policy directives. Nevertheless, none of these officials determined that Washington should treat the Slovaks as anything other than enemies of the United States. In 1944, Slovak exile minister for Agriculture Ján Lichner bucked the views of the majority of the exile government and advised American diplomat John Bruins that Washington should contact Sidor. Bruins dismissed this idea at the time, considering Sidor as not being worldly enough. American and British officials did eventually reach out to Sidor, although efforts went nowhere because Sidor refused to renounce support for Slovak autonomy.²⁴⁸

Slovak politicians and diplomats such as Sidor and Ďurčanský put themselves at risk to promote an independent Slovak foreign policy and reached out to the United States to put this policy into practice. Washington, in turn, did not even recognize or acknowledge that this effort was happening, nonetheless reciprocate or try to take advantage of it. There were multiple reasons for this neglect. Washington openly expressed a general lack of information and knowledge about occurrences in Slovakia, largely due to a lack of officials there. Likewise, the American unwillingness to respond to Slovak diplomats due to its policy on non-recognition

²⁴⁸ "Status of Mr. Karol Sidor, Slovak Politician," 17 June 1944, F#: 860F.00/587, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Harrison to SoS, no 5139," 9 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.01/8-944, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Political Conditions," F#: 860F.00/8-1744. "Memorandum," F#: 860F.00/4-1044. "Independent Slovakia," *HH Papers*, HT. "German Military: Slovakia," *OSS, Part IV*.

inhibited the Slovak effort to communicate their policy of neutrality. Most importantly, however, Washington disregarded these figures as viable and independent agents, because Prague opposed them as supporters of Slovak independence. Beneš and his cohort accredited any figures linked to the Slovak Republic as traitors to the Czechoslovak Republic and as war criminals. Because these Slovak officials continued to support Slovak independence and oppose Beneš's rule over Slovakia, the United States remained unwilling to consider their views.²⁴⁹

Ultimately, Washington did not care about Slovakia. While one can partially excuse this willful negligence due to the Slovak state's affiliation with Germany, it nonetheless also represented the continuation of Washington's standing bias against the Slovaks. Slovakia remained in its view a backward country, whose fate it would leave to Beneš and the exile government. In taking this view, the United States neglected an opportunity to weaken German influence over Slovakia. While Slovakia alone was not going to change the dynamic of World War II in Europe, it is emblematic of American negligence toward East Central Europe as whole. Slovakia was a small state in a region of small states largely deemed unimportant by the United States. Hitler was able to divide and conquer the region almost unabated, and the United States felt little motivation to stand in his way.

²⁴⁹ "DoS to Morris, no. 1718," 11 Feb 1941, F#: 860F.01/364, *DoS CS 1910-44*. CMFA, *Czechoslovakia Fights Back*, 145-159. "Status," F#: 860F.00/587.

Chapter 6

World War II and the Slovaks in America

It is easy to dismiss the one-sidedness on the Slovak Question during World War II as derivative of the Slovak Republic's affiliation to Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, when one takes German dominance out of the equation by looking at the Slovaks in exile and the Slovak-Americans, it is difficult to escape the continued impact of the existing biases and stereotypes of the Slovaks. A clear majority of the Slovaks abroad openly opposed Nazi Germany, but also openly supported Slovak autonomy. Beneš and his supporters nonetheless continued to malign these Slovaks as fascists or of abetting the German war effort. Washington likewise put the Slovak autonomists in America under harsh scrutiny and infringed upon their civil liberties. The formal political careers of figures such as Milan Hodža and Štefan Osuský effectively ended as a result, while groups such as the Slovak League of America had to fight constantly for their good name under the charge of disloyalty to the United States. While the war years served as their most trying time, the Slovak autonomists survived as a political movement and continued to fight for Slovak self-determination. Moreover, while their gains were fleeting, they ultimately forced the exile government to change its rhetoric on the Slovak Question.

Štefan Osuský, Milan Hodža, and the Slovaks in Exile

With the flight into exile of many Czech and Slovak officials, the Slovak Question carried over into the internal politics of the exile government, as many Slovaks abroad challenged Beneš and his treatment of the Slovaks. Štefan Osuský was one prominent example. After World War I, Osuský served as Czechoslovak Minister to France through the entirety of the interwar period, and after Munich he became a vocal supporter of Slovak autonomy,

when events thrust Osuský into the center of exile politics.²⁵⁰ Osuský refused to abandon his post after the breakup of the state in March 1939 and convinced the French government to continue recognizing his ambassadorship. From this position, Osuský vocally opposed German behavior and worked to convince the western powers that the Slovaks should remain part of Czechoslovakia. Likewise, he chastised independent Slovakia as an illegal formation and condemned its leaders. Osuský devoted himself to establishing an exile government and he played a major role in organizing an army for the exile government in France.²⁵¹

Nevertheless, Osuský and Beneš had long been political rivals, and Osuský openly challenged Beneš's right to leadership. Osuský was extremely critical of Beneš's handling of Munich, feeling Beneš's political intransigence, particularly on the nationality questions, had led to the breakup of the state. He directly opposed the Czech leader's attempts at unquestioned control over the future state, appealing for a more democratic representation within the exile government. Osuský also challenged Beneš's political vision. Osuský established a political platform calling for the recreation of Czechoslovakia, but he opposed a return to either the pre-Munich state or the state ideology of Czechoslovakism. Osuský criticized Beneš's right to speak for the Slovaks, and appealed for a rebuilt Czechoslovakia based on equality and autonomy for the Slovaks, lest Beneš continue to symbolize the policy that led to the split of the two peoples.

²⁵⁰ Osuský's position on the Slovak Question in the interwar period remained ambiguous. Osuský claimed to have remained firmly in support of Slovak autonomy, but many Slovak nationalists openly criticized Osuský as a 'two-faced' opportunist, who sold out on the Slovak Question to benefit his diplomatic career. This confusion was likely a result of Osuský's goal to maintain Czech-Slovak unity and his career conflicting with his personal rivalry with Beneš. Osuský later claimed that he had supported Slovak independence in theory, but had accepted unity with the Czechs because of Slovakia's hostile neighbors. These claims are difficult to verify.

²⁵¹ Osuský affirmed this sentiment to American Ambassador in Paris William Bullet, communicating, "it was essential that the Czechs and the Slovaks should stick together and cooperate completely." "Unpublished Osuský Interview," *ŠO Papers*, B:41, F:4, HIA. Osuský, "How Czecho-Slovakia was Born, 81-93. "Slovakia: The Model Example of the 'New Order,'" *ŠO Papers*, B:55, F:21, HIA. "The Slovaks," *ŠO Papers*, B:55, F:22, HIA. Mikuš, "Comments to Osuský," in *Slovakia in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, 93-96. Stodola, *Prelom*, 189. Constantine Čulen, "Osuský after March 14, 1939," *Slovakia*, 9, 5 (June-Dec 1959), 69-72. Philip James Anthony, "Introduction," in Štefan Osuský, *Truth Conquers: A Glance into the Mirror of the Second Revolution*, trans. Philip James Anthony (Middletown, Pa.: Jednota Press, 1943), 7-10.

Osuský appealed to Beneš to reach a compromise with the Slovak autonomists, but the former president ignored these appeals and instead worked to eliminate Osuský's influence. Beneš kept the Slovak autonomists isolated from the internal mechanisms of the exile government, and Osuský became alienated within the Paris embassy, staffed mostly with Czech nationalist supporters of Beneš. Osuský reached out to Slovaks abroad and in Slovakia to arrange a mutual support for Slovak autonomy, but the Slovaks could not match Czech numbers and resources. After the German invasion of France in 1940 ended his ambassadorship, Osuský's influence diminished. Osuský remained part of the exile government in London, until Beneš purged him in March 1942. The exile government and its allies then led a propaganda campaign to defame the former ambassador. R.W. Seton-Watson, for example, turned against his former friend, labeling Osuský as power hungry and "hostile to the Czechoslovak cause." This criticism was mild in comparison to what came directly from the exile government, which accused Osuský of false charges such as supporting Hitler's designs in Europe by trying to prevent the exile government's escape from Paris, of collaborating to keep fascism alive in Slovakia through support for autonomy, and of promoting a restoration of the Habsburgs.²⁵²

Osuský tried to defend himself after his dismissal. He produced a 'fact sheet' to counter the claims against him and he demanded a formal apology for the smear campaign and the

²⁵² Beneš and his cohorts tried to equate a Central European Federation to the return of Austria-Hungary in order to discredit the idea. This was a false analogy, with no merit to the charge. Štefan Osuský, *Česko-Slovensko a jeho Budúcnosť* (Paris: 1939). "Pripomienky Dra Osuského," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:2, HIA. Osuský, *Truth Conquers*, 34-60. "Osuský Memoirs (English Version)," *ŠO Papers*, B:54, F:24, HIA. "Slovakia and the Czechoslovak Republic," *ŠO Papers*, B:55, F:20, HIA. "Model Example," *ŠO Papers*. "The Slovaks, 1939," *ŠO Papers*, B:59, F:16, HIA. "Carr to SoS, No. 335," 22 Nov 1938, F#: 860F.00/576, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Bullitt to SoS, No. 470," 13 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/608, sec 1, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Bullitt to SoS, No. 1811," 6 Sep 1939, F#: 860F.01/269, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Bullitt to SoS, No. 2413," 10 Oct 1939, F#: Unkn., *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Bullitt to SoS, No. 2515," 19 Oct 1939, F#: 860F.01/281, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Osuský to Beneš, 23 Oct 1939," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:2, HIA. "Osuský to Beneš, 3 Oct 1940," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:7, HIA. Francis Vnuk, "Stephen Osuský and March 1939," in *Slovakia*, 9, 5 (June-Dec 1959), 65-68. Čulen, "Osuský, 69-72. Staško, "Osuský's Attempts, 9-33. Hauner, "Beginnings," 115, 121-122. Vnuk, *Slovenská Otázka na Západe*. Rychlík, "Slovak Question," in *Slovakia in History*, 193-205. "Memo on Czechoslovak situation," (Doc 190) & "Notes" (Doc 208) in *Seton-Watson*, 545-551. "Dismissal by Beneš, 31 March 1942," *ŠO Papers*, B:9, F:4, HIA. "Osuský's Case," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:6, HIA.

attempts to get autonomist Slovaks expelled from the United States and Britain. Osuský charged that the “political inquisition of the ‘super patriots’ of the Czechoslovak revolution” had made him into a scapegoat, and he condemned Beneš as a “Czech racist” for his lack of respect toward the other nationalities in former Czechoslovakia. Osuský also buttressed the chorus of Slovak autonomists trying to expose Beneš as a charlatan on the Slovak Question in order to encourage the future state to avoid the mistakes of the First Republic. He condemned centralist tactics to “create the impression that the Slovak nation is politically immature and unreliable,” as a tool of Czech duplicity and domination. Osuský asserted that, with the exception of a few “paid agents” propped up by Beneš, Slovaks in the homeland and abroad categorically rejected the return of Prague centralism and that Beneš’s intransigence on the issue was simply driving a wedge between the two peoples. Osuský likewise focused on a double standard in exile propaganda: “...as regards the Slovaks, not only individual responsibility is concerned, but also collective responsibility. This is in line with the propaganda of the Czechoslovak government which identifies and condemns the whole Slovak nation with Tuka and Mach, while it does not identify the government of the Protectorate with the Czech nation.”

Osuský chastised the West for giving Beneš monopoly power over Czechoslovak affairs and for allowing Beneš to pursue the same policies that had proven failing before the war. He dismissed the positive image of Beneš in the west as fraudulent, fabricated by a “200 million crown propaganda machine,” and he resentfully recounted his belief that the Czech leader “hated the Slovaks and insisted on their assimilation by the Czechs.” Osuský concluded that the Czechs and Slovaks needed to maintain their common bonds, but that their relationship remained dependent on respect for one another and on a governing system allowing Slovak autonomy.²⁵³

²⁵³ “Facts About Mr. Osuský’s Dismissal,” *ŠO Papers*, B:9, F:4, HIA. “Osuský’s Case,” *ŠO Papers*. “Peter Pridavok and Hubert Ripka,” *ŠO Papers*, B:53, F:33, HIA. “President Beneš’ Personal Representative in America,”

Milan Hodža's experience proceeded along similar lines. Hodža, like Osuský, had long been a rival of Beneš, particularly when the former was Prime Minister and the latter President for Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. Hodža's vision of a federalized system that respected the independent identity of Czechoslovakia's national minorities and gave them some degree of self-government clashed with Beneš's belief that a centralized government was necessary for the security of the state. Hodža resigned eight days before Munich, upset over the intransigence on all sides, and went into exile. Hodža supported the recreation of Czechoslovakia, but openly condemned Prague centralism as prohibitive of true democracy. Hodža organized the Slovak autonomists abroad into a common political front behind his leadership, and he pressured Beneš to sign a declaration of support for autonomy, which Beneš refused. Hodža also believed strongly in the possibility of a region-wide Central European federation, which he believed would prevent any one nation from dominating the others, and through a joint economy and defense would be able to resist the divide and conquer techniques of the region's threatening neighbors of Germany and the Soviet Union. Beneš vehemently opposed this idea, in favor of a balance of power scenario in Central Europe.

Hodža used his time in exile to flesh out these ideas in his political magnum opus, which he directed at the western powers in the hope of guiding the post-war order in Central Europe.

While Hodža expressed support for a common state and denounced the Slovak independence

ŠO Papers, B:54, F:18, HIA. "Remarks: 'Authenticity of Dr. Beneš' Letter Quoted by Frank,'" *ŠO Papers*, B:61, F:3, HIA. "Dr. Kraus: 'Osuský is Unknown in Slovakia,'" *ŠO Papers*, B:51, F:36, HIA. Osuský, *Truth Conquers*. Stephen Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, trans. Philip James Anthony (Middletown, PA: Jednota, 1943). "Unpublished Osuský Interview," *ŠO Papers*, B:41, F:4, HIA. "Osuský to John (Zeman?)," 13 Sep 1943" *ŠO Papers*, B:11, F:10, HIA. "Article on Slovakia," *ŠO Papers*, B:41, F:6, HIA. "Czechoslovak Problems," *ŠO Papers*, B:45, F:3, HIA. "Foreign Affairs and Slovakia," *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:14, HIA. "Declaration of the Beneš Czechoslovak Government, Appendix A & B," *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:1, HIA. "Osuský Letter, 21 July 1943," & "Czechoslovak London Government's Proclamation Denounced," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:5, HIA. "Observations to the Statement against Slovak Autonomy made by the Czechoslovak Government in London over the BBC," & "Comments on Dr. Beneš' Official Policy Regarding Slovakia," *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:1, HIA. Vnuk, *Slovenská Otázka na Západe*. Hauner, "Beginnings," 115, 121-122. Rychlík, "Slovak Question," 193-205.

movement, he blamed the Czech nationalist leadership for ruining Slovak-Czech unity through Prague centralism. Hodža bemoaned, “Centralism was obstinate,” giving no room for alternative voices, even as the Slovak nationalists in the SPP—whom he labeled “honest republicans”—offered support for the common state. Hodža thus felt that the Czech nationalists had reaped what they sowed in the hostile Catholic nationalism in Slovakia, and that the exchange of demagogic rhetoric created a vicious circle that made reconciliation more difficult. Hodža summarized autonomist goals were simply for “the Slovaks to be equal to the Czechs” and “that this principle should be embodied in adequate institutions.” He ultimately praised the Žilina system and he argued that the agreement would have normalized relations if not for German meddling. Accordingly, while many in the West “used to be rather skeptical about Slovakia and her position and even about her political efficiency,” Hodža argued that the Slovaks had proven their capabilities and “reached if not passed the Central European civilization level.”²⁵⁴

Beneš and his cohorts responded to Hodža as they did to Osuský. Seton-Watson initially encouraged Beneš to reconcile with Hodža, but the British scholar eventually abandoned the former Prime Minister. Seton-Watson bemoaned that Hodža was no longer the man he once knew and he condemned him as committing blackmail and treason in his criticisms of Beneš. He implied that Hodža and his “small clique” were receiving funding from malicious forces and abetting Germany designs in Czechoslovakia.²⁵⁵ Beneš himself publically attacked the idea of an American styled federal system as unsuitable for Czechoslovakia, while Jan Masaryk condemned

²⁵⁴ Milan Hodža, *The New European Situation and Czechoslovakia* (Prague: Orbis, 1938). Michal Múdry, *Milan Hodža v Amerike* (Chicago: Geringer Press, 1946). “Memo,” (Doc 190) in *Seton-Watson*. “Aká Slovenská Samobytnosť?” & “Protest proti slovenskému režimu.” in Múdry, *Milan Hodža*, 98-106, 113-132. John Palka, *My Slovakia, My Family: One Family’s Role in the Birth of a Nation* (Minneapolis: Kirk House, 2012), 49-58. Vnuk, *Slovenská Otázka*. Hauner, “Beginnings,” 115, 121-122. Rychlík, “Slovak Question,” 193-205. Milan Hodža, *Federation in Central Europe: Reflections and Reminiscences* (London: Jarrolds, 1942), 84-94, 99.

²⁵⁵ After Hodža’s death, Seton-Watson praised Hodža as an honorable leader up until Munich, but that afterwards “it is charitable to suppose that the illness to which he eventually succumbed had impaired his judgment.” He likewise condemned Hodža’s *Federation* as an unserious work.

the idea as a treasonable offense against the Czechoslovak state. When Hodža migrated to the United States, the exile government condemned him as “persona non grata,” and criticized Hodža’s support for autonomy as the poison of an old era. It likewise equated his efforts as tantamount to working for Hitler. The Czechoslovak embassy also wrote to the U.S. State Department denouncing Hodža and his supporters as deceitful enemy agents trying to undermine the America war effort through its opposition to the exile government. It then requested that Washington take action to restrict his travel and political activities. Hodža published in his own defense against these charges, affirming his clear opposition to Germany and the Slovak state, and he condemned the attacks as a deliberate effort to oppress the Slovaks.²⁵⁶

There remained several other Slovak autonomist efforts abroad, although their leaders lacked the political cache in the west of Hodža and Osuský. Although Francis Jehlička died in 1939, the Slovak Council in Geneva continued to push its objective of a Slovak return to Hungary, claiming that such a result would limit national animosity in Central Europe.²⁵⁷ In another example, Ferdinand Ďurčanský became an international advocate on the Slovak Question after his dismissal as Slovak Foreign Minister. He equated Slovakia under Czechs, Hungarians, and potentially the Bolsheviks as the equivalent of imperialism.

Everything was represented so that the Slovaks should not have the slightest courage to think about their own self-determination, so that they should see in the prospect of the denationalization, in the degradation, and elimination of their language, in their joining

²⁵⁶ “Memo” (Doc 190), “Notes” (Doc 193), & “Notes” (Doc 208) in *Seton-Watson*. “Seton-Watson to Milan Hodža” (Doc 203) & “Milan Hodža to Seton-Watson” (Doc 205), in *Seton-Watson*, 580, 582. R. W. Seton-Watson, “Milan Hodža” in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 23, 62 (Jan., 1945), 80-84. Beneš, *Future*. Jan Masaryk, “No Conservative Bloc of Central Europe,” *CEO*, 20, 15 (July 23, 1943), 237. “Persona non grata?” *B: Milan Hodža, 1878-1944*, SI. “Memorandum from the Czechoslovak Legation,” 14 May 1942, F#: 860F.01/438-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Personal Representative,” *ŠO Papers*, HIA. “Odpoved’ New-Yorkskému Denníku,” “A Ešte Odpoved’ New-Yorkskému Denníku,” & “Odpoved’ Časopisu ‘Chicago Sun,’” in Múdry, *Milan Hodža*, 133-149.

²⁵⁷ Slovak Council, *Shall Millions Die for “This Czechoslovakia...”?* (London: Slovak Council, 1938). “Slovak Council to the President of the US Congress,” 25 Jan 1940, F#: 860F.01/327, *DoS CS 1910-44*. The Slovak Council, *The Slovak Question: A Memorandum submitted by the Slovak Council to Congress of the United States of America* (Geneva: Slovak Council, 1940).

the cultural work in the interest of another nation a maximum of their national ideals.

The whole life was organized so as to inflict upon the Slovaks the feeling of inferiority in order to entirely break the will of the nation already weakened by a long slavery.

Ďurčanský criticized the West for allowing Czech domination of the Slovaks after World War I, due to their lack of “interest or understanding for the Slovak cause,” and due to embracing negative stereotypes propagated by Czech nationalists. Ďurčanský likewise defended the Slovak agency involved in the creation of the independent state and condemned the accreditation of the state’s existence to Nazi Germany as a falsehood designed to justify Slovak submission in the name of world peace. Ďurčanský argued that an independent Slovakia posed no threat to peace, unless used a vehicle for competing imperial powers, and that the Slovaks had proven their ability to maintain their own state in an extremely difficult time. Ďurčanský thus appealed for a “true application” of Wilsonianism after World War II, and a “Monroe Doctrine” for the small nations of Europe. Like Hodža, Ďurčanský pushed for the creation of a Central European federation as the best means for achieving peace in the region and for protecting the rights of the region’s small nations. He otherwise argued that the Slovaks just wanted to be left alone.²⁵⁸

Several other figures sympathetic to Slovak autonomy also arose in exile. Some of these figures were Czechs opposed to Beneš, such as the head of the Czechoslovak National Bank Jozef Malik, former ambassador to the United States Charles Pergler, and Czech politician Vladimír Ležák-Borin, all of whom coordinated with Slovak autonomists and produced propaganda material in their support. The Slovak autonomists also formed their own organizations. Osuský organized a Union of Slovak Organizations in France, which later evolved into the Slovak National Council in France designed to serve as the official Slovak branch of the

²⁵⁸ Ferdinand Ďurčanský, *Mittleuropa in Vergangenheit und Zukunft* (Bratislava: Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für da Auslandsslowakentum, 1944). Ferdinand Ďurčanský, *Die Existenzberechtigung der Kleinen Staaten* (Bratislava: Slowakische Bücherei, 1944). Ferdinand Ďurčanský, *The Way to the Slovak Freedom* (Bratislava: Slovenská Akadémia Vied a Umení, 1944).

exile government. Founded on November 23, 1939, this organization included all branches of Slovak autonomists, including Hodža as President, but also Catholic Nationalist Peter Prídavok, and Lutheran Nationalist Ján Pauliny-Toth, although it disappeared after the fall of France. Prídavok later shifted his position to support Slovak independence, and he established his own Slovak National Council in London on December 31, 1943. He argued that the Slovaks had been duped too many times by the promise of autonomy, and only through independence could the Slovaks fully assure their freedom and self-government on their own terms. Prídavok likewise praised the Slovak state as proving the Slovaks' capability for independent political, cultural and economic development. The exile government openly opposed all of these figures and even had the British government detain many of them, including Prídavok, Ležák-Borin, and Pauliny-Toth, until Osuský intervened to gain their release.²⁵⁹

Washington's Response to the Exile autonomists

This conflict among the Czech and Slovak exiles bled into American diplomacy. As a former ambassador, Osuský maintained relationships with many American officials and reached out for their support. Osuský attempted to show Beneš as secretly hostile to the United States and disrespectful of American understanding of foreign affairs and he warned American officials that Beneš was exploiting them for his own political gain. He condemned Beneš's vision as a betrayal

²⁵⁹ "Jozef Malik to Alexander Gadodan, 11 April 1942," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:8, HIA. "Charles Pergler to O. Dvouletý, 5 July 1939," *ŠO Papers*, B:25, F:53, HIA. Vladimír Ležák-Borin, *Czech—Not Czechoslovak!*, trans. Philip James Anthony (Middletown, PA: Jednota Press, 1943). "Sváz Slovenských Organizácií vo Francúzsku to American Slovaks," *ŠO Papers*, B:101, F:4, HIA. "Zápis o zakladacej schôdzke Slovenskej Národnej Rady v Paríži, dňa 23. Novembra r. 1939-ho," & "Platform for the Slovak National Council in Paris," *ŠO Papers*, B:101, F:5, HIA. "Peter Prídavok to Osuský, 16 April 1940," *ŠO Papers*, B:26, F:41, HIA. "Oscar Mason to Osuský, 28 Aug 1940," & "Mason to Osuský, 5 Sep 1940," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:7, HIA. "Poznámky K Otvorenému Listu P. Prídavka," in Múdry, *Milan Hodža*, 149-150. Peter Prídavok, *A Good Word to Slovaks Worthy of It*, trans. Philip James Anthony (London: 1943), 15-16. "Peter Prídavok," *ŠO Papers*, HIA. "Slovak National Council Formed," & "Memorandum SNR v Londýne adresované spojeneckým vládám," in Polakovič & Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie*, 91-92, 100-103. "For a Free and Independent Slovakia: The Origin and Aims of the Slovak National Council Abroad," *B: Slovak National Council Abroad 1948-1996 – K. Sidor/P. Prídavok*, SI.

of the Atlantic Charter and he encouraged the Allies to resist granting Beneš control over relief mechanisms to Czechoslovakia, which Osuský feared Beneš would use as a weapon against the Slovaks. Osuský affirmed how Beneš remained dependent on Allied power, and he appealed for American leaders to assert their own vision over Beneš's goals.²⁶⁰

Nevertheless, Osuský gained little support from American officials. One exception was his co-Ambassador in Paris, William Bullitt, with whom Osuský communicated regularly. Bullitt gave Osuský high praise, and he openly supported Osuský over Beneš, criticizing the latter as "an utterly selfish and small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country." Bullitt recommended that Washington throw its support behind Osuský, in part because he felt that Osuský, as a Slovak, could better reunify the country. This support ceased to be relevant, however, when Bullitt had a falling out with Roosevelt in 1940. Osuský received no major support from an American official afterwards. He exchanged letters with several diplomats, including Anthony Biddle, Wilbur Carr, and John Winant, and while these figures responded kindly, they did not embrace his cause. For example, after meeting with Osuský in late 1944, Rudolph Schoenfeld relayed Osuský's complaints to Washington, but dismissed the former ambassador's credibility due to Osuský's exile from the interim government. Schoenfeld remarked that Osuský was intelligent, but he dismissed Osuský's actions as irreconcilable with Beneš and thus positioning Osuský out of a role in the rebuilt state.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ "The United States of America," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:8, HIA. "Central European Federation and Security," *ŠO Papers*, B:44, F:28, HIA. "Osuský to Zeman," *ŠO Papers*. "Pripomienky," *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:1, HIA. "Remarks: Authenticity," *ŠO Papers*.

²⁶¹ "Bullitt to Roosevelt, 16 Sep 1939," *PSF*, Safe File, Czechoslovakia, B:2, FDR. "Bullitt to SoS, No. 2413." Bullitt maintained contact with Osuský after his dismissal, and continued to rely on him for information about Czechoslovakia. "Bullitt to Osuský, 14 Aug 1941," *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:28, HIA. "Carr to Osuský, 10 June 1940," *ŠO Papers*, B:15, F:33, HIA. "Biddle to Osuský, 22 Mar 1941," & "Osuský to Biddle, 4 July 1942," *ŠO Papers*, B:14, F:22, HIA. "Biddle to Osuský, 7 Aug 1941," & "Osuský to Winant, 12 Nov 1944," *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:29, HIA. "Eduard Beneš," 10 May 1943, F#: 860F.001/135, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "The Czechoslovak Government-

Of the Slovak autonomists abroad, Hodža put the most pressure on the exile government. Hodža regularly framed Slovak autonomy as representative of a federal democratic order based on the United States, and necessary within the terms of the Atlantic Charter. American officials nonetheless paid scant attention to Hodža in the early stages of the war, only reporting on the formation of his Slovak National Council and its rejection by the exile government. This lack of interest changed when Hodža moved to the United States in November 1941. Unlike other Slovak autonomists, as a former Prime Minister, Hodža was able to gain an audience among American officials in Washington. On the day of American entry into the war, December 7, 1941, Hodža gained an interview with the *New York Times*, and shortly thereafter Hodža met with State Department officials Adolf A. Berle and Harold B. Hoskins. Hodža outlined his vision for an autonomous Slovakia within a recreated Czechoslovakia, and he condemned the exile government for denying the needed voice of the Slovak autonomists. Hodža met with Hoskins and Berle again a few months later, where he reaffirmed his support for autonomy and derided the defamation campaign against him. The American officials remained non-committal, but they commended Hodža as “an able patriot with qualities of sincerity and vision that might with advantage be put to constructive work in the post-war period in Central Europe.”

Hodža also met with Office of Strategic Services officials Dewitt Clinton Poole and John C. Wiley. Hodža again criticized centralism, and complained how the Czechoslovak Information Office based in New York, led by the “agent and intriguer for Beneš” Jan Papanek, had been smearing him. Poole then joined in on Hodža’s lecture tour around the United States and affirmed the smear tactics against him. Hodža expressed contentment with these meetings.

in-Exile: Origins and Organizations, 10 Oct 1943,” *HH Papers*, B:1, F:Czechoslovakia (3 Folders), HT. “Relations Between Slovaks and Czechs,” 25 July 1944, F#: 860F.01/7-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Character of the Opposition in London to the Present Czechoslovak Government,” 15 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.01/8-1544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Activities in London of opponents of the Czechoslovak Government,” 25 July 1944, F#: 860F.01/7-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

Nevertheless, Berle told Hodža that he thought the former prime minister's efforts were in "the right direction," but that Washington was most interested in seeing Czech-Slovak unity and was uninterested in becoming mixed up in "old world problems." In a follow-up, Berle and Poole discussed the possibility of "reducing this controversy" by reconciling Hodža and the exile government. Berle ultimately summarized State Department sentiment as "not at present interested in the merits of the controversy, but it has, of course, a very distinct interest in preserving that harmony and unity which best contribute towards winning the war."²⁶²

These communications nevertheless brought the wrath of Beneš's organization down upon the State Department. Hurban wrote to Hull in response, attacking Slovak autonomy as a plan for foreign domination of the Slovaks. In a meeting with Poole, Beneš's primary Slovak-American supporter Jaroslav Pelikan chastised the State Department as "friendly to a Hapsburg restoration" because of its communications with Hodža. The exile government likewise sent an article to Congressman Adolph Sabath, which accused the Department of smuggling Hodža into the country to undermine the exile government. In all of these cases, the Department, rightfully, defended its innocence. The complaints nonetheless had an effect, for by 1943 Washington's interest in Hodža was all but gone. The Department recognized Hodža's complaints, but also criticized him for "renewing the sense of imposed inferiority and hence resentment against their Czech brethren." Accordingly, Hodža himself resigned from his political efforts. Hodža became ill and died in Florida on June 28, 1944. Hodža's daughter Irene Palka and her husband Jan Palka adopted his organization, but American officials gave them little consideration. Although the

²⁶² "Slovenská Samobytnosť?" & "Protest," in Múdry, *Hodža*. "Dr. Hodža and Dr. Osuský sentenced by the Nazis to Penal Servitude," Date Unkn, F#: 860F.00/967, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Memo to Roosevelt, 1 July 1941," *PSF*, Safe File, Czechoslovakia, B:2, FDR. "Hope put in Union of Central Europe," *New York Times*, Dec 7, 1941, 31. "MoC: Adolf A. Berle, Harold B. Hoskins, & Hodža," 9 Dec 1941, F#: 860F.01/444-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "OSS Report on Hodža," 16 June 1942, F#: 860F.01/429-3/4, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "MoC: Berle, Hoskins, & Hodža," 18 June 1942, F#: 860F.00/990, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "OSS Report on Hodža," 20 June 1942, F#: 860F.01/446-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Palka, *My Slovakia*, pp 49-58.

Catholic nationalists in exile also reached out to Washington, American officials paid no heed to their appeals, refusing to consider any notion of Slovak independence.²⁶³

The treatment of the Slovak autonomists in exile show how little had changed regarding the Slovak Question. Both Hodža and Osuský were respected figures before the war and they promoted a moderate policy that defended the Czechoslovak Republic but simply called for better treatment for the Slovaks. They could still not overcome the prejudices against the Slovaks, and ended up expunged from an official role in the recreated State. While Hodža gained a more receptive audience in Washington than any other Slovak could, and even built some sympathy, this support only went so far as to try to motivate the Slovak leader to reconcile with Beneš's leadership. Beneš in turn retained status and support from Washington despite an acrimonious nationalism that continued to prove harmful to the stability of Czechoslovakia.

The Slovak-Americans

The Slovak-Americans found themselves in an even harder spot. The breakup of the state sowed much discord among them, and they divided into three main competing branches. A small group of Czechoslovakists consolidated around the Slovak National Alliance (SNA), which served as the agent of Beneš and the exile government and supported the reestablishment of the pre-Munich centralized state. A second branch of moderate nationalists organized around the National Slovak Society (NSS) and the Slovak Evangelical Union (SEU). This group linked themselves to Milan Hodža and pushed for a return to Czechoslovakia with full domestic

²⁶³ Osuský claims that the exile government attempted to have Hodža expelled from the United States. The Czechoslovak government's hostility against Hodža continued even after his death. After the war, Prague prevented the repatriation of his remains back to Slovakia despite he and his family's wishes. This repatriation did eventually occur in 2001 after the creation of the independent Slovak Republic. "Czechoslovak Politics in the United States," 1 Oct 1942, F#: 860F.01/458, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Dewitt C. Poole to Berle," 12 Oct 1942, F#: 860F.01/462, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Beneš," F#: 860F.001/135. "Sabath to Hull," 24 May 1943, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Hurban to Hull," 31 July 1943, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile," *HH Papers*, HT. "J. Edgar Hoover to Berle," 10 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.00/11-1044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Personal Representative," *ŠO Papers*, HIA.

autonomy for Slovakia. The third group, the Slovak Catholic nationalists, headed by the Slovak League of America, generally supported an independent Slovakia. Judging the relative numbers of each of the three groups is difficult, but the majority of Slovak Americans clearly favored autonomy, with the Catholic nationalist organizations maintaining the largest membership.²⁶⁴

The Slovak National Alliance and the Exile Government

Because the SNA, led by Lutheran theologian and religious historian Jaroslav Pelikan, collaborated directly with Beneš, it maintained an inflated influence in comparison with its level of popular support among the Slovak-Americans. Praised by Beneš as America's "chief Slovak organization," the SNA served as the Slovak branch of the Czechoslovak National Council in America. It coordinated with centralist Slovaks such as Jan Papanek, Juraj Slávik, and Vladimír Hurban to encourage Slovak-Americans to align with Beneš, to develop propaganda, to fundraise for the exile government, and to arrange speaking tours around the United States. This cadre of Slovak-Americans provided Beneš cover to claim that the Slovak-Americans had rallied around the exile government. Czechoslovakist propaganda repeatedly praised that "the great majority of American Slovaks," had rallied behind them, and centered Beneš as the symbol of unity and hope among the Slovak-Americans. Consistent with this image, the Czechoslovakists continued to promote the narrative of the Czechs as the Slovak saviors. One such radio message lauded that Prague's "greatest achievement" was having "enabled the Slovaks to make greater progress in 20 years than they had made during any previous century in their whole millennial history."

²⁶⁴ The State Department estimated that 160,000 supported the Catholic-Nationalist organizations, 100,000 for the moderate nationalist ones, and 80,000 for the Czechoslovakists. Hodža's personal secretary, Michal Múdry-Šebík, alternatively calculated their numbers as 35,000 for the centralists compared to 326,683 for the combined autonomists. "Issues Related to the Visit of President Beneš," 5 May 1943, F#: 860F.001/146, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Múdry, *Milan Hodža*, 41-49.

The official stance of the exile government, however, was to bury the Slovak Question until after the war in the name of state unity. Exiles thus dismissed the right of the Slovak-Americans to speak on the future organization of the state as American citizens, and otherwise dismissed Slovak-America autonomists as a minority of “mischief-makers” and dupes of malicious propaganda, when not condemning them as fascists, Nazi agents, and traitors to the Czechoslovak nation. Papanek, for example, bemoaned that “it is hard to understand why some Slovaks in this country are in favor of Slovakia’s collaborating with the Nazis,” while Journalist Andre Visson harped that the SLA “would then do well to humble themselves to make the Czechs forget and forgive their part in their country’s dismemberment and collaboration with the enemy.” Beneš declared all Slovak-Americans welcome in his movement, except those he deemed as fascists. He thus disqualified the Slovak-American autonomists: “I did not, and never will, seek the company of those who had abandoned the legacy of their fathers and mothers and the sacred cause of our Republic.”²⁶⁵

This effort extended to direct outreach to American officials. It focused on praising American policy in support of the exile government, but it also included efforts to defame the

²⁶⁵ “Slovensko Národného Sdruženia to Slávik, 6 June 1939,” *JS Papers*, B:10, F:24, HIA. “Ohlas k americkým Slovákovi,” *JS Papers*, B:22, F:28, HIA. “Hurban: To a Nation Bathed in Blood: An Open Letter to the Unconquerable Czechoslovaks,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Czechoslovak National Council of America, *Czechoslovakia: Its Sacrifice and Future* (Chicago: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1939), 66. Michálek, *Diplomat*, 151. Beneš, *Fall and Rise*, 36. Edvard Beneš, *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš: From Munich to New War and New Victory*, trans. Godfrey Lias (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954), 74. CMFA, *Czechoslovakia Fights Back*, 152, 179-180. “Czechoslovaks in America Against Hitler,” *CEO*, 17, 6 (April 16, 1940), 51. “Czechoslovaks in U.S. Elated over American Recognition of Czecho-Slovak Government,” *News Flashes from Czechoslovakia under Nazi Domination*, 94 (Aug 18, 1941). CNCA, *Czechoslovakia: Sacrifice*, 72, 81. “Armstrong to Roosevelt, 20 April 1939,” *PSF*, B:28, FDR. “Memo” (Doc 190) & “Notes” (Doc 208) in *Seton-Watson*. Slavicus, *Free Slovakia* (New York: American Friend of Czechoslovakia: 1940). “Doubts Facts on Czechoslovakia,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 119-120. “Statement to be Released Saturday 29th of May,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Beneš, “Czechoslovakia Plans.” Beneš, *Czechoslovak Policy*, 16-20. “America is With Us,” *CEO*, 17, 9 (June 1, 1940), 83. “Radio,” F#: 860F.001/153. “Nazism and the Slovaks,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “A na toto ste zabudol dr. Hletko,” *PF: Peter Hletko*, SI. CNCA, *The International Showdown: Humanity at a Crossroads* (Chicago: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1941), 3-4. Visson, *Coming Struggle*, 115-127. Mackworth, *Czechoslovakia Fights*, 98-99. Gedye, *Betrayal*, 408-410. “Poole to Berle,” 13 Oct 1942, F#: 860F.01/460, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, 12-15. Mikuláš Šprinc, “Slovak League of America and Independent Slovakia,” *Slovakia*, 17, 40 (1967), 69-74.

Slovak-American autonomists as part of a covert fascist conspiracy to subvert American democracy and to undermine the American war effort. In one such letter to Cordell Hull, Pelikan accredited the SNA as “the central organization of the great majority of American citizens of Slovak origin,” before castigating the Slovak League as simply “a few irresponsible individuals” who supported the “totalitarian Slovakia under Hitler’s domination.” Another Slovak-American centralist begged Washinton for a statement denouncing the Slovak-State and action against the Slovak-American autonomists. He demanded, “Anyone who is boycotting or spreading animosity towards the representatives of those governments which are our Allies and whose armies are fighting our battle should be considered saboteurs.” Another group requested police action against Hodža for undermining the American war effort. Exploiting the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, the Czechoslovak Embassy pressured Washington to demand that the SLA and other autonomist organizations register as agents of the Slovak government in order to exercise free speech on the Slovak Question. Likewise, the exile government and its allies reported Slovak autonomist organizations to the Dies Committee, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Office of Strategic Services as hostile agents.²⁶⁶

As State Department officials already embraced the Czechoslovakists’ desired policy, they deemed significant follow-ups unnecessary and simply wrote back general thank you letters. State Department officials also periodically met with SNA leaders. The Slovak-American centralists, however, regularly took the Department to task, fearing that American officials were

²⁶⁶ A large number of letters praising Roosevelt’s response to the Munich Agreement are available in *OF*, F:536c, FDR. “Arthur R. Burnett to Ralph Gamble,” 16 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/769, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “J. Pelikan to Cordell Hull,” 17 Nov 1939, F#: 860F.01/298, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Pelikan to A.J. Sabath, 13 Nov 1940,” *OF*, F:536a, FDR. “J. Pelikan to Cordell Hull,” 3 Dec 1940, F#: 860F.01/362, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Sabath to James C. Dunn,” 8 Jan 1941, F#: 860F.01/375, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Stefan Skrinar to Roosevelt,” 8 Aug 1941, F#: 860F.01/418, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Paul Sturnman to Hull,” 21 Nov 1941, F#: 860F.01/427, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “SNA to Roosevelt, 31 Dec 1941 & 13 Jan 1942,” *OF*, F:536a, FDR. “John Bartos to Francis E. Walter,” 17 April 1942, F#: 860F.01/440, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Paul Sturnman to Hull,” 9 July 1942, No File #, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, 12-15.

absorbing Slovak nationalist views. For example, when Poole attended several SNA events, Pelikan accused the State Department of secretly working for the restoration of the Hapsburg Empire for listening to Hodža. Behind the scenes, American officials expressed annoyance at these accusations. Nevertheless, they honestly discredited the charges and, in addition, Berle messaged the SNA, expressing praise for the organization. Pelikan later responded with thanks and swore to keep working with the Department.²⁶⁷

The National Slovak Society and Milan Hodža

The moderate nationalists among the Slovak-Americans responded initially to the breakup of Czechoslovakia by focusing on their Americanism. Officials in the National Slovak Society openly praised American liberty as the salvation of the Slovaks, and likewise produced a memorandum entitled “Be a Good American,” which it made into posters distributed to its members. This memo decried Slovakia being under Nazi shackles and for declaring war against “the liberty-consecrated land which, during the past half century and even longer, has given asylum to all Slovaks.” Early in the war, the moderate nationalists opposed the Slovak Republic and called for the re-creation of Czechoslovakia, often siding with the Czechoslovakists. During the Munich crisis the NSS, SEU, Zivena, and the Slovak Sokol appealed to Cordell Hull for American intervention to help the state. When Slovakia declared independence, NSS President, businessman Wendell Platek, wrote to Sumner Welles in support of Washington’s policy of non-recognition. In a later speech, Platek appealed to Czech-Slovak unity, “two peoples, two

²⁶⁷ “Memorandum for the files, John Hickerson,” 13 Mar 1940, F#: 860F.01/334, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “MoC: Atherton, Hickerson, Cob, Zmrhal, Hovorka, Pelikan,” 8 May 1941, F#: 860F.01/414, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Poole to Berle,” F#: 860F.01/462. “SNA to Hull,” 30 Oct 1940, F#: 860F.01/463, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum,” F#: 860F.01/438-1/2.

languages, but one heart,” and figures such as Stephen Zeman, Jr of the SEU and Paul Blažek of the Zivena wrote to the State Department to encourage support for the exile government.²⁶⁸

By late 1941, the moderate nationalists took a different track. In a speech to the SLA, Platek praised the organization as one “whose every fiber is truly democratic, truly Slovak, is truly American,” as he appealed to Slovak-American unity. He exalted the national liberation that the Slovaks had experienced in America, and he commended the American Slovaks for fighting to carry this freedom back to Slovakia. In turn, he bemoaned how “the fundamentals of democracy continued to be ignored insofar as the Slovaks were concerned” with the failure to implement autonomous government administration as promised in the Pittsburgh Agreement. He appealed for the Slovak-Americans to fight against Hitler, but in the name of an autonomous Slovakia within Czechoslovakia. A follow-up NSS memorandum then criticized how “in the Czecho-Slovakia of old, the Slovaks, rather than being accepted as equals by their brother Czechs, were too often treated as a subject people,” and appealed for a new Czechoslovakia based on national equality.

Ultimately, the autonomist groups combined to create an organization to support their goals, the American-Slovak Council of Organizations and Newspapers (ASCON), consisting of the NSS, First Catholic Slovak Union (FCSU), Catholic Sokol, Zivena, First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union (FCSLU), and the SEU, among others. In response to Beneš’s visit to Washington

²⁶⁸ “The American Way of Life” & “A Declaration of Humanitarian, Christian, American Principles,” in John A. Willo, et al, eds., *Souvenir Program, 19th Regular Convention of the National Slovak Society of the United States of America, August 5-10, 1946, Youngstown, Ohio* (National Slovak Society, 1946), 153-155. (Found in: National Slovak Society Box, SI). “Speech on Slovaks and America,” NSS, B: 5, F: Our Society Address at 18th Convention Banquet in New York 1941, IHRC. “Be a Good American,” & “War Clause Resolution,” NSS, B: 7, F: Supreme Assembly Meetings – January, 1942, IHRC. “America – Our Country,” NSS, B: 5, F: 18th Regular Convention in New York 1941, IHRC. “Slovak-American Groups to Hull, 23 Sep 1938,” NSS, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Wendell Platek to Welles,” 18 Mar 1939, F#: 860F.00/705, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovakia – The Land of our Fathers,” NSS, IHRC, B: 5, F: 18th Regular Convention in New York 1941. “Paul Blažek to Hull,” 24 Nov 1941, F#: 860F.01/428, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Stephen Zeman to Hull,” 25 Nov 1941, F#: 860F.01/429, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak Lutherans Demand Facts,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 105-108.

in 1943, the ASCON wrote to Hull to express the need to raise its voice on behalf of Slovakia, “a true democracy, a small America in the heart of Europe.” They denounced the Slovak Republic but appealed for Washington to pressure Beneš to sign a memorandum promising Slovak autonomy in the recreated state. “As God fearing and liberty-loving Americans we and all disciples of true democracy must see to it that the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia to be re-created after the global war shall be on the basis of equal rights, equal privileges, equal opportunities and equal obligations. We demand a Slovakia for Slovaks.” In a follow up letter, the group outlined the past ill-treatment of the Slovaks, and requested an American-led Allied military government administration in Slovakia independent from Beneš. They affirmed that the Slovaks would support an American-led democratic system for Czechoslovakia, but would never support Beneš. Accordingly, “Any attempt by the Allies to force Beneš on the Slovaks, or to repair his prestige, can only cause resentment and certain future trouble.”²⁶⁹ This plan was conceptually feasible, as there was no shortage of reliable Slovak leaders, but it would have required Washington to mitigate Beneš’s authority, which it was unwilling to do.

This shift came in large part due to the efforts of Hodža. Upon his arrival to America, the moderate nationalists treated Hodža coolly, largely due to Beneš’ smear campaign against him. Hodža nevertheless took his case directly to the Slovak-Americans through the press and through a tour visiting Slovak communities. Hodža told State Department officials that his objective was to unify the Slovak-Americans around his plan. While he assumed that rallying the Slovak-Americans against centralism would be easy, he also condemned the Slovak-American

²⁶⁹ The Slovak League played a role in the organization’s founding, although it did not join, looking to maintain its own freedom of action. The other Catholic nationalist organizations substituted for it. “Speech to the Slovak League,” NSS, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. National Slovak Society, “Statement of War Aims,” in Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 116-117. “Poole to Berle,” 19 Nov 1942, F#: 860F.001/127-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak-American Groups to Hull,” 11 May 1943, F#: 860F.01/493, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak-American Groups to Hull, 27 Oct 1943,” NSS, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. Stolarik, “Slovak League, 18-27. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 110-119.

nationalists and he promised to “destroy” them by stealing their popular support, “leaving the leaders, such as they were, un-sustained by any following whatsoever.” Hodža broached both the Czechoslovakists and the nationalists head on. He debated Pelikan in the Slovak-American press, charging centralism as an infringement of Slovak self-determination, and he targeted Josef Hušek to condemn the Slovak state. At an SNA meeting in Detroit, Hodža appealed for a Czechoslovakia based on the U.S. model of federalism, while in a written statement to the SLA’s 25th convention, he condemned Prague centralism in the name of the Atlantic Charter. He likewise praised the SLA’s activities and denounced the attacks against it. Overall, Hodža framed his vision to the Slovak-Americans as “with the Czechs, but not under the Czechs.”

Although the centralists largely still opposed Hodža and worked to counter his efforts, he gained the active support of the Slovak autonomists, who demanded that Hodža and not Beneš represent the Slovaks in determining the post-war order in Slovakia. Platek informed OSS officials how he now supported Hodža instead of the “petty politicians” and smear tactics of those working for Beneš. After Hodža’s death, the NSS eulogized him as the greatest Slovak statesmen of the time. Hodža bragged to American officials that all of the Slovak-Americans had rallied around him except for “a negligible group of Slovak Communists and an equally small group of supporters of the puppet state.” Hodža did help reconcile the autonomist branches of the American Slovaks. Nevertheless, he overstated his own success. While the moderate nationalists embraced him, the Catholic nationalists never quite trusted the former Prime Minister. They saw Hodža as a political opportunist without firm principles and quietly continued to support Slovak independence. The American entry into the war did more to shift their views than did Hodža.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ “MoC: Berle, Hoskins, & Hodža,” F#: 860F.01/444-1/2. “OSS Report,” F#: 860F.01/429-3/4. “Slovenská Samobytnosť,” “Odpoved’,” & “Ešte Odpoved’,” & “Protest,” in Múdry, *Hodža*. Kukliš-Kunovský, *Ako je na Slovensku?*, 81-94, 99-103. “Poole to Berle,” 1 Oct 1942, F#: 860F.00/994, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Milan Hodža,” NSS, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Dubosh to Pavol Jamriška, 3 July 1944,” *B:Msgr. Frantisek Dubosh, 1890-1967*, SI.

Other Slovak leaders in exile also communicated with the Slovak-Americans. Osuský had his closest relationship with the Lutheran autonomists, with whom he remained in close contact. They produced an open letter to Osuský during the war that discredited Beneš right to speak for the Slovaks and that denounced his smear campaign against the Slovak autonomists. Osuský forwarded this letter to the American embassy in London. After the Slovak Declaration of Independence, Osuský exchanged letters with figures linked to the SNA, and he publically criticized Hušek and the SLA for its support for the Slovak State. Nonetheless, Osuský shifted gears as his rivalry with Beneš exacerbated. He produced a rallying call for the Slovak-Americans in which he praised them for fighting for their “enslaved” brethren in Slovakia against both Germany and the “anti-Slovak policies” of the exile government. Osuský likewise denounced the exile government’s propaganda head, Papanek, as a traitor to his own people for leading the smear campaign against Slovak-Americans.²⁷¹

The Slovak League of America and the Slovak State

The Slovak-American Catholic nationalists and the Slovak League openly embraced the shift toward Slovak independence following Munich, particularly under the SLA presidency of Josef Hušek. They embraced the Žilina Agreement as the culmination of the Slovaks long struggle for self-determination. Peter Hletko cheered how the Slovaks had “fought and won the

“MoC: Berle, Hoskins, & Hodža,” F#: 860F.00/990. “OSS Report on Hodža,” 20 June 1942, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

“Minutes of the SLA Central Committee meeting for 1942,” B: *SLA*, SI. “Slovak-Americans to Hull,” F#: 860F.01/493. Múdry, *Hodža*, 17-49. Šprinc, “Slovak League,” 74-78. Stolarik, “Slovak League, 18-27. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 116-117.

²⁷¹ “Palic to Osuský,” *ŠO Papers*, HIA. “Fred Antl to Osuský, 24 June 1939,” *ŠO Papers*, B:11, F:1, HIA. “Osuský to Slovak Society in Chicago,” *ŠO Papers*, B:56, F:5, HIA. Osuský, *Česko-Slovensko*, 31-33. “Czech-American National Alliance to Osuský, 30 Nov 1939,” *ŠO Papers*, B:15, F:61, HIA. Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, 12. Staško, “Osuský’s Attempts.” “Sváz Slovenských Organizácií,” & “Beneš’ Personal Representative,” *ŠO Papers*, HIA. “Osuský on Slovak-Americans,” *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:29, HIA. “Osuský to John Zeman, 13 Sep 1943,” *ŠO Papers*, B:11, F:10, HIA. “American Slovaks to Dr. Štefan Osuský,” *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:13, HIA. “Osuský to Winant, 14 Nov 1944,” *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:29, HIA. Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, 12-15.

victory,” while teacher and publisher Philip Hrobak exclaimed that finally “a native Christian government was ruling Slovakia.” The SLA also sent a letter to Roosevelt, requesting his support for the post-Munich Czechoslovakia through protection and expanded trade relations. Slovak leaders in Slovakia also communicated with Slovak-Americans, in order to maintain their pre-established political and cultural connections and to encourage Slovak-American monetary investment in Slovakia. Jozef Tiso invited the SLA and the Slovak Catholic Federation (SCF) to the opening of the Slovak state assembly, although they were unable to attend, and likewise sent Čulen to America to serve as his attaché to the Slovak-Americans.²⁷²

When Slovakia split from Czechia in March 1939, Tiso immediately reached out to the Slovak-Americans for support. The Slovak President placed a short article in the *New York Times* arguing that secession was the only option left to protect Slovak self-determination. He asked the Slovak-Americans to rejoice, for “Slovakia is no longer a tolerated appendage, but is everywhere the master in its own house and able to face the world in its own name,” and he appealed for an un-infringed transatlantic coordination between the Slovaks. Tiso then wrote directly to the Slovak League. He appealed that “neither distance nor expanse of ocean separated us in the past, feeling always as one Slovak family which stands united in good and in evil, in joy and in sorrow, so, during the period just past when the very existence of our nation was at stake, we were even more keenly aware of our common ties.” He again explained the necessity of their declaration of independence as a means to protect the freedom of the Slovak nation without bloodshed. “We did not find in Prague an open willingness of the Czech government to live with us as one equal with another and on the basis of a sincere respect for our gained rights... This situation was made more difficult by our ill-wishing neighbors who constantly and breathlessly

²⁷² At the time, Čulen was also completing his history of the Slovak-Americans. “Dôvera Dr. Tisovi, NSS, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “M. Palic to Osuský, 6 June 1939,” *ŠO Papers*, B:11, F:16, HIA. “Slovak League to Roosevelt, 14 Oct 1938” NSS, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Staško, “Osuský’s Attempts.”

awaited an opportunity to divide Slovakia.” He argued that they had accepted the treaty of protection only out of necessity for their survival. Tiso reflected on his visit to the United States as well as the Slovak-American visit to Slovakia in 1938 and he praised the Slovak-Americans for not losing faith in Slovak self-determination. He then appealed for the League’s support in countering negative propaganda against the state:

The truth is that we are a young and a small state, but we desire to be honorable defenders of peace among nations...It is only our enemies who permit themselves, through malicious propaganda, to blacken our name and falsely represent us as a nation wild, uneducated, demoralized, and unfit for life. Believing that we were given freedom and independence by the goodness and wisdom of God, we want to prove to the world that we are worthy of these.

Tiso then thanked the Slovak-Americans. He asserted that they “were not a dry branch on the tree of the nation but its blossom,” and that his government recognized them as “loyal defenders of its interest, its honor, and its good name, and will continue to be worthy helpers in the joyous task of building the Slovak state and in guaranteeing its future development.”²⁷³

Receiving sparse information due to the confusion of March 1939, the SLA initially affirmed its support for autonomy, but opposed secession. Hušek even sent a letter to Tiso recommending against independence, although he promised to stand beside the Slovaks. Tiso’s letter, however, convinced the League to support independence. The SLA, the FCSU, and the SCF each openly expressed support for the state and organized a fundraising campaign on its behalf. The Slovak League planned to send an emissary to Slovakia to report on events and facilitate cooperation, and formed a delegation with the intent of delivering the original draft of the Pittsburgh Agreement to the new state as a gift, although neither of these events took place.

²⁷³ “Tiso Asks for Backing of Slovaks in the U.S.,” *New York Times*, 15 Mar 1939, 1. “Dr. Joseph Tiso to the Slovaks in America,” in Slovak League of America, *Correspondence in Re Slovakia and the Declaration of the Aim and Principles of the Slovak League of America* (Slovak League of America, 1940), 7-16.

The League also opened of a press bureau in Washington, D.C. in order to counter exile government propaganda and to encourage Washington to recognize the new state.

In its resolution of aims in November 1939, the SLA condemned the efforts to recreate Czechoslovakia as meant to subjugate and denationalize the Slovaks again under the “fallacious and historically untenable ideology of Czechoslovakism.” It chided Beneš for setting the stage for Czechoslovakia’s demise and denounced his claim to speak for the Slovaks. After affirming its own primary loyalty to the United States and to Christian principles, the League appealed for broader American support for the Slovak state “in order to strengthen and spread the democratic spirit among them” against the totalitarian ideologies of Nazism, Fascism, and Communism.”

Hušek then extended this campaign with direct appeals to Washington. In a letter to the White House, Hušek praised Roosevelt’s efforts to promote world peace but expressed disappointment that Washington neglected Slovakia. He appealed for Roosevelt to ignore the negative propaganda about Slovakia, and pleaded that the Slovaks “look to you and to men of your vision for assistance, trusting to your devotion to freedom, your deep sense of justice, and your love of humanity, that Slovakia will not again become a helpless victim of her more powerful and aggressive neighbors.” Hušek concluded that this support first required American recognition of the Slovak state. In a follow-up letters to Hull, Hušek apologized for the Slovak alliance with Germany as simply an act of survival and appealed that the Slovaks simply wanted to see their independent state succeed in its cultural and economic development. Accordingly, he highlighted the transatlantic linkages of the Slovaks to argue that America democracy “will always remain their highest ideal.” Hušek also expressed willingness to meet with American officials to discuss the SLA’s views in light of the campaign against it.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ “Slovensko Skladá Osud Svoj do Rúk Amerických Slovákov,” & “Adam Poliak to Tiso, 27 Aug 1939” NSS, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Jan Kocur to Karol Sidor, 6 Mar 1940,” & “Ivan Bielek to Sidor, 17 April 1940,” in

The outbreak of war in Europe cut off communication between the Slovak-American nationalists and the Slovak government. World War II effectively marked the end of direct transatlantic coordination on the Slovak Question until the fall of communism in 1989, and future Slovak-American national activism continued independently or in coordination with Slovak political exiles. The Slovak-American nationalists maintained connections with Karol Sidor at the Vatican, exchanging information and news, although Sidor admitted necessary restraint due to German monitors. This communication broke off, however, after the American entry into the war, when the U.S. censorship board cut off communication between Slovak-Americans and Slovak state diplomats, perceiving such communication as Nazi subversion. Osuský also spoke out in the defense of the Slovak-American autonomists. He praised them as loyal Americans, democrats, and Slovaks, and he criticized the Czechoslovakist efforts to label them as Nazi sympathizers. The Catholic nationalists never quite trusted Osuský, often perceiving him as a two-faced political careerist, an impression that lingered from Osuský's behavior during World War I. Nevertheless, they agreed to work with the former ambassador against their common foes, and Philip Hrobak translated into English, published, and distributed Osuský's writings for an American audience. Prídavok also reached out to the Slovak-Americans, encouraging them to remain firm in their transatlantic solidarity. The Slovak

Sidor, *Šesť Rokov*, 125-127. "Slovenská Repulika," *FCSU*, F: 1523, IHRC. "Report," F#: 860F.00/596, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Joseph Paučo, "American Slovaks and March 14, 1939," *Slovakia*, 4, 1 (Mar 1954), 17-22. Jozef Paučo, "75 Years of the First Catholic Slovak Union," *Furdek*, 5 (1966), 65-74. "Resolution Condemning Undemocratic and Un-American ideologies," & "Declaration of the Principles and Aims of the Slovak League of America" in *Proceedings of the Conference of Americans of Slovak Descent, Washington D.C., October 17-18, 1940* (Washington D.C.: Slovak League of America, 1940). "Slovaks in the recent Czecho-Slovak Crisis," & "Slovakia's Great Awakening" in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 97-105. Šprinc, "Slovak League, 63-69. Evangela, "White House," 51-63. "Jozef Hušek to Roosevelt," 24 April 1939, Missing F#, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Hušek to Hull," 4 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.00/892, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Hušek to Hull," 12 Dec 1939, F#: 860F.01/307, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

nationalists also supported Pridavok, translating and publishing much of his work into English.²⁷⁵

The Slovak-Americans and American Loyalty

The Slovak-American nationalists during World War II pursued a delicate balancing act. They remained firm supporters of Slovak autonomy and maintained an interest in seeing the Slovak state succeed. While they were unhappy about the state's relationship to Germany, they understood the necessity of this relationship, given the circumstances. The difficulty of this position became more acute when America entered the war. The Slovak-American nationalists continued to express pride as Americans and vigorously supported the American war effort, but found themselves trapped between their hope for a democratic, self-determinate Slovakia, their loyalty to the United States, and the threat of claims of disloyalty due to America's state of war against the Slovak Republic. The exile government's campaign to convince Washington that any opposition to its position on the Slovaks was treasonous and damaging to the American war effort exacerbated this concern. Hletko expressed frustration at this situation. He asserted how the Slovak-Americans remained "one of the most loyal citizens of the United States. This does not mean that they must be ashamed of their old mother—their native land." Francis Dubosh likewise affirmed, "We are not working for any foreign government; we are only interested in bringing the plight of the Slovaks to the front and of aiding them to obtain finally what was promised an agreed upon in the Pittsburgh Pact." The SLA, thus, devoted ample effort to detach

²⁷⁵ During the war, Hrobak published under the pseudonym Philip James Anthony. "Hrobak to George Marshall," 9 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-947, *Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945-1949 (DoS CS 1945-49)*, Microfilm (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1986). Sidor, *Šest' Rokov*, 123-131, 152-157. "Dubosh to Hletko 21 Sep 1944," B: *Dubosh*, SI. The Slovaks of America," *ŠO Papers*, B:55, F:24, HIA. Anthony, "Introduction," in Osuský, *Truth Conquers*, 7-10. Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*. Pridavok, *Good Word*, 6-7.

the value of Slovak self-determination from the implicit affiliation with Hitler, and proposed goals to break the Slovakia free from Germany under the sole influence of the United States.²⁷⁶

When Beneš first began organizing in America, he tried to recruit the Slovak-American nationalists, sending Slávik to meet with the SLA in May 1939, but its leaders, long disillusioned with Prague and Beneš, openly rejected him. They expressed their long-held frustrations on the Slovak Question and defended the Slovak state, before sending Slávik on his way with a memorandum stating their open opposition to Beneš and his vision for the Slovaks. This act spurred what historian Mikuláš Šprinc called a “campaign of revenge” by Beneš against the SLA, in an attempt to “put the stamp of Nazism on the organization” and defame it in the eyes of American officials. This effort proved successful early on, as the SLA lacked the funding and connections in Washington to counter the resources of the exile government. Dubosh complained, “Our enemies have millions at their disposal, but we in the SLA we have pocket change.” Unlike the professional politicians in the exile government, the Slovak-American leaders were everyday citizens with lives outside of politics, a reality that expectedly slowed down their organization. Dubosh emphasized how “in a job such as this, it is impossible to command anybody to do anything. One must depend on their good will and their love the cause—and beyond that, on nothing.” Accordingly, Dubosh almost resigned the SLA presidency in mid-1943 from a mix of exhaustion and helplessness in face of the constant political battles on top of the everyday responsibilities of his priesthood. Thus, the Slovak League found itself unable to prevent the exile government from consolidating its view over American officials.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ *Proceedings, Washington D.C.*, 31-34. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 17 Dec 1943,” in *B: Philip A. Hrobak*, SI.

²⁷⁷ “Dubosh to the 28th FCSU Conference, 15 Aug 1943,” “Ivan J. Kramoris to Dubosh 25 Aug 1943,” & “C. J. Hrtanek to Dubosh 14 Sep 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Dubosh to Florian Billy, 18 Sep 1943,” *PF: Florian Billy*, SI. Hrobak, “50 Years,” 10-18. Šprinc, “Slovak League, 69-74, 78-79. Mikuš, “Slovak League, 47-49.

Because of the smear campaign, the Slovak League came under extensive scrutiny from the federal government. The League found itself reported to the Dies Committee as a subversive element and put under investigation for claimed *Communist* infiltration. The FBI likewise kept its leaders, including Hletko and Hušek, under constant surveillance. The State Department's department of controls pressured the SLA and its leaders to register as agents of a foreign government in response to reports that it was working for the Slovak state. The League also came under scrutiny of the Office of War Information as a pro-fascist organization.²⁷⁸

The Slovak-American nationalists expressed frustration that Beneš held such sway over American officials and fought to deny categorically the charge and to defend their good name. Hušek wrote directly to Martin Dies to express his outrage:

The Slovak League of America is democratic and American in every respect and has always upheld the principles of democracy and of individual freedom cherished by all loyal citizens of the United States... To me, such peremptory action appears to be both undemocratic and un-American and only helps to strengthen the very forces against which your Committee and all loyal American citizens are fighting.

Dubosh also had an extended conversation with a State Department official over the demand to register as a foreign agent. Dubosh explained that the League received only membership dues from Slovaks in America, and clarified its purposes of helping Slovaks assimilate, educating about the Slovaks, and defending Slovak self-determination. He affirmed that the League continued to fight for Slovakia, but within the terms and obligations imposed by Washington, and he evidenced its active opposition to anti-democratic ideologies. Dubosh successfully convinced the State Department that this registration was not applicable to the League. When

²⁷⁸ There is no evidence of fascist activity among the SLA leaders. "FBI to Berle," 25 April 1944, F#: 860F.01/4-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "J. Edgar Hoover to Berle," 10 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.00/11-1044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "J. Edgar Hoover to Frederick B. Lyon," 30 Dec 1944, F#: 860F.01/12-3044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Leonard H. Price to Slovak Library of Information, 26 Oct 1940," & "Price to SLA, 8 Nov 1940," B: *Dubosh*, SI. Šprinc, "Slovak League, 69-74, 78-79. Evangela, "White House and the Slovaks." Stolarik, "Slovak League," 18-27.

Beneš attacked Slovak autonomists in an American radio address, the SLA, the SCF and the Federation of Slovak Newspapermen in America wrote a joint letter to Attorney General Robert Jackson that denied the charge, demanded proof, and requested action to prevent such attacks on “loyal Americans.” As in other cases, they received no response. The SLA also released several pamphlets asserting its position. In one example, the League affirmed its loyalty to the United States and scorned the disingenuousness of the accusations against it, but asserted that it would continue to fight for Slovak national freedom, and to “prevent, whenever possible, the defilement of the honor and the good name of the Slovak nation.” It repeated their desire for a democratic government protecting the Slovaks rather than Germany, and argued that viable alternatives existed to returning the Slovakia to the Czechs. The rest of the document then provided copies of the League’s correspondence with American officials, and a translation of Tiso’s message to the Slovak-Americans to prove that their support for the Slovak state had always been in good faith for Slovak liberty and democracy. Other documents condemned these actions as simply an extension of Czech nationalist attempts to condemn the Slovaks as a ‘backward’ people.²⁷⁹

The Slovak League’s main public relations effort was to hold a conference in October 1940 in Washington D.C., in order to defend their good name and to promote a positive image of the Slovaks. The League reached out to all Slovak-Americans, and the moderate nationalists participated in the event, although the Czechoslovakists did not. In his introductory speech at the event, Hušek defined the conference’s purpose as to promote Slovak-American patriotism and to support for America though “energetic and united participation in patriotic and public activity.”

²⁷⁹ “Hletko to Sidor, 9 April 1940,” “Bielek to Sidor, 17 April 1940,” & “Hletko to Sidor, 11 Feb 1941,” in Sidor, *Šest’ Rokov*, 125-129, 153. “Hušek to Martin Dies, 6 Aug 1939,” & “Hušek to Dies, 28 Oct 1939,” in SLA, *Correspondence*, 23-24. “Hušek to Walter Steele, 14 May 1940” *National Republic Collection (NRC)*, Microfilm Reel 302, B316F2, HIA. “Dubosh to Price, 11 Dec 1940,” & “Price to SLA, 26 Dec 1940,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Hušek, John Baker, & Fedor Salva to Robert H. Jackson, 20 Jan 1940,” in SLA, *Correspondence*, 29. “Forward” in SLA, *Correspondence*, 3-5. Stephanie O. Hušek, “The Slovaks in America: A Historical Sketch,” *B: SLA*, SI.

The conference then passed two resolutions. The first called for Slovak unity against efforts to divide and to smear them publically through “ridiculous fabrications and suspicioning” in a manner that was “un-American and un-Slovak.” It then emphasized Slovak Christianity, pledged support for liberty and democracy as well as loyalty to America, and then denounced fascism, nazism and communism. The second resolution vowed to report attacks against the Slovak-American’s good name to the Justice Department. The conference then had several guest speakers, including Congressman Michael Kirwan of Ohio, who praised the Slovak-Americans as patriots willing to stand in defense of America, and Senator James Davis from Pennsylvania, who praised the SLA’s charity, religiosity, education and Americanization efforts, and its patriotism and willingness to spread American values to its homeland.

On the last day of the conference, several of the Slovak-American leaders received a short meeting with President Roosevelt, arranged for them by Congressman Sabath. Roosevelt communicated to them that *Czechoslovakia* would become independent again, but that all of the states of Central Europe should work together. Michael Trenko interjected that “Just as you say, we Americans do not discriminate regardless of size,” and Roosevelt affirmed this sentiment. Hletko informed Roosevelt about their conference and then swore their support for the President. Monsignor Stephen Krasula provided blessings and the meeting ended. The meeting did not address the Slovak Question, likely to avoid controversy. Nevertheless, the Slovak leaders considered it a moral victory, that gave them credibility and the opportunity to affirm their loyalty. The conference then concluded with a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. After the Conference, the SLA produced a pamphlet describing the event as well as various resolutions. The pamphlet began with a short history of the organization, explaining its purpose as pushing education and Americanization among the Slovak-Americans while also working to

bring liberty to their homeland, and exposing how Prague had betrayed them after the First World War. It then criticized the smear campaign against the SLA as an effort as foreign agents sowing disunity at a time when the President had called on solidarity.²⁸⁰

After this event, the Slovak-American nationalists continued direct outreach to American officials. Most of their letters focused on affirming their allegiance to the U.S. government. When they did address the Slovak Question, they focused on the exile government, and avoided mention of the Slovak state. For example, Hušek wrote to Hull to complain how the exile government continued to fool the world due to the “general unfamiliarity with the history of the Slovak people and supported by government subsidized propaganda,” and to plead for Washington to deny recognition of the provisional government as the representative of the Slovaks. Hušek asserted that the Slovaks mistrusted Beneš due to the Czech leader’s constant opposition to Slovak self-determination, and he appealed that the situation created by Germany should not justify punishing the Slovaks by subjecting them to Beneš. Publisher Gustav Kosik likewise produced a memorandum directed at Hull. It complained that Washington “erroneously” accepted the idea of “a homogeneous and unified Czechoslovak people.” The memo asserted Slovak opposition to the pre-Munich state, and appealed for a Central European confederation as an alternative. Kosik expressed the liberation of the Slovaks from the Nazis as the goal of the Slovak-Americans, yet, he asserted that the Slovaks should still receive their right to self-determination through an independent state. The memo concluded with a request for Washington to recognize the exile government only concerning the Czechs, for such a policy would

²⁸⁰ “Stephanie O. Hušek to John Willo, 19 Aug 1940,” NSS, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Hletko to Sidor, 28 Nov 1940,” in Sidor, *Šest’ Rokov*, 130-131. “Sabath to Edwin M. Watson, 16 Oct 1940,” OF, F:536a, FDR. “Slovak Delegates Convention, Oct 18, 1940,” in *Franklin D. Roosevelt – The Great Communicator: The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1944*, Microfilm, Series 2, Reel 20, FDR. *Proceedings, Washington D.C.*, 31-59. Stolarik, “Slovak League,” 18-27. “Introduction,” in *Proceedings*, 9-17.

“strengthen the faith of Americans of Slovak descent in democracy and exemplify the absolute righteousness of the government of this county.”²⁸¹

Washington’s response was tepid. The White House sent generic letters of thanks to most of these appeals, or passed them on the State Department. Pierrepont Moffat in the Department of European Affairs initially offered to give Hušek’s concerns “close attention,” but he affirmed that they were not considering a change in policy. The State Department ultimately decided to stop responding to the Slovak-American nationalists all together, conceding that it would never embrace the autonomists view and worrying that their responses “might be misused in some form or another.” American officials determined that this issue was an internal matter for the Slovaks and Czechs and not in the American government’s purview.

By late 1941, however, the Department decided to address the issue. Congressman Gordon Canfield from New Jersey arranged a meeting between Košík, Czech-American William R. Vanecek and Department officials. The two argued that a reunion of the Czechs and Slovaks was impossible given the past treatment of the Slovaks, and that Beneš’ vision was unrepresentative of the Slovaks. They expressed disappointment over the American recognition of the exile government, and requested that Washington amend the recognition to include only the Czechs. Department official Ray Atherton dismissed the request, stating that the government had always held the view that the issue was an internal issue for the Czech and Slovak peoples. Atherton likewise asserted that America would continue to recognize Beneš, and that it could only do so if it recognized the pre-Munich order. Košík then provided a letter from the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington that threatened to incarcerate Slovak citizens in America if they did not register with the exile government. Department official Cavendish Cannon

²⁸¹ “SLA to Roosevelt, 3 April 1941,” & “FCSU to Roosevelt, 24 Sep 1941,” *OF*, F:536a, FDR. “Hušek to Hull,” 2 April 1941, F#: 860F.01/372, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hull to Francis E. Walter,” 16 Feb 1940, F#: 860F.01/313, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum to the Honorable Cordell Hull” F#: 860F.01/429-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

expressed understanding, but said that the Slovak-American's main priority should be promoting national solidarity as Americans, and he chided the promotion of Slovak self-determination as beneficial to the Nazis. Kosik responded that they could undoubtedly achieve unity with a guarantee of equal treatment for the Slovaks. The officials then concluded by encouraging the Slovak-Americans to work with Hodža to bridge the gap with the exile government. The purpose of the meeting was seemingly not to give a serious consideration of the Slovak autonomist views, but rather to push the Slovak-Americans to fall in line behind Beneš.²⁸²

The Office of War Information and the Slovak-Americans

When America entered the war, the Office of War Information ultimately decided that Slovak-American disunity was a major concern. As a result, the Office convened a meeting, overseen by OWI officials Alan Cranston and David Carr, on September 14, 1942, between almost all of the Slovak-American organizations and editors, designed to obtain an agreement. With Slovak-Americans of all views involved, the meeting featured ample bickering over the right to discuss the Slovak Question as well as the basic organization of the conference. Pelikan and other Czechoslovakists tried to purge an examination of the Slovak Question at the conference. They argued that no one should discuss the postwar order until completion of the war and that this issue was not the business of the Slovak-Americans anyway.²⁸³ This attempt spurred dissent, and when this bickering threatened to consume the conference, the OWI officials butted in to express their displeasure about the direction of the discussion. Carr condemned these

²⁸² "M. H. McIntyre to Jan Kocur, 8 April 1941," *OF*, F:536a, FDR. "Moffat to Hušek," 4 Aug 1939, F#: 860F.01/372, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Division of European Affairs Memorandum," 15 Jan 1940, F# Missing, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant)," 14 July 1941, in *FRUS, 1941*, V1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), 342. "MoC: Atherton, Cannon, Kosik, & Vanecek, 18 Nov 1941," F#: 860F.01/429-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*.

²⁸³ Pelikan also tried to flood the event with his supporters and called for a vote from all in attendance. Zeman, however, called him on this ploy and the autonomists assured that each organization had only a single vote.

debates for dividing the Czechs and Slovaks and he asserted that they all needed to focus on unifying behind the war effort as Americans. Cranston likewise affirmed that they had strict orders to avoid discussion on the post-war order, and that any other course was antithetical to the American war effort. In this manner, they affirmed the Czechoslovakist position.

The Slovak nationalists did not kowtow in response, and instead, they defended their position. Bradac quoted OWI head Elmer Davis on a need for clarity on the postwar order, and Fedor Salva and John Willo each expressed stark resentment about the implication that Slovak autonomists were somehow disloyal for fostering debate on the topic. Carr butted in again, marking such disagreements as helping Goebbels, and claimed that “one group here” had appealed for recognition of the Slovak State. He asserted that the Washington had already decided to restore Czechoslovakia and that the point of the meeting was simply to get a consensus behind the American effort. This statement spurred an outcry. Palkovic stood up and denounced the notion that someone could question their patriotism because of their interest in the fate of Slovakia. He affirmed how both his sons were fighting for America overseas and he asserted his own readiness to fight. Hletko then took Carr to task as being misinformed. He asserted, “one hundred percent of the Slovaks in this country are good Americans,” and accused the officials of making a tense situation worse by butting in. Hletko then criticized the government for gaining its information from anti-Slovak sources, and for accepting accusations against the SLA without allowing a self-defense. Many other figures then spoke on similar terms. They defended the right to discuss the fate of the Slovaks and affirmed how supporting Slovak freedom against efforts to force their submission, whether by the Germans, by the exile government or by the communists, was in line with American values. Primarily, they expressed their discontent with the smear campaign against them. Although the American officials played

dumb about the smear campaign, Carr effectively apologized for the insinuations of disloyalty and praised the SLA's war bond campaign. Zeman and John Wargovic then attempted to cool things down by noting that the OWI officials had good motives and honestly took in everyone's opinion. The two likewise commended how the Slovak-Americans had proven their loyalty to America, and that any future smear campaign would have no impact.²⁸⁴

The remaining portion of the conference focused on the completion of several resolutions. The first two resolutions expressed Slovak-American loyalty to the United States, their unity as Americans, and their eagerness to support the war effort. All of the representatives signed these two documents and agreed to their delivery to the President, Congress, and the Department of State. The final resolution discussed the post-war order and the status of Slovakia. It stated opposition to the Slovak State as "the betrayers and the murders of the Slovak people, the rulers of Slovakia, who, under the command of Hitler, have declared war on the United States of America." It then expressed that the Slovaks, as believers in democracy, would throw off the Nazi yoke, with Slovak-American support. It called for the recreation of Czechoslovakia, but based on equality and autonomy, in the name of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms.

The final resolution caused ample controversy at the meeting. The autonomists shot down a resolution desired by the centralists to avoid issues of the post-war order. The Slovak-American nationalists, in turn, accepted the line denouncing the Slovak State and one affirming the indispensability of the Czecho-Slovak state to appease the SNA. A line stating that the Czechs had too often treated the Slovaks "as subject people in derogation of their rights and privileges as equal partners in the Republic" caused the most controversy. The Slovak nationalists also desired a statement affirming that the United States, and not Beneš, would

²⁸⁴ "Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Slovak Fraternal Organizations," *ŠO Papers*, B:101, F:1, HIA. Stolarik, "The Slovak League," 18-27.

determine Slovakia's fate. The group dumped the latter component for sake of compromise, but the nationalists held firm on the former. The OWI officials stepped in and rejected the line because it prevented unity and exceeded the bounds of the meeting. Cranston responded that "foreign policy issues" were not in their purview, and that the autonomists had to take them up with the Department of State. He added that in order to do so, they had to register as agents of a foreign government. Salva challenged this claim, criticizing that the law did not apply to the SNA, which was both receiving and collecting funds from the exile government to pursue propaganda. In response, Carr shifted the responsibility to the State Department, and reasserted that the statement represented an attack on an allied government. "The audacity of the thing, not in our eyes but in the eyes of the State Department, is almost incredible." In response, Jozef Prusa criticized the officials as pretending to come as observers, only to force the participants to comply with exile government designs, and asserted that he would not accept bullying.

The group finally agreed to vote on each paragraph, and approved all of them. The OWI reaffirmed that it could not sign off on the memorandum so long as the controversial paragraph remained, and the Americans temporarily left the room. Salva praised the line as the most important one in the text and admitted that the uproar over it had only raised his desire to support its inclusion. Hrobak emphasized how the line represented the values of the Atlantic Charter and was thus in compliance with the goals of the war. The moderate nationalists, however, coaxed the group into abandoning the line, for the sake of unity. The group agreed to replace the line with a general quote from Roosevelt on the rights of small nations. The OWI concurred, and the leaders of the combined autonomist organizations signed this final document. Ultimately, the Slovak nationalists compromised extensively, accepting statements with which they were not entirely happy. Historian Jozef Mikuš claims that the Slovak Catholic nationalists never

endorsed the memos and only accepted them under pressure. While the autonomists certainly made concessions, Mikuš likely overstates their response. After the event, the Catholic nationalists regularly promoted the resolutions in their own support. Pelikan, however, remained completely uncompromising. He rejected the resolution for using the hyphen in name of the state, for discussing the post-war environment, and because he felt the issue was none of the Slovak-American's concern. Pelikan even rejected the Roosevelt quote, despite it saying nothing on the Slovaks. The SNA and other centralists, thus, refused to sign the resolution.²⁸⁵

Slovak-American Autonomists and the American Entry into World War II

With the American entry into the war and the scrutiny coming from Washington, the Slovak-American nationalists decided to lay low for a while. Leadership of the Slovak League moved to the more reserved and tactful Monsignor Francis Dubosh, a Catholic priest who had founded the SS Cyril and Methodius Church in Lakewood, Ohio, who formally took over the SLA presidency in 1943 to lead the organization through its most challenging period. Dubosh marked Hušek's approach as too aggressive and he encouraged his colleagues to tread lightly and to prioritize support for the war effort over pressuring for Slovak self-determination. The SLA, however, continued organizing. John Willo, as head of the SLA's Political-Civic Committee, encouraged SLA members to reach out to government officials at all levels and on a bipartisan basis. Dubosh, in turn, worked closely with the Justice Department to affirm what types of material the League could and could not produce within America's wartime laws. Affirming the

²⁸⁵ Within this debate, there were many discussions on Hodža, Beneš and other topics, which the OWI forced to be off the record. National Slovak Society, "Statement of War Aims", in Baumgarten, NSS, 116-117. "As Americans, we Stand United," & "For the Rebirth of Czecho-Slovakia" in Willo, et al, *Souvenir Program*, 158-161. Múdry, *Hodža*, 41-49. "Minutes of Meeting," *ŠO Papers*, HIA. "NSS Resolution Authorizing War Conference Resolutions," NSS, B:7, F: Supreme Assembly Meetings – May 1945, IHRC. "John Cranston to Willo, 28 Aug 1942," "John Salva to Willo, 16 Sep 1942," "Unknown to Slovak v Amerike, 17 Sep 1942," & "Unknown to James Hovorka, 15 Sep 1943," NSS, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Mikuš, "Slovak League, 47-49.

sensitivity of American officials, Dubosh encouraged Slovak nationalists to use caution when publishing their views, and to focus on general “education” about the Slovaks, in order to get information to the public without meriting accusations of disloyalty. The League also continued to fundraise to compete against the exile government.²⁸⁶

During this time, the League shifted its position to supporting Slovak autonomy within a re-created Czechoslovakia, and restricted talk of complete Slovak independence. Dubosh stated the League’s official policy: “The Slovak League of America today is not interested in the formation of any particular state for the Slovaks over there. The Slovak League believes that the Slovaks in Slovakia should be permitted to decide for themselves as to what alliance or federation they wish to form.” The organization’s leaders also condemned the Slovak state’s decision to side with Germany. Another memorandum denounced Hušek’s past request for recognition of the Slovak state, and affirmed friendliness to the Jews. Nevertheless, the Slovak-American Catholic nationalists continued to appeal that America was the only hope to assure Slovak liberty, and begged for American government assurance of Slovak autonomy in a re-created Czechoslovakia. One letter, for example, begged for American control over the fate of Slovakia, for leaving them to Beneš would be like leaving “a lamb to an unmerciful wolf.” The League affirmed this sentiment outright in its 25th Congress in February of 1943. Organized as a “purely American” event, the SLA vowed to keep fighting for Slovak freedom, but aligned with American war aims and the Atlantic Charter. It then passed a series of memoranda that called on

²⁸⁶ “Vote on Tuesday,” & “To the Officers and Members of the Slovak League of America,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 17 Dec 1943,” in *B: Hrobak*, SI. “Dubosh to Gurčák, 10 Oct 1944,” & “Dubosh to the 28th FCSU Conference, 15 Aug 1943,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

full support for the war effort abroad and on the home front, condemned Hitler and the breakup of Czechoslovakia, decried anti-Semitism, and pledged moral support for the Jews in Europe.²⁸⁷

Despite this shift, the federal government continued to scrutinize the Slovak-Americans. The League remained stigmatized by the Dies committee as late as mid-1942. In June 1943, American officials prevented Hletko from speaking at a public ceremony honoring the SLA's bond-raising efforts. Although the State Department had already cleared them, the League again had to deal with demands about registering as agents of the foreign government, this time from the Justice Department. The OWI also continued to frustrate Slovak autonomists. Dubosh, for example, got into a tit-for-tat with an OWI official, Reuben Markham, who had charged the SLA with being a pro-Nazi organization. Dubosh defended the League and its support for democracy: "The nature of true Slovaks is against tyranny and subjugation... The Slovaks over there want what we over here want: freedom, opportunities, justice, peace, recognition of the national rights and not oppression." Dubosh condemned Markham as a "stooge" for Beneš and then criticized the OWI in general as working for Beneš to obfuscate on the Slovak Question, diminish the Slovaks, and smear the Slovak autonomists. Dubosh then sent the OWI ample evidence of their support for the war, along with a range of material espousing the League's goals, including the memorandums from the 1942 conference with the OWI. Markham responded, asking for more evidence and again charging that the SLA had refused to denounce Tiso. Fed up, Dubosh tagged Markham as "biased and perhaps malicious" and ended the correspondence. In March 1944,

²⁸⁷ "Untitled Resolution," *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. "Minutes of the SLA Central Committee meeting for 1942," in *B: SLA*, SI. "Postmaster General to the Secretary of State, 27 June 1942," F#: 860F.01/474, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "John A Kocur to Roosevelt, 12 Nov 1942," F#: 860F.01/471-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Dubosh to SLA Members, 6 July 1943," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Report of the Program Committee," in *SLA Cabinet*, F: 24th Congress of the Slovak League of America, 28 February 1943, Pittsburgh, PA, SI. The Slovak-American Catholic nationalist leaders broadly showed sympathy toward the treatment of the Jews in Europe, although they overlooked the Slovak state's anti-Semitism because of their own sympathies for the state as a representation of Slovak national self-determination. Expressions of anti-Semitism among the Slovak-American leaders were rare, although one exception was journalist Stephen Palickar, who regularly harped on "Czech-Jewish" conspiracies to exploit the Slovaks. "Slovakia's Great Awakening" in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 100-105.

Dubosh visited the OWI, who denied knowledge of this back and forth. Dubosh expressed his skepticism: “Down there they tell you anything, because they think that they have the upper hand...Perhaps they have no system of filing. But they do find everything AGAINST the Slovak League of America.” He later re-sent the correspondence to the War Department and to OWI head Elmer Davis.²⁸⁸

The Slovak-American nationalists remained resolved to fight the efforts to condemn them as fascists. As Hrobak asserted, “they can rant a rave, lie and spread stories about us and it seems ok, but when we fight for the thing that really is the truth and for justice, and the aims of the Allies to make all people free, well we’re supposed to be propagandists.” The SLA responded by making itself transparent to Washington. Its leaders welcomed investigations and pushed government agencies to open up their files in order to expose exactly what evidence and charges they held against the League. The Slovak-American nationalists also considered various legal measures, including suits against the organizations and individuals attacking them and petitions for police investigations to gauge the source of these organization’s funding.²⁸⁹

Dubosh eventually attended meetings with the State Department, the OSS, the OWI, and Justice Department to address the concerns, and he claimed that the agencies treated him with respect. The FBI cleared the League of all charges, and the League convinced many government officials of the right of Slovak-American autonomists to speak in the interest of their ethnic homeland. Ultimately, the effort to shut down the organization failed. Šprinc attributed this result

²⁸⁸ “Slovak League, July 1942,” *NRC*, Microfilm, 302, B316F2, HIA. “David Karr to Berle,” 3 Dec 1942, F#: 860F.01/475, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 2 July 1943,” “Dubosh to Michael S. Rehak, 13 Dec 1943,” “Dubosh to Reuben H. Markham, 24 June 1943,” “Markham to Dobosh, 2 July 1943,” “Dubosh to Markham, 23 July 1943,” “Dubosh to William C. Fitzgibbon, 7 April 1944,” & “Dubosh to Hrobak, 6 Nov 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

²⁸⁹ “Hrobak to Dubosh, 20 Nov 1943,” & “Hrobak to Dubosh, 22 Dec 1943,” in *B: Hrobak*, SI. “Dubosh to Michael S. Rehak, 13 Dec 1943,” & “Dubosh to Howard J. Carroll, Date Unk,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Dubosh to Jurchak, 8 June 1944, *PF: Peter P. Jurchak*, SI. “MoC: Possible Publication,” 24 Feb 1944, F#: 860F.01/527, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubosh to Feighan, 19 June 1944,” in *SLA Cab*, F: SLA Presidents, Telegrams, 1907-2006, SI. “Slovakia maintains her Independence,” in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 117-119.

to the fact that “there was nothing to hide, for the Slovak League membership, its president and executive officers were men of personal integrity and loyal citizens of the United States. They met the challenge without flinching and withstood the test with courage and dignity.” Dubosh expressed relief that, despite the mudslinging, the government “still sees that the Slovaks are democratic at their roots.” He also expressed hope that the SLA could use the connections built with American officials to counter Beneš, and “that they who help to form public opinion and that they who have the destinies of nations in their hands, will recognize that the Slovaks always did have and still do have rights as a nation.” Nevertheless, the process effectively marginalized their influence. By 1945, the League still struggled to rebuild its public image. Accordingly, Hrobak pushed, unsuccessfully, for a government statement exonerating the League: “The least they can do is give us a clean slate!... it would certainly have a great effect on our people and it would surely just about squash the Slovak National Alliance and the others, who tried and are trying to besmirch the Slovak League and the Slovak people.”²⁹⁰

The Slovak League Reawakens

After this period of restraint, the Slovak-American nationalists came back full force by mid-1943 once victory over Germany appeared certain. They felt that the Czechoslovakist promotions too often went unanswered and that a strong pushback was necessary to try to influence the post-war order in Slovakia. Attorney Peter Jurchak, for example, asserted that the League “must establish and prove our cultural independence from the Czechs before we talk to any outsider about our political independence... When I think of the abysmal lack of information

²⁹⁰ “Dubosh to Fedor Salva 22 April 1943,” & “P. Jamriska to Dubosh, 13 June 1943, *PF: Peter P. Jurchak*, SI. “Dubosh to SLA Members, 6 July 1943,” & “Dubosh to SLA Members, 6 Jan 1945,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Hrobak to Dubosh, 10 Mar 1945,” & “Dubosh to Hrobak, 6 Oct 1945,” in *B: Hrobak*, SI. Šprinc, “Slovak League, 73. Evangela, “White House.”

on the subject in Washington, I am not deceived about the general ignorance of the American public on the subject of the Slovaks and Slovakia.” Jurchak felt the answer was to develop several English languages periodicals about the Slovaks, including a newspaper and another in the style and format of *Reader’s Digest*. Literary scholar Ivan J. Kramoris likewise pushed for extended material on Slovak culture, including a Slovak history in English and translations of Slovak literature, otherwise “the Czech material will form all opinion on Slovakia, distorting and minimizing and even glossing over Slovakia’s role.”²⁹¹

The Slovak League responded. Determining that a broad American ignorance about the Slovaks and Slovakia was the main cause of their difficulties, the League worked to inform all levels of American society about Slovak culture, society, and the Slovak Question. As such, the League and its leaders produced a variety of articles and pamphlets on the Slovak Question. Their primary step was to fight back against the Czechoslovakists and their claimed authority over the Slovaks. In one such piece, Dobush asserted that Beneš “seems to think that if he looks down upon us with disdain, we ‘stupid Slovaks’ will shake with trepidation and run to him seeking his help...Dr. Beneš is badly mistaken if he thinks the Slovaks were given to the Czechs by divine decree.” Hrobak published essays from various figures to show the diverse opposition to Beneš, and he criticized the inflated influence given to centralist Slovaks, “since their main work thus far was to smear and knock the Slovak League of America and organizations and persons connected with it.” The Slovak autonomists then attempted to deconstruct the exile government’s methods to defame the Slovak-Americans, which they presented as attacks against good American citizens. They in turn criticized Washington for allowing the exile government to pursue this campaign unrestrained, and even supporting it financially through lend-lease aid.

²⁹¹ “Peter Jurchak to Dubosh, 2 March 1943,” & “Jurchak to Dubosh, 7 March 1944,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Kramoris to Dubosh 25 Aug 1943,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

Their second objective was to attach blame for the breakup of the state on the pre-Munich government and its treatment of the Slovaks. One such article defined Czechoslovakism as a “pernicious doctrine of national destruction, whose ultimate aim was the Czechizing of the Slovak people and the exploitation of their country... a political hoax perpetrated not only on the Slovaks, but on the countries which had befriended the young state,” which had pinned down the Slovaks and allowed Hitler to manipulate the situation. In response, they appealed for American control over Slovakia’s fate, in the name of American democracy, the values of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms. “The Slovaks are a liberty-loving and democratic people. This innate characteristic has been intensified by close association with the Slovaks in the United States, from whom they have so frequently received encouragement and inspiration to persevere in their battle.” They argued that an American assurance over the fate of Slovakia “would do more to drive the Germans out of Slovakia than bombing it.”²⁹²

The Slovak-American autonomists also worked to publish articles in the general press, having the most success in Catholic publications. Jurchak also began working on an English language history of the Slovaks geared toward general consumption. The League’s most notable effort, however, was the *Slovak Record*, a monthly newspaper about the Slovaks produced from 1943 through 1945 with the intent of reaching a broad American audience, particularly government officials. Subtitled “The Voice and Opinion of the Majority of American Slovaks,” it mixed news reports with opinion and information pieces about the Slovaks and Slovak-Americans, ranging from exposes on Slovak history and culture to reports on Slovak-American events and efforts to support the war effort. Dubosh praised the *Slovak Record* as bringing the

²⁹² Slovak League of America, *The Slovaks and Their Right to Nationhood* (Cleveland: Slovak League of America, 1943). Peter P. Jurchak, “Inside Czecho-Slovakia,” *Catholic World*, 159, 950 (May 1944), 156-162. Philip James Anthony, “Intro” in Ležák-Borin, *Czech*, 2-3. Anthony, “Intro,” in Pridavok, *Good Word*, 3-5. Anthony, “Intro,” in Osuský, *Beneš and Slovakia*, 3-4. Philip James Anthony, “American Relief for Czechoslovakia,” in *SLA Cab*, F: SLA Presidents, SI. Šprinc, “Slovak League,” 79.

“right kind of publicity,” and the SLA president worked hard to assure it received a wide distribution. Overall, the SLA distributed its material to many government officials as well as to libraries, radio stations, and news offices across the country. Although this effort made their material more widely available, and they received some responses from members of Congress, there was no way to impel much their intended audiences to consider them.²⁹³

The Slovak-American autonomists also revamped their efforts to communicate directly with American officials. In advance of Beneš 1943 visit to Washington, Hodža’s Slovak-American supporters wrote to Hull in complaint, and provided copies of the 1942 resolutions. Another letter to the Secretary of State from the SLA argued that “Beneš does not have the support of those Americans of Slovak descent whom we represent...he is therefore in no position to interpret the views and the principles for which we stand.” It promoted the League as standing for the Atlantic Charter, whereas Beneš was “insisting on the predetermination of the future of the Slovaks without giving them the opportunity to voice their will.” Another letter to Hull and Roosevelt summarized the historical treatment of the Slovaks and requested American support for Slovak autonomy within the re-created Czechoslovakia or in a Central European federation. These letters continued through 1944. For example, the SLA sent a memorandum to Roosevelt, Elmer Davis, and the State Department reaffirming Slovak-American loyalty to U.S. democracy

²⁹³ The full collection of the *Slovak Record* is available at Slovak Institute. Philip James Anthony, “Slovakia...The Unknown Country,” *SR*, 1, 1, Jan 1943, 6. F. J. Dubosh, “Americans and Democracy,” *SR*, 1, 3, June 1943, 3. “Dr. Beneš Should not be Given Dictatorial Powers by the Allies,” *SR*, 1, 5, Oct 1943, 8. F. J. Dubosh, “America! On Guard!,” *SR*, 2, 6, March 1944, 1, 11. Philip James Anthony, “Slovak Americans—Slovakia—Dr. Beneš,” *SR*, 2, 8, Oct 1944, 1, 11. “Dubosh to Prusa, 4 April 1943,” “Dubosh to Unk, 8 April 1943,” & “Dubosh to Slovak-American Leaders, 14 June 1943,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Jurchak to Dubosh, 7 March 1944,” & “Jurchak to Dubosh, 18 April 1944,” & “Jurchak to Dubosh, 4 Oct 1944,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Dubosh to the *Catholic World*, 14 April 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

and the war effort. In return, it appealed that the Slovak nation “be remembered and given a full right of self-determination, contrary to the “wishes and whims” of the exile government.”²⁹⁴

Throughout the American involvement in the war, the SLA made multiple efforts to assist on the military and the home fronts. It led an active campaign to encourage Slovak-American youth to enlist in the military. The organization’s women also organized a campaign to support philanthropy and aid programs. The League’s primary effort was a fundraising campaign for war bonds, led by Catholic Priest John Lach. The League embraced this project with a sense of urgency to assure that the Slovaks received credit and to reach its members for donations before they gave to other organizations. It also reached out to other Slovak organizations to collaborate on the effort, and it encouraged local organizations to spearhead their own fundraising campaigns. League leaders only expressed that organizations should pursue activities in the name of the American Slovaks generally, to help their national image. Although recruiting local volunteers proved a challenge early on, the campaign proved a major success. The SLA raised 53 million dollars overall from individual League members and other Slovak-Americans.

The first phase of the campaign led to the purchase of three training planes, which the league labeled the “Spirit of the Slovak League of America.” The program also led to the purchase of three liberty ships, which the League named Stephen Furdek, Milan R. Štefánik, and Mathias Kocák. The Slovak League held celebrations for the launching ceremonies, to which they invited public figures, from politicians to clergymen. The most notable of these ceremonies was the launching of the SS Stefanik on September 27, 1944 in Baltimore, followed by a public

²⁹⁴ “Slovak-Americans to Hull,” F#: 860F.01/493. “Slovak-Americans to Hull,” NSS, IHRC. “SLA to Hull, 10 May 1943,” F#: 860F.01/495, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Joseph J. Kosina to Hull, 10 May 1943,” F#: 860F.00/1006, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hrobak to Hull, 6 Oct 1943,” F#: 860F.001/158, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “To our President and Department of State,” in *SLA Cabinet*, F: 24th Congress of the Slovak League of America, 28 February 1943, Pittsburgh, PA, SI. “Hradesky to Hull, 28 Aug 1944,” F#: 860F.01/8-2844, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubosh to Hull, 11 Nov 1944,” F#: 860F.01/11-1144, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Dubosh to Slovak-Americans, 5 May 1943,” & “Dubosh to Elmer Davis, 11 Nov 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

celebration designed to inform the public about the Slovaks.²⁹⁵ The Slovak League received public recognition from the Treasury Department for the campaign, as well as from the general press. It also widely advertised its own efforts. The League was extremely touchy about gaining credit. When Treasury Department officials accidentally labeled the campaign a “Czechoslovak” effort, Lach took it to task in a letter expounding on the differences between the Slovaks and Czechs. He asserted how the SLA had supported every fundraising drive independently and did not want the Czechs stealing credit. The SLA likewise regularly compared their fundraising success with the SNA’s to evidence its claim as the lead voice of the Slovaks in America. At the end of the campaign, Lach lauded how “the Slovak-Americans once more demonstrated their loyalty, generosity, and pride in United States citizenship,” affirming that “every such campaign helps to consolidate the Slovaks in this country and to increase the esteem and respect.” He expressed hope that their efforts would encourage support for the Slovaks in Slovakia in “their burning desire for an equitable measure of freedom and independence.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ The SLA considered many names including Hlinka, Rovnianek, Bielek, Jankola, Mamatey, and Vaniscak. Another Slovak organization purchased a fourth ship, naming it the Joseph Murgaš. The naming of the ships was, however, something of a bureaucratic boondoggle. The Treasury Department at first almost stopped the campaign, arguing that the ships had to be purchased on a state level and could not be a national campaign. The Department then later rejected the name Matej Kocak due to a policy to avoid naming the ships after World War I war heroes. It neglected to inform the SLA before the liberty ship program ended, so its third ship went effectively unnamed. The Treasury Department apologized and offered the League to name three B29 warships instead.

²⁹⁶ “50,000 Slovaks in Various Branches of U.S. Service,” *SR*, 2, 6, March 1944, 1. Dubosh to Edward B. Hitchcock, 26 July 1943,” “Dubosh to S. Moravek, 17 Jan 1944,” “Dubosh to Fedor Salva, 22 April 1943,” & “Dubosh to George Malinak 11 Feb 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Road to Victory and Security,” *B: SLA*, SI. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 27 July 1943,” *B: Hrobak*, SI. “John Lach to Dubosh, 30 September 1943,” *PF: John Lach*, SI. “Report,” in *SLA Cabinet*, F: 24th Congress, SI. “Dubosh to Hitchcock, 8 April 1943,” “Dubosh to V. P. Baran, 13 May 1943,” “Dubosh to Hletko 26 Aug 1944,” “Dubosh to Hletko 21 Sep 1944,” “William C. Fitzgibbon to Dubosh,” & “Dubosh to Sinko, 1 Aug 1945,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Jamriska to Dubosh, 13 June 1943, *PF: Peter P. Jurchak*, SI. “Minutes of the SLA Central Committee meeting for 1942,” in *B: SLA*, SI. “Edward B. Hitchcock to Dubosh, 1 April 1943,” “Whiting War Finance Committee to Hitchcock, 22 July 1943,” “Vera Turin to Dubosh, 1 Oct 1943,” *SLA Cabinet*, F: Treasury Department & SLA, 1943-1945, SI. “Slovak League Gives U.S. 3 Training Planes,” *SR*, 1, 3, June, 1943, 1. “Slovak Planes for Army,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1943, 9. “Liberty Ships are Launched in Honor of Slovak Heroes,” *SR*, 2, 8, June 1943, 1, 9, 13. “Dubosh to Prusa, 22 Sep 1943,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Frank J. Gurčák to Dubosh 7 Dec 1943,” “Jamriska to Dubosh, 8 Dec 1943,” “Billy to Dubosh 8 Dec 1943,” *SLA Cabinet*, F: Treasury, SI. “Lach to Hitchcock, 7 Oct 1943,” *SLA Cabinet*, F: Treasury, SI. “Gurčák to Dubosh, 9 Oct 1944,” & “Dubosh to Gurčák, 6 Nov 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Lach to War Bond Donors, 13 Nov 1944,” & “Report of the Fifth war Loan Drive by the Slovaks of America,” *PF: John Lach*, SI. Šprinc, “Slovak League, 84-89.

Although direct coordination was not possible during the war, Čulen argues that Tiso and other Slovak state leaders retained a positive image of the Slovak-Americans. He quoted Tiso, who said that the Slovak-Americans were correct in placing their primary loyalty to the United States: “Who gave to them more than America gave to them? It made of them citizens with equal rights, gave them freedom, gave them bread, it would have been thankless of them, if with word or deed they did not provide it full support.” When the Slovak ambassador to Spain reached out to his American counterpart, he emphasized the importance of the Slovak-American community to Slovakia, and proposed that they serve as intermediaries between Slovak officials and Washington. When the Slovak leaders surrendered to the American military in Austria, they likewise appealed for protection from “the homeland of which is living about one fourth of our nation.” As Slovak leaders went into exile, they also reached out to the Slovak-Americans. Although sympathetic to those officials, the Slovak-American nationalists were hesitant to coordinate them with the war still ongoing. Hletko expressed his frustration about how these officials “perhaps do not realize that they put us in a very bad spot five years ago and made it impossible for us to help them now.” Fearful of renewed federal government scrutiny, the SLA leaders chose to tread lightly in dealing with Slovak politicians fleeing abroad, although they did help Slovak cultural leaders, such as poet Jozef Hronsky, enter the United States.²⁹⁷

The American Government and Slovak-American Activism during World War II

Despite the efforts to prove their loyalty, Washington continued to discriminate against Slovak-American autonomists. When the OWI allowed a broadcast into Slovakia by Slovak-

²⁹⁷ Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. Ďurica, *Political Activities*, 34-49. Kirschbaum, “My Last.” Ďurčanský, *The Way*, 312-316. “Attaching,” F#: 860F.00/1022. “Telegrams sent by Dubosh,” 25 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/1022, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Hayes to SoS, no. 8823,” *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Surrender” (Doc 44) in *Slovakia*, Mikuš. “Jurchak to Dubosh, 2 June 1944,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 14 June 1944,” “Hletko to Dubosh, 1 Sep 44,” & “Jurchak to Dubosh, 15 Sep 1944,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Dubosh to Michael A. Feighan, 1 Aug 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI.

American Marxist Helen Vrabel, Dubosh requested the opportunity to make a radio appeal for the Slovaks to maintain faith in liberty and to support the Allied war effort. The OWI refused, citing the SLA as an untrustworthy organization. The League wrote to Hull and OWI officials to condemn that they would broadcast a “communist” but not a representative from group of loyal Americans who had actively supported the war effort. Achilles F. Sekell, Chief of the Foreign Language Press and Radio division at OWI, replied that the broadcasters had to be persons “who adhere to the foreign policy of the United States and support the cause of the United Nations,” and that they must produce a script “denouncing separatist anti-Czechoslovak activities.” Dubosh responded, “We of the Slovak League of America resent being constantly accused or at least suspected of not being true to the principles of this country,” and expressed his bafflement that they still had to make perpetual statements of loyalty, while those attacking the SLA merited no such scrutiny. The OWI never allowed a broadcast.²⁹⁸

In another case, the War Relief Control Board founded an organization in late 1944 to centralize aid work for Czechoslovakia, called the American Relief for Czechoslovakia. The Slovak-American representation in the organization consisted solely of officials from the Slovak National Alliance, and no Slovak Catholics. When the Slovak League discovered this reality, it led a campaign for representation in the organization. Dubosh and Prusa led a committee to Washington to highlight to American officials their war bond campaign and their membership numbers compared to the SNA, and to emphasize the lack of Slovak Catholic representation, albeit with no success. An official from the WRCB later responded with a pro forma letter that asserted that the SNA already represented the Slovaks, and that the organization’s purpose was humanitarian and neither political nor racial. Dubosh responded with a warning that the Slovak-

²⁹⁸ “Memorandum on OWI Radio Broadcasts, 19 Oct 1944” B: *SLA*, SI. “Dubosh to Elmer Davis, 9 April 1943,” “Dubosh to Achilles F. Sekell, 11 Nov 1944,” “Sekell to Dubosh, 27 Nov 1944,” “Dubosh to Sekell, 8 Dec 1944,” B: *Dubosh*, SI. “Dubosh to Hull,” F#: 860F.01/11-1144. Jurchak, “Inside, 156-162.

American Catholics would not support the organizations without representation. The League maintained its pressure, and in March 1945, with the help of Monsignor Patrick O'Boyle who headed the Catholic War Relief Services, gained a representative on the organization's board.²⁹⁹

By this late into the war, it was clear that most State Department officials were in line with the views of the exile government and that they were not going to abandon their prejudicial view of the Slovak-American autonomists. When a Slovak-American group tried to organize a public celebration of Milan Štefánik in New York City, the city of New York consulted with the Department on whether the city should allow it. In an internal memo, State expressed a lack of knowledge about the group, but worried about a "definite though not yet important 'Slovak' movement here, with a separatist, anti-Beneš tendency." The Department suggested that the event might be a "front" to stage an anti-Czechoslovak demonstration. "The maneuver would be clever, since the Czechoslovak Government could not protest about a ceremony in honor of one of its heroes." In its formal response, State signed off on the event. It told the city, however, to watch closely for any "mischievous" activity, and if there was any mention of the independent state, to shut it down. The organization shortly thereafter wrote a letter requesting a statement from Roosevelt for the event, but the Department denied the request. Despite this sentiment, the State Department publically kept quiet on the issue. By mid-1942, however, it began considering how to respond to "growing controversies" among the Czechs and Slovaks. When a pastor from Whiting Indiana wrote to express worry about the divide among the Slovak-Americans, the

²⁹⁹ "Billy to Charles Riley, 17 Sep 1943," *PF: Billy*, SI. "Frank Gurčák to Dubosh, 9 Oct 1944," "Dubosh to Gurčák, 10 Oct 1944," "Dubosh to Gurčák, 6 Nov 1944," "Resolution on War Relief for CS, 19 Oct 1944," "Dubosh to Patrick O'Boyle, 5 Feb 1945," "Dubosh to V. P. Baran, 18 Mar 1945," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Dubosh to the President's War Relief Control Board, 11 Nov 1944," "Arthur C. Ringland to Dubosh, 28 Nov 1944," "Dubosh to Ringland, 5 Feb 1945," *SLA Cab*, F: Treasury, SI. Anthony, "American Relief," in *SLA Cab*, F: SLA Presidents, SI.

Department consulted the Czechoslovak embassy. Hurban wrote back to affirm its policy of not addressing the Slovak Question until after the war, and then criticized the SLA.³⁰⁰

Ultimately, the Department of State put its faith in Milan Hodža to unify the Slovaks in America, and worked with the OSS to achieve this effort. Department officials told Hodža they did not want “old world politics” fought on American soil, and Hodža pledged to resolve the issue. Dewitt Poole, head of the Foreign Nationalities Branch of the OSS, led this effort and Poole ultimately became the most knowledgeable official on the Slovak-Americans. He attended several Slovak-American meetings and kept track of the growing shift in favor of autonomy and the harsh Czechoslovakists response against it. Poole described the 1942 OWI meeting, and while he emphasized that the discussion “waxed violent,” he ultimately praised the result. He nonetheless also noted the impact of Hodža’s arrival in “renewing the sense of imposed inferiority and hence resentment against their Czech brethren” among the Slovaks, and he expressed concern about Osuský’s writings doing likewise. Poole expressed ample concern about a Slovak break from the Czechs, which he feared would be “good news for Hitler,” for he accredited the exile government as “the symbol in the United States of Czechoslovak unity.”

After meeting with Hodža, Poole nevertheless reported one perceived success. He claimed that Hodža had ended the “movement of disloyalty” in the SLA: “The broader membership of the League is said to have been converted from their political apostasy to a sound Americanism and support of the United Nations’ cause.” By mid-1943, however, he conceded that the SLA still did not trust Hodža, and the union of the autonomists led Poole to worry that

³⁰⁰ “Meyer Goldberg to Hull, 7 April 1942,” F#: 860F.00/988, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Division of European Affairs internal Memo, 16 April 1942,” F#: 860F.01/388, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Paul T. Culbertson to Goldberg, 18 April 1942,” F#: 860F.00/988, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Slovak Welfare Club ‘Tatra’ to Roosevelt, 11 April 1942,” F#: 860F.00/989, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “George T. Summerlin to Edward Vacsy,” 22 April 1942, F#: 860F.00/989, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Division of European Affairs internal Memo, 28 April 1942,” F#: 860F.01/501, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “C.M. Mlynarovich to Clarence Manion, 11 May 1942,” F# Miss, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum,” F#: 860F.01/438-1/2.

“we are confronted by a Czech-Slovak schism, or a schism among the Slovaks... We may eventually have a Slovak as well as a Czechoslovak delegation storming the doors of the Peace Conference.” He blamed Papanek, and recommended having Jan Masaryk go on a tour, believing, wrongly, that Masaryk might be able to bring unity. Otherwise, he hoped that the issue would ultimately just fade away without any action. The Department eventually encouraged Hodža’s retirement, hoping it would ease the tension. Poole also proposed a memorandum that requested Slovak autonomist reconciliation with the exile government. Poole provided his final report in advance of Beneš’s visit in 1943. He outlined the competing Slovak-American branches, recognizing that the Catholic nationalists made up the majority and that Beneš only maintained support from a minority. Poole expressed hope that Beneš and Hodža would iron out a compromise. Nevertheless, he noted that the SLA and ASCON were organizing a campaign in Washington, to coincide with Beneš’s visit, based around promoting Slovak autonomy in a Central European federation. He still bemoaned the notion, however, that the “anti-Czech faction” was pursuing a “slightly camouflaged” campaign for Slovak independence.³⁰¹

Poole’s interest in the Slovak-Americans led the autonomists to believe that “Washington circles are finally appraised of the aims of the American of Slovak extraction.” They hoped to use their connection with Poole to lead a delegation to Washington to meet with Hull and to explain their views for post-war Slovakia. This sentiment was misguided. American officials did recognize the troubles Beneš had with the Slovaks during the war. Yet, they did not show any inclination to shift from the policies encouraged upon them by Beneš. When the OWI informed Berle about this proposed delegation, Berle shot down the idea as “unwise.” The Department of State simply gave the Slovaks stock answers, thanking them for their views and affirming

³⁰¹ “OSS Report,” F#: 860F.01/429-3/4. “Czechoslovak,” F#: 860F.01/458. “Poole to Berle,” F#: 860F.00/994. “Untitled Report,” 24 Oct 1942, F#: 860F.01/463-1/2, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Poole to Berle,” F#: 860F.001/127-1/2. “Karr to Berle,” F#: 860F.01/475. “Issues,” F#: 860F.001/146. Palka, *My Slovakia*, pp 49-58.

American support for the exile government. By mid-1943, it even began including a line straight out of Czechoslovakist propaganda that the Slovak Question could “only be settled by the peoples directly concerned after their liberation from the enemy.”

American officials also continued to discriminate against the Slovak League. When the SLA requested a statement from Eleanor Roosevelt honoring Slovak-American World War I hero Mathias Kocák, the White House forwarded the letter to the State Department, asking if the organization was “all right.” Worried that the SLA would use the statement to promote itself, the Department responded that the SLA was “not too good” and advised the White House not to respond. While they accredited the League’s support for the war effort, they asserted that it could not be trusted due to its prior support for the independent state. In February 1944, the State Department finally granted a meeting to SLA leaders, including Dubosh and Yurchak. The Slovak-American leaders affirmed their distrust of Beneš, and appealed for support for the Slovaks based on the terms of the Atlantic Charter. Department official Cavendish Cannon just told the Slovak-Americans that the Department was aware of their “controversies,” but that they should consider its effect on the war effort. He then told them to talk to Poole, who in turn sent them to the OWI. In the end, American officials did not consider their views.³⁰²

Aware of their inability to convince the foreign policy establishment, the Slovak League made a decision to focus its efforts on Congress. The League put together a master list of supportive elected officials to whom it sent materials and with whom it tried to coordinate. This strategy proved effective. Congress became the one branch of the American government where the Slovak autonomists gained much support. This support largely crossed party lines, and

³⁰² “Karr to Berle,” F#: 860F.01/475. “Beneš,” F#: 860F.001/135. “Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile,” *HH Papers*, HT. “Hugh S. Fullerton to Dubosh,” 22 May 1943, F#: 860F.01/495, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Fullerton to Platek,” 29 May 1943, F#: 860F.01/493, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Melvina C. Thompson to DoS,” 9 Oct 1943, F#: 860F.01/509, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Wellington to Hordon,” 13 Oct 1943, F#: 860F.01/510, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “H. F. Matthews to Thompson,” 23 Oct 1943, F#: 860F.01/510, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “MoC: Possible,” F#: 860F.01/527.

generally came from Congressmen with large Slovak-American constituencies. Some congressional officials peddled the Czechoslovakist line, but many more stood up in their support. Senators Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota and Robert Taft of Ohio, among others, communicated interest and support to Dubosh in light of material he provided them. Several Congressmen helped get their letters into the White House, and likewise helped arrange meetings with government officials. Senator Davis and Congressman Feighnan both spoke at the 1940 conference in Washington, and Davis then had his speech included in the *Congressional Record*. Davis later also had the memos produced at the 1942 conference published there.

Many other congressional representatives made open declarations of support for the Slovaks. For example, Shipstead criticized the failure to establish autonomy in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia and declared a return to such a situation unacceptable. Congressman Marion T. Bennet of Missouri called out the OWI for treating the Slovak-Americans unfairly. Many others publically praised the Slovak-Americans support for the war effort and their loyalty to the United States. Congressman Ray Madden from Indiana praised the Slovak League's war bond campaign. "The Slovak citizens of the United States, though comparatively small in number, yield to no other racial groups in loyal devotion to our flag and all that it stands for in the eyes of the world." Congressman Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin in turn praised the loyalty of the Slovaks and exemplified them as proof of a "good type" of American ethnic. Several others also spoke out on the Slovak Question. Congressman Samuel Weiss of Pennsylvania included in the *Congressional Record* an article by Dubosh. Congressman Alvin O'Konski of Wisconsin read a statement written by Hrobak that gave a background of the Slovak Question, praised the Slovaks as devout Christians and lovers of democracy, and called for action in order to assure that the Slovaks received full self-determination through autonomy in the renewed Czechoslovakia.

While the support from their elected representatives emboldened the Slovak-American autonomists, it ultimately did not advance their objectives. So long as those directly guiding American foreign policy shut out their views, their options remained limited.³⁰³

Conclusion

In general, during the war, the efforts of the Slovak-American autonomists largely failed. Beneš and his cohorts provided the main source of information and propaganda to Washington on Czechoslovakia, and American officials disregarded the efforts of the Slovak-American autonomists. Hletko later bemoaned how Washington was completely inflexible, and how “no amount of our effort could change the official position of our State Department and our Government.” He was exasperated about Washington’s ignorance of the Slovaks and it undermined his faith in the American government. Willo likewise criticized that “the Slovak citizenry has not been appreciated for its true worth and has not been given credit for its true value by the politicians at large.” Hrobak, in turn, lamented that Beneš “knew the right people in Washington, Paris, London and Moscow,” and thus the Slovak-Americans could not prevail.

Surprisingly, these efforts proved most successful on Beneš himself. Under pressure from multiple corners on the Slovak Question, Beneš openly admitted to American officials that his hold on the Slovaks was weak. He began to moderate his view, declaring support for “a greater degree of decentralization,” in the post-war state. In his visit to America in 1943, Beneš likewise told officials “there will arise no substantial conflict on the subject of decentralization,” that he

³⁰³ “Dubosh to Hrobak, 2 July 1943,” “Dubosh to Feighan, 2 Aug 1943,” & “General Letter from Dubosh, 26 May 1944,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Dubosh to Jurchak, 8 June 1944, & “Jurchak to Dubosh, 4 Oct 1944,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “B. W. Kearney to Florian C. Billy, 27 Oct 1943,” & “Dubosh to Feighan, 19 June 1944,” in *SLA Cab*, F: SLA Presidents, SI. “Thank you, Senator Taft” & “Friend of Slovaks Honored,” *SR*, 1, 1, January 1943. 86 *CR* 4606 (1940) Appendix. 86 *CR* 6467-69 (1940-1941) Appendix. 88 *CR* 8852-8853 (1942) Senate - Monday, November 16, 1942. 89 *CR* 9178 (1943) Senate - Friday, November 5, 1943. 89 *CR* 9154 (1943) House of Representatives - Thursday, November 4, 1943. 89 *CR* A3052 (1943) Appendix. 89 *CR* A 4906-07 (1943) Appendix. 89 *CR* A 5570-71 (1943) Appendix. 90 *CR* 149-50 (1944) House of Representatives - Thursday, January 13, 1944. 90 *CR* A3549-50 (1944) Appendix - Extension of Remarks. 90 *CR* A4513 (1944) Appendix - Extension of Remarks. 91 *CR* A2147-49 (1945) Appendix - Extension of Remarks.

was reconciling with the Slovaks and “getting ready for a complete liquidation of all internal conflicts about Czechoslovak internal matters.” While Beneš’ public claims were disingenuous, the pressure nonetheless positioned the Slovaks in Slovakia to pressure successfully for autonomy within the recreated state in the post war period.³⁰⁴

Chapter 7

The United States and the Slovak Question in Post-war Czechoslovakia

As the post-war order began to take shape, the Slovak Question remained unsettled. The Slovaks in America were persistent in their distrust of Beneš, and continued to put pressure on the Czech leader over this treatment of the Slovaks. This pressure became more acute when the underground opposition in the Slovak Republic consolidated their support for Slovak autonomy and agreed to cooperate with Beneš’s exile government only if it acquiesced on the issue. This combined pressure effectively forced Beneš to offer rhetorical support for Slovak autonomy in order to maintain the legitimacy of a reunified Czechoslovakia. As in the past, this support waned considerably once Beneš and his government became ensconced in power, and the issue continued to fester, as Slovak political leaders fought to maintain the promised autonomy.

Accordingly, the transatlantic component of the Slovak Question compounded with the budding Cold War and the debates over American policy. Seeing no resolution to the Slovak Question, Slovak-American nationalist continued to push the issue. An influx of new migrants, Catholic nationalists fleeing Slovakia upon Red Army encroachment, in turn boosted this activism. With the specter of communist domination over Czechoslovakia, the American Slovaks placed their fight for Slovak self-determination directly in the framework of the Cold War,

³⁰⁴ Hletko, “The Slovaks and the Pittsburgh Pact.” “To the Officers,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Evangela, “White House,” 54-55. Hrobak, “50 Years.” “Dubosh to Billy, 11 June 1944,” *PF: Billy*, SI. “Beneš to Welles, 12 Mar 1940,” *SW Papers*, B:161, F:7, FDR. “Winant to SoS, no. 1271,” 2 April 1941, F#: 860F.00/989, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Beneš, *Future*, 8. “Hurban to Hull,” F#: 860F.00/1002.

equating support for Slovak autonomy with anti-communism. This approach proved effective in building sympathy with elected officials in Congress, while at the same time Slovak anti-Communism in Slovakia gained the interest of many American diplomats in Czechoslovakia. While this support well exceeded any the Slovaks had received in the past, it ultimately did little to change the perception of foreign policy leaders in Washington, and thus did not change American foreign policy toward Czechoslovakia.

The Slovak Uprising

The post-war order in Slovakia effectively began with the Slovak Uprising in 1944. When Nazi defeat became apparent, opponents of the wartime government organized an underground opposition based in the city of Banská Bystrica in Central Slovakia. This opposition united two political groupings, the Slovak Democratic Party (DP), led primarily by Lutheran, former Agrarian, politicians, and the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS). While ideological opposites, the two parties completed the Christmas Agreement of December 1943, in which they formed a new Slovak National Council (SNC) to serve as the governing body of post-war Slovakia. Their cooperation was rooted in common opposition to the wartime Slovak state, but also in the goal of assuring Slovak autonomy in a reestablished Czechoslovakia. The SNC agreed to cooperate with Beneš's exile government and the Czech communists in Moscow in return for Czech acceptance of autonomous SNC jurisdiction over Slovakia, and, despite reservations, both Beneš and Czech Communist leader Klement Gottwald agreed to this arrangement. The Czech exiles needed SNC cooperation to legitimate their claim over the future state, and the Czech monopoly over Allied support mandated that the SNC work through them to gain external support. The SNC thus coordinated with the exiles, but held firm control over its own operations,

rejecting attempts by Beneš to take control of the uprising. The formal uprising lasted from late August through late October 1944, before German forces in Slovakia crushed it.³⁰⁵

The diplomatic component of the Uprising focused on gaining recognition of the Slovak National Council as part of the Allied war effort and on gaining Allied military and material support. In its general proclamation of Sep 1, 1944, the SNC declared itself the representative of the Slovak people working in tandem with the exile government. It asserted that the Slovak nation had always been on the side of the Allies and offered all possible support toward victory. The SNC later sent a separate message to American officials stating, “The Slovak people, which is contributing with all its strength to this common struggle for freedom and justice, greets the other Allied armies which, though they are at present separated from the Czechoslovak army fighting in Slovakia, will soon join in driving the defeated German armies back to Berlin.” A Slovak offering intelligence to American in turn remarked on the “great faith in the United States,” due to the historic linkages between the two countries and because of Washington’s consistent opposition to German designs on Czechoslovakia.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Judging the level of popular support for the uprising versus the Tiso government is tricky, but most evidence suggests the country divided sharply. “The 1943 ‘Christmas Agreement,’” (Doc 42) in *Slovakia: Political*, 241-242. “Memorandum delegácie Slovenskej národnej rady Edvardovi Benešovi,” in *Dokumenty*, 368-369. Kirschbaum, *History*, 205-223. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 132-148. Jiří Kocian, “The Czechs versus the Slovaks” Bilateral Relations, 1944-1948,” in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist*, 207-215. Ivan Kamenec, “1944: Deutschland und der Slowakische Nationalaufstand,” in *Wendepunkte in den Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen, Tschechen und Slowaken 1848-1989*, eds. Detlef Brandes, et al, 213-221. Vladimir Baumgarten, “Fifty Years Later: An Inquiry into Soviet Military Policy Concerning The Slovak Uprising,” in *On All Fronts: Czechoslovaks in World War II*, vol 2, ed. Lewis M. White (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1995), 221-220. Eva Seeber, *Die Mächte der Antihitlerkoalition und die Auseinandersetzung um Polen und die ČSR* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984), 324-336. Anna Josko, “The Slovak Resistance Movement,” in *History*, 362-384. Josef Kalvoda. *Czechoslovakia’s Role in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, D.C: University Press of America, 1978), 185-186. Jelinek, *Lust*, 79-83. Vilém Prečan, “The Slovak National Uprising: The Most Dramatic Moment in the Nation’s History,” in *Slovakia in History*, 206-228. Rychlík, “Slovak Question,” in *Slovakia in History*, 193-205.

³⁰⁶ “Proclamation of the Slovak National Council,” *ŠO Papers*, B:101, F:6, HIA. “Transmitting Greetings of Slovak National Council to United States Government,” 25 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Conditions and Public Attitudes in Slovakia,” 3 Oct 1944, F#: 860F.00/10-344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Ján Ursíny, *Spomienky Na Slovenské Národné Povstanie* (Liptovskom Mikuláši: Tranoscius, 1994), 90.

Despite this outreach, the exile government was effective in taking credit in western circles for the Slovak Uprising. Both Beneš and exile foreign minister Ján Masaryk reported to American officials that the Uprising worked under their orders, while Hubert Ripka claimed it proved the validity of Beneš's political program. The exile government's propaganda likewise obscured the SLC's leadership. One such pamphlet praised, "Instinctively, the Slovak people regard the Czechoslovak government in London as their lawful and only Government...they have an unbounded admiration for the statesmanship of Dr. Beneš." Beneš and his allies ignored any hint of the Slovak Question, and Beneš even took credit for the compromise on Slovak autonomy as his own idea. Nevertheless, Beneš could not put aside Czechoslovakism. He continued to assert, "there is absolutely no difference between Czechs and Slovaks," and there "cannot" and "will not" be any dispute on the issue. Ripka showed even less repentance. "From the point of view of international policy Slovakia is to be treated simply as Czechoslovakia. Slovakia will not be a separate member of any federation or confederation however formed." He firmly predicted that the Uprising would forever unite the two peoples and notions of individualization would never again occur. This cognitive dissonance exposed how Czech nationalist support for Slovak autonomy remained fleeting.³⁰⁷

Many Slovak leaders in exile nonetheless tried to disabuse these images. A Slovak working for American intelligence services in Slovakia, Emil J. Tomes, openly warned about Slovak mistrust of most of the exile politicians. Tomes emphasized that in spite of the Slovak

³⁰⁷ "Address," F#: 860F.001/180, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Attaching," F#: 860F.00/1016, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Statement by Czechoslovak Foreign Minister on Armed Uprising in Slovakia," 7 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Transmitting President Beneš' Radio Address of September 8, 1944," 12 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.001/9-1244, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Beneš, "Plans for Peace." Kunoši, *Basis*, 109-120. Vladimír Clementis, "The Slovak Uprising," *CEO*, 21, 19 (Sep 15, 1944), 273-275. Vladimír Clementis, "The Slovak 'State': How it was Born and How it will Die," in *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 4, 4 (Jan. 1945), 341-349. Hubert Ripka, "The Significance of the Slovak Rising," *CEO*, 21, 21 (Oct 13, 1944), 309-311. CMFA, *Heroes and Victims* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Service, 1945). "Slovaks Fight for Restoration of Czechoslovakia," *Czechoslovakia Newsletter*, 20 Oct 1944, 1, in *ŠO Papers*, B:91, F:17, HIA.

State's linkage to Nazi Germany, its economic success and proven capability to run Slovakia's own affairs had spurred most Slovaks to be more independent minded, and that they would refuse any organization that denied Slovak autonomy. Fedor Hodža, serving as a liaison for the SNC in London, told American diplomats that the Slovaks remained "dissatisfied at what they consider to be a dictatorial attitude and a unique submergence of the Slovaks on the part of the Beneš government." He affirmed that most Slovaks desired reunification, but there remained almost universal support for autonomy, including a Slovak parliament and the ability for Slovak delegates to veto any action by Prague effecting Slovakia. The remnants of former Prime Minister Milan Hodža's organization praised the SNC as inspired by Hodža's own model for Slovak autonomy. Otherwise, "the Slovaks would refuse to recognize Beneš as the head of the state." Štefan Osuský, still campaigning against Beneš in exile, accordingly defined the Uprising as a repudiation of both the Nazis and Beneš. Osuský praised the willingness of the Slovaks to fight the Germans as a complete refutation of the claims of Slovak political immaturity and opposition to western democracy, and he mocked how Czech nationalists were now at a loss, having hoped to use Slovak affiliation with Germany to crack down on the Slovaks and minimalize Slovak autonomy. In a later meeting with American officials, Osuský appealed for their support for Slovak autonomy, reminding them how Czech nationalist obstinacy had pushed Slovak autonomists to accept secessionism before the war.³⁰⁸

In October 1944, during the uprising, the American military extracted an SNC delegation to London. The delegation had a twofold objective to complete negotiations with the exile government over the post-war organization of Slovakia and to appeal to the western Allies for

³⁰⁸ "Activities," F#: 860F.01/7-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Hoover to Berle," F#: 860F.00/11-1044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Conditions," F#: 860F.00/10-344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "The Slovak Rising," & "Slovak Resistance," *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:29, HIA. "Slovak Rising," *Tablet*, 23 Sep 1944, 149, in *ŠO Papers*, B:62, F:9, HIA. "Czechoslovak Problems," *ŠO Papers*, B:45, F:3, HIA.

support. The delegates met with ambassador Schoenfeld and his aide, John Bruins, where they made clear their desire for Slovak autonomy. Ján Ursíny, representing the DP, then followed up this meeting with a private one, where he warned that much of Slovakia remained opposed to Beneš, and explained how the SNC had rejected Beneš's delegation sent to take leadership over their organization. He also asserted a general Slovak opposition to communism, and claimed that the SNC had given the Slovak communists an inflated influence simply for political reasons. Hearing this contrasting point of view, the American officials consulted Ripka and Slovak centralist Ján Lichner. While both affirmed exile government acceptance of the SNC as the representative of the Slovak people, Ripka praised the SNC as having given up a "provincial outlook" in order to embrace the guidance and support of the exile government. Schoenfeld and Bruins were somewhat surprised when Ripka noted exile government support for some level of Slovak autonomy. Schoenfeld noted, however, that "as to the conceptions of a 'Slovak nation' and 'autonomy,' both of which have been front line Slovak desiderata, there appears to have been considerable misunderstanding by both sides as to the meaning these terms and as to the degree of autonomy desired." Schoenfeld nevertheless maintained faith that Beneš was genuine in his support for Slovak autonomy. As such, American officials began recognizing the SNC as an independent body, and began to embrace the idea of Slovak autonomy.³⁰⁹

The general view of the uprising presented by American officials in London was therefore positive, and they commended it as returning liberty to Slovakia. American diplomats nevertheless still conflated the SNC's coordination with the exile government as deference to it,

³⁰⁹ The delegation consisted of Democrat Jan Ursíny, Communist Ladislav Novomesky, and Mirko Vesel, representing the Slovak resistance military organization. "Visit to London of Delegation from Slovak National Council," 20 Oct 1944, F#: 860F.01/10-2044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Political," F#: 860F.01/10-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Czechoslovak Civil Affairs Delegation," 31 Oct 1944, F#: 860F.01/10-3144, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Relations between Czechs and Slovaks," 17 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.01/11-1744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Relations between Czechs and Slovaks," 5 Dec 1944, F#: 860F.01/12-544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 140.

and took Beneš at his word on Slovak autonomy. Higher American officials in turn gave full credit for the Slovak Uprising to the exile government. Secretary of State Cordell Hull requested of President Roosevelt a statement of support for “the uprising in Czechoslovakia.” In a letter to Beneš shortly thereafter, Roosevelt proclaimed, “the people and armed forces inside Czechoslovakia have joined actively and gloriously with their countrymen abroad in the ranks of the nations united against tyranny.” Roosevelt made no specific reference to the Slovaks.³¹⁰

When the uprising was set in motion on Aug 28, 1944, it nevertheless received little outside support from the Allies. Beneš had only concluded agreements with Moscow in support of resistance operations, and thus did not have arrangements in place for widespread western involvement. Masaryk made a formal plea for America support only after the start of the military campaign. Osuský also wrote to American ambassador to London, John Winant to express his displeasure at the limited coordination with Western leaders during the Uprising, and pleaded for immediate aid to Slovakia, lest the Uprising fail. Nevertheless, wartime international politics squashed any desire for greater American involvement. The United States and Britain, having conceded the region to the Red Army, would not proactively raise their involvement without Soviet approval. Soviet leaders refused such permission, having preferred a failed uprising to an active Western presence in East Central Europe. Thus, when Washington consulted Beneš about providing more aid, the Czech leader rejected the offer out of fear of upsetting Stalin. Moscow supplied some token armaments, and flew in partisan advisors, but treated the Slovak Uprising

³¹⁰ “Harrison to SoS, no 5490” 23 Aug 1944, F#: 860F.01/8-2344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 5863” 6 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-644, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Harrison to SoS, no 5957,” 9 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-944, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Transmitting News Item Regarding Changes in Bratislava Government,” 20 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-2044, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Civil Condition in Liberated Section of Slovakia,” 26 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.00/9-2644, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Activities,” F#: 860F.01/7-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Winant to SoS, no 7316,” 7 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Political Situation in Slovakia,” 6 Oct 1944, F#: 860F.00/10-644, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Memorandum for the President, 5 Sep 1944,” *OF*, F:536, *Czechoslovakia 1940-1945*, FDR. “Roosevelt to Beneš, 27 Oct 1944,” *OF*, F:536, FDR. Miller, “Unforgettable.”

similarly to the Warsaw Uprising, holding back a wide-scale involvement until the formal Red Army liberation over two months after the Germans had squashed the Slovaks resistance.

While Washington left Slovakia predominantly to Soviet decision-making, it did contribute a small level of support. It buttressed radio and print propaganda in Slovakia and it legally recognized the Slovaks supporting the uprising as part of the exile military, designed to give the fighters legal cover as an official fighting force of the Allies. Militarily, America's primary role was strategic bombing campaigns against Slovak industrial centers, but the OSS likewise sent fifteen military advisors to Banská Bystrica and nine B-12s with weapons, ammunition, and supplies within the two-month period of the uprising. Later, the OSS managed to airdrop a few more supplies into the Tatra Mountains to help the Slovak military organization survive after going into hiding. When the uprising failed, American advisors fled into the mountains, and only six survived. The Germans also shot down several American planes over Slovakia. Of the surviving personnel, the Germans captured some, and the Slovak government detained others, although Slovak supporters smuggled a few of them back out of the country.³¹¹

Those interested in the success of the uprising condemned this meager support. One of the American advisors sent to Slovakia, Navy Lieutenant James Holt Green, decried how Beneš kept promising support to the Slovaks, which never came, and how America failed to step in. He considered it a "tragedy" for both the Slovaks and American interests in the region. Czech

³¹¹ A Slovak named Maria Guliovičová received a bronze star for keeping American troops hidden. "Osuský to Winant, 3 Sep 1944," *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:29, HIA. "Political," F#: 860F.00/8-1744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Conditions," F#: 860F.00/10-344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "William J. Donovan to James C. Dunn," 4 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.01/11-444, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Draft Statement Regarding Combatant Rights of Soldiers in Czechoslovakia," *OF*, F:536, Czechoslovakia 1940-1945, FDR. Gustav Galko, "In the aftermath of the Slovak National Uprising," in *On All Fronts*, 2, 243-244. William J. Miller, "Unforgettable Days of the Slovak National Uprising," in *On All Fronts*, V3, 207-218. "Hurban to Masaryk, 2 September 1944," in *Slovenské Národné Povstanie: Dokumenty*, ed. Vilém Prečan (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Politickej Literatúry, 1965), 408. Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi*, 182-189. Jozef Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia* (New York: Frederick & Praeger, 1955), 212-214. Miroslav J. Ličko, *1944: USA v Banskej Bystrici* (Bratislava: NVK International, 1993). Jelinek, *Lust*, 69-75. Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's*, 187-191. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 140, 143, 145-146. Josko, "Slovak Resistance," 380-382. Lundestad, *American*, 152. Ivo Duchacek, "Czechoslovakia," in *The Fate of East Central Europe: Hopes and Failures of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Stephen Kertesz (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1956), 200.

journalist Josef Josten bemoaned how Moscow wanted the uprising to fail, much like it did with Poland, for “if the Slovak uprising succeeded it might stir patriots in the Bohemian countries to similar action; it would also speed up the progress of the liberation armies in the West.” Osuský also felt the uprising failed by design, but had a different culprit. Osuský accused Beneš of provoking the uprising before the SNC or the Allies were ready, by promising inexistent Allied aid, in order to weaken the SNC and the Slovak resolve for autonomy.³¹²

Although these accusations are difficult to verify, it is clear that the uprising provided only a limited benefit to the advancement of Slovak self-determination. Some historians praise the uprising as a symbolic success, but most recent works recognize it as a clear military failure, and largely a political failure as well. Historian Stanislav Kirschbaum notes correctly that the uprising did allow the Slovaks to claim of having collectively risen against Hitler in union with the Allies and to “earn its leaders and not the government-in-exile the right to speak on behalf of the Slovak nation in a restored Czechoslovakia.”³¹³ Yet, the uprising proved a double-edged sword. The SNC gained access to western officials and positive recognition, which helped their cause, but it had to work through Beneš, who controlled access to the Allied leadership regarding the future of the Czechs and Slovaks. This situation did not provide the Slovaks with a tenable position with the Allies to advance the Slovak Question in their favor, and instead allowed the exile government to reap the diplomatic benefits of the uprising. The American perception of the uprising centered less on Slovak independence and merit for self-government and more on an image of the Slovaks rising for the restoration of Beneš and his vision for Czechoslovakia.

The Slovaks in America and the Post-war order

³¹² Ličko, *1944*, 104. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 143. Josef Josten, *Oh, My Country* (London: Latimer House, 1949), 39. “Slovak Tragedy,” *ŠO Papers*, B:55, F:19, HIA.

³¹³ Kirschbaum, *History*, 222.

The Slovak League of America had faced its most trying period during the Second World War, but by the war's end, the organization had survived the attacks against it and had developed strategies that served it well moving into the post-war era. Francis Dubosh continued his SLA presidency through 1945, when Peter P. Jurchak, an attorney from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania took over. Jurchak's work during the war in defense of the League put him in good standing, and facilitated a smooth continuation of the direction established under Dubosh. With the campaign to quash the League still fresh in mind, Dubosh prioritized the dampening of politics until the end of the war, to try to maintain Slovak-American unity and to insulate against the linkage of Slovak autonomists to Nazi Germany. Dubosh discouraged League members from publishing overtly provocative or divisive opinions on the Slovak Question, and targeted Jozef Hušek in particular. Dubosh complained that Hušek was "more guilty in causing chaos and disunity than any Slovak in America," by taking too radical of stances, and pressured him out of leadership positions. Jurchak likewise emphasized a more dedicated focus on cultural components to try to reunite the Slovak-Americans divided by politics.

The Slovak League also adopted a Cold War mentality well before the war ended. By mid-1944, its leaders were expressing concern about Soviet control over Slovakia depriving the West of influence there. They saw the treatment of Poland as clear warning signal that Czechoslovakia would likely see the same fate, and by early 1945, began to acknowledge Beneš as simply a useful tool for Moscow, soon to be disposed of. SLA leaders devised many strategies to address this concern. Receiving several pleas from Slovakia for support, the Slovak League actively fundraised for economic aide and charity for Slovakia, once again placing Lach in charge of its organization, and it hoped to send a delegation over to help rebuilding. Jurchak prioritized material aid as the League's focus for the homeland, over politics, as he felt it would

help the SLA's prestige, help unite the Slovak-Americans, and give the Slovak-Americans the best opportunity to help their homeland to rebuild quickly to be able to withstand the challenges ahead. This effort nevertheless proved difficult. Prague and Moscow limited western access to Slovakia, particularly for groups such as the Slovak League. Most aid to Czechoslovakia ran through bureaucracies such as the UNRRA and the War Relief Control Board, which cut off the Slovak League's control over the distribution of their aid. While the League did donate money through them, these organizations stymied the SLA's efforts to establish direct involvement within them. This lack of direct access to Slovakia markedly frustrated League officials, much as it did other East European ethnic groups.³¹⁴ Jurchak remarked, "Unless we know the true state of affairs in Slovakia we are working in the dark. After the rehabilitation of Slovakia is completed it may be too late to help secure democracy for Slovakia." Jurchak conceptualized using Slovak-Americans serving in the U.S. Army in Europe to build relationships with the Slovaks in Slovakia and to report on conditions there. The exclusion of American military personnel from Red Army controlled Slovakia, however, negated this plan. The League also prioritized getting a few of their own to Slovakia as foreign correspondents, but the State Department refused the necessary support for them to gain access in this capacity.

The restrictions on access to their ethnic homeland and other points of frustration, such as the realization that the Slovaks would not receive a seat independent from the Czechs at the postwar conferences, spurred feelings of resignation among SLA leaders. Dubosh expressed his frustration that the Slovaks "are always a football for everybody." Jurchak commented that the Slovak-Americans could do little more than push for Slovak freedom and hope that Washington heeded their pleas. Recognizing the larger forces working against them, the League decided to

³¹⁴ The Polish-Americans, for example, futilely campaigned against events such as the Yalta Agreement, the redrawing of Polish borders, and the Red Army subjugation of Poland. See: Pienkos, *Freedom*, 105-151.

broaden its outreach to try to build a variety of supports based on common interests. The SLA began working more closely with its counterpart in Canada, the Slovak League of Canada, but it also reached out to other East European nationals to ally in the common interests of self-determination for small nations and anti-communism. The idea of a Central European Federation remained popular among the Slovak-Americans, and League leaders regularly promoted the idea in their political pamphlets. Both Dubosh and Jurchak also reached out to other American ethnic organizations to try to build common organization, and attempted to convert Slovak-specific cultural and political events into general “small nations” gatherings. The Slovaks recognized that, as small nations, they needed a common strategic and economic security to resist aggression from their powerful neighbors. This attempt was nonetheless unsuccessful. While the SLA received some rhetorical support, divisions within and among the various ethnic groups left most of them too consumed in their own specific interests and politics to organize joint action.³¹⁵

One approach that continued to bear fruit, however, was the Slovak League’s targeting of Congress. Jurchak recognized how approaching the State Department and other government bodies had long proven a “waste of time,” and that reaching elected officials was the “only practical approach to the Slovak problem.” The SLA set up organizations focused on distributing

³¹⁵ “Dubosh to V. P. Baran, 12 April 44,” “Dubosh to Pavol Jamriška, 11 Aug 44,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 29 Dec 44,” “Dubosh to Pavol Jamriška, 4 May 45,” “Dubosh to Hrobak, 9 May 1945,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 9 May 1945,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 19 June 44,” “Dubosh to N. V. Sinko, 1 Aug 45,” & “Dubosh to Jurchak, 11 Sep 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Jurchak to Dubosh, 13 Sep 1944,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 18 Jan 1945,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 2 May 1945,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 5 May 1945,” & “Dubosh to Jurchak, 28 Sep 1945,” *PF: Peter P. Jurchak*, SI. “Jurchak to Lach, 28 May 45,” *SLA Cab, F: Treasury Department & SLA, 1943-1945*, SI. On SLA fundraising efforts, see: “Jurchak to Kocur, 30 Oct 1945,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Relief for Suffering Slovakia,” “Lach to Dubosh, 2 Aug 1945,” “Ignác Želenka to Lach, 31 Oct 1947,” *PF: John Lach*, SI. “Dubosh to Jamnický, 1 Aug 1945,” & “Dubosh to Jurchak, 6 Oct 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Billy to Dubosh, 26 May 1945,” “Dubosh to Billy, 11 June 1945,” & “A. E. Casgrain to Billy, 29 Aug 1945,” *PF: Billy*, SI. “Willo to John A. Kocur, 7 Jun 1946,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “A Donation for the Needy in Slovakia,” *Slovak Digest (SD)*, 1, 1 (Nov-Dec 1946), 43. On SLA efforts to work with other East European nationals, see: “Dubosh to Jurchak, 25 Feb 45,” & “League for Liberation of Lithuanian to Dubosh, 11 April 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Dubosh to Billy, 24 May 1945,” & “Dubosh to Billy, 11 June 1945,” *PF: Billy*, SI. “Jurchak to Jan A. Kocur, 31 Jan 1946,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. F. J. Dubosh, “End of World War II.—End of Round Two,” *Slovak Record (SR)*, 3, 11, Mar 1945, 1, 4. F. J. Dubosh, “The Pittsburgh Pact and the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia,” *SR*, 3, 13, May 1945, 1, 4. “Romanians in the United States,” *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 4. Peter P. Yurchak, “An Independent Slovakia,” *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 5, 12.

their published material to members of Congress in an expeditious fashion, and used electoral politics to gain direct access to politicians on the campaign trail, to pressure them to commit to Slovak concerns in exchange for political support. Along with reaching out to congressional officials with large Slovak-American constituencies, the League also targeted representatives making regular appeals for anti-communism, support for Judeo-Christian values, or aggressive promotions of American values in international affairs. This approach succeeded in getting many congressional officials to acknowledge the Slovaks as an independent nation from the Czechs, and even spurred some firm supporters. SLA Leaders perceived several possible benefits from this support, including influence on treaties through the senate ratification process, and the ability of supportive congressional officials to gain access to the various post-war conferences, where they could give voice to the Slovaks. Getting congressional officials to attend Slovak-American events also helped draw attention to them, and Jurchak noted that even compared to the League's best outreach efforts, "one good blast on the floor of Congress will attract much more attention." These benefits are hard to measure, but one area of tangible success was the ability of supportive congressional officials to put pressure on other government agencies. While the State Department was inclined to ignore letters from Slovak-Americans, whenever congressional officials provided support, it forced Department officials to consider them and respond, and it even won SLA leaders a few personal meetings with the State Department.³¹⁶

One other notable component of the post-war period was the influx of Slovak exiles following the fall of the Slovak state. Around 8,000 Slovaks fled to North America after the recreation of Czechoslovakia, most of them Catholic nationalists at risk of persecution. Many of

³¹⁶ On SLA relations with congressional officials, see: "Dubosh to Charles M. LaFollette, 22 Jan 45," "Dubosh to Samuel A. Weiss, 22 Jan 45," & "Dubosh to Michael A. Feighan, 22 Jan 45," *SLA Cab*, F: Slovak Delegation, SI. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 25 Feb 45," & "Dubosh to SLA 20th District, 11 April 45," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Jurchak to Dubosh, 18 Jan 1945," "Jurchak to Dubosh, 28 Mar 1945," "Jurchak to Dubosh, 5 May 1945," "Publicity," & "Summary of 1936 Results," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. "Hrobak to Dubosh, 1 Oct 1945," *B: Hrobak*, SI.

these exiles were academics, intellectuals, and journalists, such as, historians František Hrušovský and Konštantín Čulen, poets Mikuláš Šprinc, and Francis Šubík, and journalist Jozef Paučo. They also included, however, many former politicians and diplomats from the Slovak state who had remained abroad after losing their postings, such as Jozef Kirschbaum, Karol Sidor, Jozef A. Mikuš, and Matthew Černák. While some of these figures gained admittance to the United States, most of them migrated to Canada where they had an easier time gaining entry. The Slovak League dedicated many resources to help these exiles reestablish in America, in what was a difficult and costly process. It actively petitioned the State Department, refugee organizations, and Congress to help expedite their entry into the United States, and worked to raise money to balance the monetary costs. While these efforts were successful in gaining admittance of some Slovak academic leaders into the United States, attempts on behalf of former politicians were largely ineffective. SLA leaders, for example, made a rigorous effort to gain Sidor's entry, through appeals to Washington, but were unsuccessful. Eventually, the State Department labeled him ineligible and removed his name from the Czechoslovak immigrant quota. Alternatively, the SLA succeeded in convincing the International Refugee Organization in Switzerland to recognize Jozef Kirschbaum as the League's official overseas delegate, where he helped organize the arrival of Slovak refugees to the U.S. and Canada from 1946 to 1948. Nonetheless, they were unable to get Kirschbaum admitted into the United States.

The League did not offer its support without concerns. Dubosh complained how the Slovak political leaders overseas had "been conducting their affairs to suit themselves. Now that they are in hot water, they want us to work miracles with the big powers." Dubosh also noted concern about the League's overseas focus drawing attention away from its domestic priorities. Factional differences among the Slovaks in exile also caused concern, to the point that the

League considered sending former SLA president Peter Hletko to Europe to mollify these divisions before they spread to America. Despite these concerns, Slovak exiles quickly merged into the existing Slovak-American political and cultural institutions, becoming leaders in publishing, in cultural development, and in political activism. The exiles also emboldened Slovak-American support for Slovak independence, interjecting concepts and interpretations linked to their first-hand accounts of Slovakia's brief period of independence during the war.³¹⁷

The Slovaks in exile also brought with them their own conceptions of Slovakia's future. Stefan Osuský remained ostracized from the recreated Czechoslovakia due to his wartime feud with Beneš. Osuský positioned himself in support of the SNC, and tried to bring international pressure on Beneš to accept Slovak autonomy, coordinating with Slovaks in Slovakia and the United States. Osuský returned to the United States in 1946, where he settled into an academic career.³¹⁸ The Slovak Catholic Nationalists in exile also maintained their own organizations, intending to serve as exile governments. Peter Prídavok's Slovak National Council in London continued to function in the post-war period until 1948, when it merged with Karol Sidor's

³¹⁷ Kirschaum gained entry to Canada in 1949. Jurchak produced a detailed, sixteen-page legal brief arguing Sidor's case, and the League tried to get the former Slovak politician admitted with different appeals, ranging from having Sidor serve as the Slovak Representative to the United Nations to hiring him as a high school teacher. Sidor eventually gave up on entry to the United States, and instead gained entrance into Canada in 1950. "J.M. Hopkins to Dubosh, 2 Aug 45," "Dubosh to Jurchak, 11 Sep 45," & "Dubosh to Jurchak, 16 Oct 45," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 17 June 1945," "Dubosh to Jurchak, 12 July 1945," "Jurchak to Dubosh, 13 Sep 1945," "Jurchak to Dubosh, 28 Sep 1945," "Trip Abroad," & "Martha H. Biehle to Jurchak, 5 Dec 1947," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. "Hletko to Kocur, 5 July 47," *PF: Hletko*, SI. "US Consulate in Naples to Sidor, 27 Oct 47," & "Sidor to SLA, 10 Dec 1947," *B: Sidor*, SI. W.I. Igoe, "I Can Reveal the Grim Fate of Catholics in Slovakia," *Slovak v America*, 11 Oct 1945, 1, in: *ŠO Papers*, B:1, F:5, HIA. "In Re: Refusal of a U.S. Visa to Karol Sidor," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. Stolarik, "Slovak League," 28-29. Oddo, *Slovakia*, 340-341. Murin, "In Honor," in *Slovak Politics*, xii-xviii. "MoC," in *FRUS, 1950, V4* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 344-347.

³¹⁸ Due to his connections as a former ambassador, Osuský was able to work around restrictions on entry placed on other Slovak exiles. "Beneš Government and the Slovak Home Front," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:5, HIA. "Tatar to Samo Osuský, date unkn," *ŠO Papers*, B:11, F:19, HIA. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 25 Feb 45," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Czechoslovak Problems," *ŠO Papers*, B:45, F:3, HIA. "Pretended Agreement between the Czechoslovak Government and the Slovak National Council," *ŠO Papers*, B:49, F:5, HIA. "Osuský General Letter on the SNC, 8 Oct 44," *ŠO Papers*, B:101, F:4, HIA. "Engagements Schedule," & "Edgar J. Fischer to Osuský, 20 Feb 1946," *ŠO Papers*, B:5, F:3, HIA. "Foreign Diplomat Added to Faculty," *Colgate Maroon*, 16 Oct 1946, 1, 6, found in: *ŠO Papers*, B:1, F:6, HIA. "Josef Hanč to Osuský," *ŠO Papers*, B:17, F:45, HIA. "Bullitt to Osuský, 15 May 1947" & "Bullitt to Osuský, 6 Feb 1948," *ŠO Papers*, B:17, F:45, HIA.

organization to become the Slovak National Council Abroad (SNCA). Alternatively, Ferdinand Ďurčanský founded the Slovak Action Committee (SAC) in 1946. The SNC abroad and the SAC were similar in purpose, promoting anti-communism and the reestablishment of an independent Slovakia, but became rival organizations due to a personal competition between Sidor and Ďurčanský over leadership of the Slovaks in exile. Each organization actively promoted Slovak self-determination to the West, and both coordinated with Slovak-Americans, although the Slovak League formally supported the SNCA over the SAC in the early Cold War.³¹⁹

The Slovak Question in the Third Czechoslovak Republic

World War II formally ended for Slovakia on April 11, 1945 when the Red Army took Bratislava, with the exile government in tow. The Slovak Republic ceased to exist and Slovakia became part of the third Czechoslovak Republic, now a collaboration of pre-Munich state leaders and Czech and Slovak communists. The pressure placed by the SNC on behalf of Slovak autonomy bore fruit in the Košice Agreement of April 5, 1945. This document, confirmed in the eastern Slovak city of Košice, established an interim Czechoslovak government with Beneš as President that included Slovak autonomy. The government laid out the specific details of this jurisdiction in the First Prague Agreement of June 2, 1945, in which Prague recognized the SNC as the governing body for Slovakia with autonomous jurisdiction over Slovak internal affairs,

³¹⁹ The primary difference between the two organizations was that the SNCA conceptualized itself as new organization, whereas the SAC presented itself as the legal continuation of the World War II Slovak Republic. Despite his removal from office for resisting Nazi prerogatives, Prague sought to convict Ďurčanský for his role in the creation of the Slovak state. Prague ultimately convicted Ďurčanský in absentia during the Tiso trial, and he would have faced execution upon capture. Accordingly, Washington attempted, unsuccessfully, to capture and extradite him to Czechoslovakia. "Slovenská Národná Rada v Zahraníčí Utvorená," & "Sidor to Yurchak, 30 July 47," B: Sidor, SI. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 13 April 1945," PF: Jurchak, SI. "Kde je Národ, tam musí byť stat!," B: SNCA, SI. "Slovak Liberation Committee in the U.S.A.," B: Ferdinand Ďurčanský, 1906-1974, SI. "Mémor," in P. A. Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia, Victim of Communist Aggression* (Middletown, PA: Jednota Press, 1945), 30-39. "Andrew Beres to Marshall," 25 July 1947, F#: 860F.00/7-2547, DoS CS 1945-49. "Steinhardt to SoS, no a-848," 27 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-2747, DoS CS 1945-49. "Note, re: Letter From Rev. Andrew Beres," 1 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-147, DoS CS 1945-49. "Francis T. Williamson to William D. Hassett," 31 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-3147, DoS CS 1945-49. "Williamson to Connelly, 14 May 1947," OF, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. "Slovak Plot Linked to Puppet Fugitive", *New York Times*, Oct 27, 1947, 11. Polakovič & Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie*. Buc, "Role," 44-46. Stolarik, "Slovak League," 30-31.

whereas foreign policy and other national affairs remained under the jurisdiction of Prague. The SNC became the legislative body for Slovakia, while a subsidiary Board of Commissioners (SBC) handled the executive administration. Nevertheless, Prague centralism died hard. Prague gradually began to whittle away at Slovak autonomy, claiming it gave the Slovaks a disproportionate influence on state affairs. It dictated a Second Prague Agreement in April 11, 1946 that required national ministerial approval on all SNC legislation and established presidential appointment of government officials in Slovakia. The Third Prague Agreement of June 27, 1947 then gave Prague the right to dictate the SNC agenda, and gave federal ministerial authority over SBC action. Not long after, Beneš's National Socialist Party established a plan for the "spiritual assimilation of the Slovaks people," designed to get them to "think like Czechs," with a detailed list of tactics not far removed from those of the interwar period.³²⁰

Slovak-Americans and the SNC

The approach and treatment of the SNC again spurred division among the Slovaks in America. The organization's adherence to Beneš pleased the Czechoslovakists, while the moderate nationalists embraced the SNC as closely in line of their vision of an autonomist Slovakia in a united republic. One Slovak-American leader, for example, praised the SNC and labeled its success in gaining autonomy as the influence of America finally taking place in Czechoslovakia. The National Slovak Society likewise continued to criticize the past treatment of the Slovaks, noting that "every fair-minded person conversant with the facts" knew that the Slovaks were ready for autonomy well before Munich, but commended Beneš's claimed shift on

³²⁰ "Košice Agreement," (Doc 43) & "Third Prague Agreement," (Doc 48) in *Slovakia: Political*, 242-243, 250-251. "Memorandum on Slovakia (Issued by the Department of Scientific Politics of the National Socialist Party in Czechoslovakia on July 7, 1946)," *B: SLA*, SI. Felak, *After Hitler*, 1-46. Kirschbaum, *History*, 225-231. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 151-176. Kocian, "Czechs versus Slovaks," 207-215. Jelinek, *Lust*, 79-98. Michal Barnovský, "The Slovak Question, 1945-1948," *Slovakia in History*, 229-246.

the matter as well as the SNC for putting autonomy into effect. It expressed hope that Slovakia would become a “little America in the heart of Europe,” and it appealed for the building of transatlantic cultural relationships, including common media and education programs.³²¹

The Catholic nationalists were more tentative in their approach, due to their unequivocal mistrust of Beneš. Dubosh declared Beneš’s attacks on Slovak-Americans during the war unforgivable, and compared Beneš to the biblical “bad hireling,” who protected his flock in word but not in deed. Hrobak in turn criticized Beneš for taking credit for the Slovak Uprising, while also assuring its failure. Jurchak likewise declared outreach to the exile government a waste of time, due to Beneš’s unpopularity among the Slovaks and Beneš’s closeness to Moscow. Jurchak feared that any trust placed in the Czech leader would lead to a repeat of the experience of compromise and betrayal from the First World War. The League put this intransigence into practice, rejecting a proposed meeting with exile foreign minister Jan Masaryk in mid-1944.

The Slovak League was in turn skeptical about the SNC, due to its collaboration with the exile government, but was willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. The National Council’s support for autonomy pleased SLA leaders, who also expressed optimism about the uprising as a means to prove a Slovak willingness and capability to organize and fight independently in support of the Allied war effort. After the success of the Košice Agreement, they gained faith in the organization as capable of representing Slovak self-determination. Dubosh praised the SNC standing up to and cowing Beneš. Jurchak likewise expressed hope that because Beneš and the Czechs “have publically admitted to the world there is such a thing as a distinct Slovak nation,” Washington would also change its view on the Slovaks. After a rigorous internal debate, the League made a decision to reach out to the SNC, despite firm internal opposition from supporters

³²¹ John, Willo, “Slovaks to be Equal Partners in New Republic of Czechoslovakia,” *Narodny Noviny*, Wed. 6 Dec 1944, in *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. Willo, *Souvenir*. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 123-126.

of complete Slovak independence, such as Hušek. In April 1945, the League passed a resolution in Washington D.C., which praised the SNC and acknowledged it as the legitimate representative of the Slovak people. The Washington Resolution then declared the SNC in alignment with the SLA goals of a democratic, autonomous, Christian government in Slovakia, and expressed willingness to cooperate with the SNC in support of the Allied war effort and in the realization of democratic rights as expressed in the Atlantic Charter, the Four Freedoms, and the Dumbarton Oaks Resolution. It concluded with an appeal for independent recognition of the Slovaks at the San Francisco Conference and free elections in Slovakia under American oversight.

This support was not without reservations, however. The willingness of SLA leaders to support the SNC linked to a perception of the SNC standing up against Prague, and they prepared a formal renunciation of support in case the direction of Slovakia turned undemocratic. SLA support for the National Council, therefore, soured by late 1945 as Prague began to whittle away at Slovak autonomy, the communists began to gain more influence, and the League caught wind of negative actions against Slovak Catholics. The SLA decided it could not trust the SNC, and repudiated its prior support. In August 1945, the SLA wrote a complaint about the treatment of churches, religious schools, and the widespread detainment and expulsion of Catholic nationalists in Slovakia. The letter expressed the League's desire to support the SNC, but it declared that it could not if present events continued. In a later memo, the League called the decision to trust the SNC "a colossal historic blunder," and the organization of the Third Czechoslovakia Republic a "crime against the sovereignty of the Slovak nation, against its just rights to freedom, self-determination and democracy, and against truth and justice." From late 1945 on, the SLA chose to work instead in support of the Slovak exile organizations.³²²

³²² "Ustrednej Správy a Výkonného Výboru Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike vzhľadom na ochotu kooperácie so Slovenskou Národnou Radou na Slovenskou," "Dubosh to Jurchak, 26 June 44," "Dubosh to SLA leaders, 4 May

This divergence of views on the SNC had the effect of splintering the compromise between the Slovak moderate nationalists and Catholic nationalists in America that had materialized during the war. The NSS sharply criticized the Catholic nationalists as “enemies of the new republic,” and the Catholic nationalists responded in kind. Peter Prídavok, for example, accused Slovak Lutherans of trying to destroy Slovak Catholicism and of abetting communism in Slovakia. Nevertheless, SLA leaders did look for compromise. Dubosh acknowledged how he and Slovak-American socialist writer and publisher Jan Dendur, shared a similar view on the Slovak Question, although he concluded that collaboration was not possible because of socialist anti-Catholic hostility and admiration for the Soviet Union. Jurchak likewise remarked how the Slovak-Americans were successful when the Catholics and Protestants worked together, and he decried that the Slovak left was using divide-and-conquer techniques against them. Jurchak nevertheless concluded that the League should work to build support from those Lutherans who “see the writing on the wall,” and should use cultural programs to build unity. More would come around once “the Communists teach the Evangelical Slovaks an old, old lesson of history.”³²³

Unlike in the past, there was only a limited effort to encourage Slovak-American involvement in the homeland in the immediate post-war period. Unsurprisingly, Beneš openly dismissed any Slovak-American right to speak on behalf of the Slovaks, and in October 1946,

1945,” “F. Jamnický to Dubosh, date unk,” “Dubosh to Jamnický, 1 Aug 1945,” & “Dubosh to Jurchak, 13 Aug 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Jurchak to Dubosh, 18 Jan 1945,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 13 April 1945,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 12 June 1945,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 17 June 1945,” “Jurchak to Dubosh, 30 June 1945,” “Dubosh to Jurchak, 12 July 1945,” & “Summary of 1936 Results,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Podkriavcy to Kocur, 5 Nov 1945,” *PF: Podkriavcy*, SI. “Billy to Dubosh, 25 Sep 1945,” *PF: Billy*, SI. “Porady 6. Aprila 1945,” *B: SLA*, SI. “Jurchak to Lach, 28 May 45,” *SLA Cab, F: Treasury*, SI. “Intro,” “Slovakia Sold Out by Dr. Beneš,” & Peter Prídavok, “Communist Terror Reigns in Slovakia,” in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia*, 3-5, 17-20, 40-41. F. J. Dubosh, “End,” *SR*. Dubosh, “Pittsburgh,” *SR*. F. J. Dubosh, “Appeal to the Slovak National Council in Slovakia,” & “Is the New Czechoslovak Government Independent,” *SR*, 3, 16, Aug 1945, 1, 4, 10. “Slovakia Victim of Communist Injustices,” *SR*, 2, 18, Oct 1945, 1, 4. Šprinc, “Slovak League,” 80-103. Stolarik, “Slovak League,” 23-24. Mikuš “Slovak League,” 49-50. Paučo, “Slovaks Abroad,” 341-342.

³²³ Willo, *Souvenir*. “Veľký boj medzi Pravdou a Krivdou, medzi Svetlom a Tmou,” & “Priateľský list p. Pankuchovi, Redaktorovi ‘Hlasu,’” *B: SNCA*, SI. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 30 Mar 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “Summary,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI.

Prague banned several Slovak-American papers from Czechoslovakia. This sentiment, though, also extended to the SNC. When Ursíny met with American officials in late 1944, he highlighted the sense of linkage between America and Slovakia because of immigration, claiming that every Slovak has a family member in America. While he called their interest in the homeland “notable,” he, nonetheless, openly disparaged the Slovak League, and asserted that the Slovak-Americans would have no influence on the affairs of the homeland.³²⁴

Democratic Party head Jozef Lettrich showed slightly more interest. He wrote to the SLA in 1945 affirming his party’s support for a democratic Slovakia and asking for support, and in November 1946, he and Fedor Hodža visited the United States to try to strengthen transatlantic ties and to build Slovak-American support for the DP. While Lettrich encouraged unity with the Czechs, and criticized notions of independence, he did appeal to his party’s continued fight for autonomy. Lettrich, who was a Lutheran, focused his efforts on the moderate nationalists, who already firmly supported the SNC. They embraced Lettrich and fundraised on his behalf. NSS President Victor Platek likewise appealed to the White House to meet with the DP leader, so that Lettrich could thank Truman for American support in the war. Platek appealed to the DP’s electoral success and he asserted that a visit to the White House for Lettrich would “be helpful in strengthening the democratic forces in Czecho-Slovakia.” Although eager, the NSS lacked the funds or influence for widespread aide beyond symbolic statements of support.

The Slovak-American Catholic nationalists gave an alternative response. An article by Prídavok, for example, warned that the DP politicians wanted to convince the Slovak-Americans of the virtue of “Czech-Bolshevik bondage.” He encouraged them to challenge Lettrich on

³²⁴ The four banned papers were: *Jednota*, *Slovák v Amerike*, *Osadné Hlasy*, and *Slovenská Obrana*. “Political Situation in Slovakia,” 25 Oct 1944, F#: 860F.01/10-2544, *DoS CS 1910-44*. Edvard Beneš, *Edvard Beneš in His Own Words: Threescore Years of a Statesman, Builder and Philosopher* (New York: Czech-American National Alliance, 1944), 61-62. Oddo, *Slovakia*, 338-339.

issues such as a plebiscite for Slovakia, the ill-treatment of Slovak Catholics, and the failure of the Košice program, before turning the DP leader away. Florian Billy in turn criticized how such leaders would come and beg for aid, but never reciprocate. He boasted how the SLA was strong on its own, and did not need validation from Lettrich. The League should instead devote more time to those Slovaks expelled by Lettrich's government, who want to help contribute to Slovak cultural understanding in America. Several Slovak leaders also wrote to Washington to warn them not to receive Lettrich. While a few Catholic organizations met with Lettrich and heard his point of view, they did not offer much support. Afterwards, Lettrich expressed much frustration over the prevalence of Slovak Catholic nationalists in the United States. He condemned them as supporting separatism, which he decried as "the unfortunate result of the lack of proper information and political orientation." This experience spurred DP officials to conceptualize an American institute magazine for "educating" the Slovak-Americans of "the true situation in Czechoslovakia," although the communist coup occurred before it developed.³²⁵

Washington and the Slovak Question in Postwar Czechoslovakia

Washington's view on Prague once again defined its view on the Slovak Question following World War II. Despite Beneš's close relationship with Soviet officials, including having signed a bi-lateral alliance with Moscow in 1943, Washington viewed Beneš favorably

³²⁵ "Acheson to Madden," F#: 860F.00/12-246. "SoPE for the week Oct 30 to Nov 6, 1946," 3 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SoPE for the week Nov 27 to Dec 3, 1946," 10 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-1047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SoPE for the week Oct 30 to Nov 6, 1946," 3 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Transmitting Memorandum of Trip Through Slovakia by Embassy Officer," 1 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "John J. Kane to Connelly, 29 Nov 1946," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. Willo, *Souvenir*, 137. "Pamätník," *B: Slovenske Povstanie*, SI. "Slovenskí Amerikáni, pozor!: Idú k Vám predstavitelia slovenskej národnej zrady!" *B: SNCA*, SI. "Predstierana Starost o Slovakov v Amerike," *B: Sidor*, SI. "Billy to Dubosh, 25 Sep 1945," *PF: Billy*, SI. "Hrobak to Truman, 16 Dec 1946," & "Stetnutie s Dr. Lettrichom roku 1946," *B: Hrobak*, SI. "Summary of 1936 Results," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. Konštantín Čulen, *Vznik a Zánik Democratickej strany na Slovensko* (Middletown, PA: Jednota, 1950) in *SLA Cab*, F: 29th Congress of the SLA, 21 Oct 1947, Cleveland, OH, SI. Lettrich, *History*, 270-277. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 123-126.

due to its past good relations with Czechoslovakia and because most American officials saw him as a reliable supporter of democracy. When he had visited the United States in 1943, Beneš convinced American policymakers of the idea that Czechoslovakia would become a neutral country bridging the east and west. This plan proved successful, as the big three Allies came to quick agreement on the removal of troops from Czechoslovakia, and Czech and Slovak officials established the Republic largely free of external coercion, including free elections. Nonetheless, Moscow perceived Czechoslovakia as part of its sphere of influence, and accepted this low priority arrangement in the uncertainty of the immediate post-war period. While British officials broadly remained skeptical of the arrangement's viability, American officials trusted in their own good relationship with Beneš and faith in Czech and Slovak liberalism. An embassy telegram, for example, lauded that Beneš' "ideal was an American two party system," and predicted that in the upcoming elections the Communists would "poll the lowest percentage of votes." Truman likewise congratulated the re-creation of the state, and praised the viability of its "principles of democracy and freedom," having survived the two World Wars.³²⁶

Beneš's response to Truman showed how the Czech leader actively cultivated this image, noting that Czechoslovakia would "continue to cherish all the ideals we have in common with your great people and continue to tread the path of democracy of which you are one of the foremost champions." Beneš and his allies in turn used it to justify their absorption of the Slovaks. In his final speech in London, Beneš praised the achievements of the exile government

³²⁶ "Grew to Truman, 4 May 1945," & "Jozef Stalin to Truman, 8 Nov 1945," *Secretary File (SF)*, B: 154, F: Czechoslovakia, HT. "Statement by the President, 21 Oct 1946," & "Truman to Beneš, 28 Oct 1945," *Official File (OF)*, B: 1138, F: 317, HT. "Telegram JPH-1874," 24 June 1945, F#: 860F.00/6-2445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Igor Lukes, *Edge*. Ullmann, *United States*, 150-154. Bennett Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation: East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 18-19. Kovrig, *Of Walls*, 11. Wettig, *Stalin*, 78-79. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943 to 1956*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), 88. Aleksei M. Filitov, "Problems of Post-War Construction in Soviet Foreign Policy Conceptions during World War II," in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, eds. Francesca Gori & Silvio Pons (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 9. Zybynek Zeman & Antonin Klimek, *The Life of Edvard Beneš 1884-1948: Czechoslovakia in Peace and War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 194.

including, “the international settlement of Slovak affairs,” and he praised the exile government for having “saved” Slovakia by getting the Allied governments to recognize the exile government’s authority over the Slovaks. Beneš likewise continued to speak out of both sides of his mouth on the Slovak Question. During a visit to Slovakia in 1946, Beneš made rhetorical concessions on decentralization, while arguing that Prague should nevertheless run most “critical” affairs, due to the need for “competent people.” He then added that it would yet require “an additional 40 years and much systematic work to educate the Slovak nation politically.” Beneš’s presentation to the West also continued to present the Slovaks as in lockstep behind Czechoslovakism. “The realization that the Czechoslovak Republic is the requisite for the future welfare of the Czechs and Slovaks is now simply universal.” He in turn equated support for autonomy with fascism, and he downplayed the continuation of Slovak autonomist sentiment.³²⁷

Once again, the scholarly and journalistic image of Slovakia largely followed suit. Scholars such as R.W. Seton-Watson and American Sociologist Joseph Roucek continued to promote Slovak dependence on the Czechs, while attacking Slovak autonomists as trying to prevent Czech efforts to uplift the Slovaks. American economist William Diamond, sent by Washington to study the Czechoslovak economy, likewise openly disparaged the DP support for autonomy as, “a threat to the unity both of the Government and the Republic.” He then chastised the DP’s absorption of Slovak Catholics as marking the party with “reactionary groups and individuals,” and he commended Communist efforts to attack the DP for fascist subversion. Diamond assertively condemned the Slovaks as anti-modern, and rued their Catholicism: “To

³²⁷ “Beneš to Truman, 1 Nov 1945,” *Official File (OF)*, B: 1138, F: 317, HT. “Transmitting address by President Beneš to the State Council, Feb 23, 1945,” 19 Mar 1945, F#: 860F.00/3-1945, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “President Beneš on Slovak Reconstruction,” 8 April 1946, F#:860F.00/4-846, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Edvard Beneš, *Czechoslovak Policy for Victory and Peace* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Service, 1944), 40-46. Beneš, *His Own Words*, 61-62. Eduard Beneš, “Post-War Czechoslovakia,” *CEO*, 23, 10 (May 10, 1946), 145-147.

travel from Bohemia to Eastern Slovakia is, in terms of both economic progress and political maturity, to withdraw a hundred years into the past....characterized by the problems common to all the predominantly peasant-inhabited, non-industrial and impoverished areas of South-east Europe.” He expressed frustration that the Slovaks resisted socialism, unlike the Czechs, but he thought Czech modernization would solve this condition.³²⁸

This prevalence of the usual stereotypes about the Slovaks thus continued to influence many American officials. While American officials generally held a positive view of the SNC, this optimism linked to its cooperation with the exile government. Rudolf Schoenfeld, for example, praised how “the question of the self-determination of the Slovak nation is solved once and for all.” Other officials were less generous. When Winant reported on the Košice settlement, he neglected recognition of the Slovak Democrats as a sympathetic party, only stating that Czechs Masaryk and Ripka had “saved” the national cabinet. George Kennan continued his disparagement of the Slovaks, predicting the failure of any attempt at Slovak autonomy because Slovakia was “barely solvent,” and otherwise desperate for the Czechs to pay their bills. An OSS report in turn labeled Slovakia a hopeless cause, citing “the province’s generally backward nature.” Its author criticized the establishment of Slovak autonomy as abetting corruption and the infiltration of “collaborationists,” and warned that there remained “no decisive improvements in Slovakia’s discouraging prospects for rehabilitation.” The author praised Czech Communist Party head Klement Gottwald for standing up against these Slovak Catholics and autonomists, and expressed hope that other Czech leaders would follow in kind.³²⁹

³²⁸ Edgar P. Young, “Slovakia Two Years after the National Rising,” *CEO*, 23, 19 (Sep 13, 1946), 292. Joseph S. Rousek, ed. *Central-Eastern Europe: Crucible of World Wars* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946), 60-85, 338-369. R. W. Seton-Watson, *Czechoslovakia in its European Setting* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1946), 16. William Diamond, *Czechoslovakia Between East and West* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1947), 49-53, 169-180.

³²⁹ “Visit,” F#: 860F.01/10-2044. “Kennan to SoS, no 4384,” 16 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.01/11-1644, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Transmitting,” F#: 860F.00/3-1945. “President,” F#: 860F.00/4-846. “Slovak National Council,” 20 April 1945, F#: 860F.00/4-2045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Winant to SoS, No. 33,” 5 April 1945, F#: 860F.00/4-545, *DoS CS*

One notable component of American perception of the Slovak Question was an attempt by Czech nationalists to advance their position vis-à-vis the Slovaks using American anti-communism. One unnamed “Czechoslovak” source attempted to convince American officials that the push for Slovak autonomy was “a Moscow inspired move to split Czechoslovakia into two states” in order to make each weaker for takeover. Another source warned that Moscow was deliberately “exploiting hatred of Slovaks for Czechs” in order to create an independent, fully communist Slovakia, and peddled the notion that only communist and socialist parties functioned in Slovakia. Ripka likewise told American officials that, in contrast to the Czechs, the Slovaks would lean more toward the Communists due to the wartime Slovak government. Several American officials reported these claims to Washington, and the American diplomats in Moscow even attempted to give them credence. Kennan, for example, saw Slovak autonomy as a means to “a major political role in future Slovak affairs” for Moscow, and a plot to absorb Slovakia into the Soviet Union. An OSS report likewise made a poor prediction that “a pro-Soviet orientation will be easier to achieve in Slovakia than in the Czech lands,” and that Moscow would likely use the Slovak Questions as a wedge against Prague and that Slovakia would likely be at the vanguard of advancing communist economics to Czechoslovakia.³³⁰

This attempt was curious, given American support for Beneš, who had close relations with Moscow. The sentiment seemed to arise from Soviet considerations early in the war to support Slovak communist nationalism and a minority of Slovak communists who called for

1945-49. “Status and Prospects of Slovak Reconstruction, 20 Sep 1945,” *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports*, Part V, Postwar Europe, Microfilm, ed. Paul Kesaris (Washington: University Publications of America, 1977).

³³⁰ “Harriman to SoS, no 3476,” 13 Sep 1944, F#: 860F.01/9-1344, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Kennan to SoS, no 4328,” 11 Nov 1944, F#: 860F.01/11-1144, *DoS CS 1910-44*. “Kennan to SoS,” F#: 860F.01/11-1644. “Winant to SoS,” F#: 860F.00/4-545. “Harriman to SoS, no 1105,” 9 April 1945, F#: 860F.01/4-945, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Developments Relating to Recruitment of Czechoslovak Light Infantry Battalion,” 5 May 1945, F#: 860F.00/5-545, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Tittman to SoS, No. 168,” 9 July 1945, F#: 860F.00/7-945, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “The Position of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak State, 25 May 1945,” *O.S.S.*, Part V.

Slovakia's annexation into the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, according to historian Yeshayahu Jelinek, by end of the war Moscow distrusted Slovak nationalism and deferred to Prague on the Slovak Question as the new state formed. On the other hand, Beneš himself openly praised the Soviet Alliance a means of preventing Slovak nationalism and "the possibility of a repetition of the treachery of the Slovak fascists and of their treasonable separation of Slovakia from the Republic." The Czech National Socialist Party even had contingency plans to allow a Soviet absorption of Slovakia, should Slovak nationalism spin out of their control. The U.S. staff in Moscow clearly overreached on this issue, and if American officials in Prague accepted these claims at any point, it was not for long. By the end of 1945, such attempts to link Slovak autonomy to Moscow dried up entirely as events proved them unfounded.³³¹

Slovak-American Activism

Once it became clear that Moscow was going to guide East Central Europe toward communism, the Slovak-American nationalists worked adamantly to change Washington's view. Their appeals to American officials focused on the themes of exposing the ill-treatment of Catholics in Slovakia, positioning America's support for Czechoslovakia as contrary to its stated ideals, and appealing for a Slovak plebiscite under the belief that the Slovaks, if given the opportunity, would vote against joining Czechoslovakia. Spurred by long frustration and the looming Cold War, the period from 1945 to 1948 saw the Slovaks in America develop their most prolific lobbying campaign of any time.

³³¹ "Relations," F#: 860F.01/11-1744, *DoS CS 1910-44*. "Program of Slovak Communists," 10 April 1945, F#: 860F.00/4-1045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Czechoslovakian Activities in the United States," 14 April 1945, F#: 860F.00/4-1445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "New Developments in Czech-Slovak Relations," 21 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Beneš, *Czechoslovak Policy*, 24. "Memorandum on Slovakia," B: *SLA*, SI. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 158-159. Jelinek, *Lust*, 40-42, 60-61, 70, 79-83.

The Slovak-American nationalists sent appeals to just about any government figure they could. Pastor John Zeman, for example, wrote to many White House officials, including President Roosevelt's daughter, Anna Boettinger, to whom he criticized the "powerful propaganda" of Beneš as "masterfully directed to confuse the world as to what the vast majority of Slovak people of Slovakia really want," to be "completely free and independent," under "purely American supervision." Publisher Philip Hrobak likewise wrote to Truman and his two senators from Pennsylvania, Joseph F. Guffey and Francis J. Myers, to complain how Slovak "liberation" quickly shifted to Slovakia being "terrorized and communized or Sovietized." He decried the reestablished Republic's hostility toward Slovak Catholics, and questioned how the world would see peace while nations were "brutally forced to accept ideologies and policies that are entirely foreign to them." After a blasé State Department response, Hrobak accused the Department of betraying the stated values of the United Nations, and of hypocrisy for treating the Slovaks in a way inconsistent with American policy claiming to stand up against dictatorships. Dobush in turn wrote to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes to complain how Slovakia was being "thrown first of all into the lap of the cruel Nazis, and now thrown into the lap of the Soviet Union, which is no less cruel." He criticized how the Red Army occupation had defiled Slovakia, marked by looting, rape, abuse, and the expulsion or flight into exile of multitudes, and he asked, "Will the United States and Britain appease Stalin and what he represents, as Hitler was appeased?" In follow-up letters, Dubosh then noted the hypocrisy of demanding observed elections in Bulgaria, but not in Czechoslovakia, as well as Washington's barring of the attempts by the SLA to send its own representatives to Slovakia.³³²

³³² "Resolution by the American Slovak Liberation Committee of Reading, PA," 7 April 1945, Missing F#, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "John Zeman to Anna Boettinger," 24 Feb 1945, F#:860F.01/2-2445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Zeman to Matthew J. Connely," 24 April 1945, F#: 860F.01/4-2445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Zeman to Connely," 31 May 1945, F#: 860F.01/5-3145, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Zeman to Henry Vaughan, 25 April 1945," & "Zeman to Robert Hannegan,

The League supplemented this lobbying campaign with an effort to expand their publishing. Jurchak criticized how the Slovak-Americans had not done nearly enough to gain exposure and prioritized the production of more English language materials. He lamented how the Slovak nation remained “an unknown country and an unknown people,” and how people needed more background information to be able to understand present day events. The SLA’s cultural department thus organized a fundraising drive to bolster publication efforts. It called for publications “of such worth and dignity as to draw and hold the attention of the English speaking world...by showing them that what the Slovak people stand for is worth fighting for, and worth something to them as well as to the Slovaks.” Accordingly, the League attempted to expand its English periodicals. It continued publication of the *Slovak Record* to serve as a source of information, in which Slovak-American leaders defended the good name of the SLA, emphasized the Slovak linkage to American democracy and ideals of self-determination, and exposed the threat of communism to Europe. The *Slovak Record* was the most successful Slovak-American English language periodical in its scope, content, and accessibility, but it concluded publication after 1945 due to a lack of resources. The League followed with two attempts at new English periodicals, the *Slovak Digest* and the *Slovak Review*, intended to be more academic. This stated goal for *Slovak Digest* was to help bridge this gap of understanding between the United States and East Central Europe. Although intended as an academic journal, in practice it was more a collection of journalistic styled editorials and texts, focusing on politics and government. The *Slovak Review* was more effective at being academic, focusing on Slovak

22 July 1945,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “Hrobak to Truman,” 6 July 1945, F#: 860F.01/7-645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Hrobak to Joseph Guffey,” 12 June 1945, F#: 860F.01/6-1245, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Hrobak to Francis Myers,” 12 June 1945, F#: 860F.01/6-1245, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Hrobak to Davis Harris,” 1 Oct 1945, F#: 860F.00/10-145, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Hrobak to Truman, 5 Oct 1945,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “Hrobak to Leverich, 9 Oct 1945,” *B: Hrobak*, SI. “Dubosh to Byrnes,” 2 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-2145, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “State Department Turns Down Slovak League Request for Plebiscite in Slovakia,” *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 1, 9. “Slovakia Victim,” *SR*.

history, literature, and culture with contributors from academia and the arts. Both were short lived, however, due to a lack of funding and difficulties finding consistent contributors.³³³

Several Slovak-American leaders also produced longer works addressing the Slovaks and the Slovak Question. Hrobak produced a pamphlet targeting Beneš as a discredited leader who had manipulated himself back into power using the Allies, and who was once again misleading the world on the Slovak Question. Hrobak cited Beneš's treatment of Slovak autonomists during the war, having ostracized "the largest groups of organized Slovaks in America" and having purged Osuský and Hodža from his organization. He also challenged existing stereotypes:

The claim that the Slovaks cannot live without the Czechs is just plain hokum and an insult to sound intelligence...The Czechs and the Slovaks certainly may live together, each under his own roof, if they choose to do so, but the Slovaks should not be condemned and persecuted when they insist on the exercise of their natural and God-given rights as a nation.

Hrobak concluded that the West needed to intervene on the issue, in the name of the Atlantic Charter and "a just and lasting peace and a better post-war world."³³⁴

More notable, however, was Jurchak's history of the Slovaks. Although written by a nonprofessional historian, Jurchak filled the gap of an English language historical survey of the Slovaks from the classical era to World War II. Jurchak presented his book as an alternative to Czech histories, with the intent to inform Americans about the Slovak's unique identity and history. Reflecting his prerogatives, Jurchak put heavy emphasis on the influence of America on

³³³ The Slovak-Americans used the *Slovak Record* in political activism, regularly sending copies to Congressmen several of whom claimed to have read from them. "Nardony Fund," "Jurchak to Dubosh, 21 July 1945," "Publicity," "The Slovak Review (Report)," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. "An Appeal to Our Fraternal Organizations," B: Dubosh, SI. "Beneš Denounced as Having Delivered Country to Reds," *SR*, 3, 15, July 1945, 3. "Slovaks Have Faith in America and Democracy," *SR*, 2, 8, Oct 1944, 6, 9. F. Dubosh, "Principles of World War II: Atlantic Charter and Four Freedoms," *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 12. Christian Ball, "The European Order is Crumbling," *SR*, 3, 10, Feb 1945, 12. Andrej V. Pir, "Slovakia's Statehood and Soviet Security," *SR*, 3, 13, May 1945, 12. "Europe Must be Americanized or it will be Sovietized," *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 5. The few editions of the *Slovak Review* and the *Slovak Digest* produced are available at the Slovak Institute. "Editorial," *SD*, 1, 1, (Nov-Dec 1946), 1. "The Slovak Review," *Slovak Review*, 1, 1, (Autumn 1946), 1.

³³⁴ Philip James Anthony, *Beneš and the Future of Slovakia* (Middletown, PA: Jednota Press, 1945).

Slovak national conceptions. Jurchak praised the Slovak's "great emigration" to the United States where the Slovaks had "grown to maturity in the finest type of American citizenship in less than the span of a single lifetime." He then outlined the Slovak-American's effort to bring ideas of liberty and democracy back to Slovakia. Jurchak nonetheless criticized how this mentality did not extend to Washington. "It is a matter of further regret that our own government remained blind to the true state of affairs within Czecho-Slovakia," and he cited Washington's neglect of Wilsonianism as contributing to the events leading to the breakup of Czechoslovakia. When analyzing recent events, Jurchak expressed concern with the post-war order and the threat of Soviet domination over Central Europe. While he asserted that the Slovaks served as natural opponents of communism and would "never voluntarily submit to Soviet dictatorship," he warned that they could not stand alone. He called for an active U.S. role in Central Europe, arguing that America could offer a detached, unbiased support of democracy there through support for a Central European Federation to facilitate peace, economic unity, and common security. He then put forward his belief that the Slovak-Americans, and other ethnic Americans from the region, could offer a source of guidance that Washington should consider.³³⁵

As President, Jurchak nonetheless saw limits to the Slovak-American's own publications, and felt that exposure in larger and more general publications was critical to their success. He prioritized a campaign to break into such publications, and even considered hiring a full time journalist or foreign correspondent for this role. While the influence of the Slovak-Americans on them is unclear, a few writers did express favorable images of the Slovaks. Foreign

³³⁵ Peter P Yurchak, *The Slovaks: Their History and Traditions* (Whiting, IN: Rev. John J. Lach, 1946). "Jurchak to Michael Vargovich, 7 May 1945," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. Jurchak and other SLA members pressured a quick release of the book, but Dubosh and Hrobak were extremely exacting in their standards and choose not to rush the publishing until it met their quality. They also debated whether to qualify the book as a "history," rather than a political document, given its layman source. "Unsigned to Hrobak, 21 April 1945," "Hrobak to Dubosh, 15 May 1945," & "Dubosh to Hrobak 19 May 45," *B: Hrobak*, SI. "Dubosh to Hrobak, 9 May 1945," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Jurchak to Dubosh, 2 May 1945," *PF: Jurchak*, SI.

Correspondent A.I. Goldberg, for example, declared Slovakia a test case for post-war Central Europe, not just on issues of reconstruction and reconsolidation of the new government, but also because Goldberg perceived a prevalent “spirit of Wilson” supporting self-determination and democracy. American Sinologist Owen Lattimore visited Czechoslovakia to study its minority questions, and recognized that, despite claims of the Czechoslovakists, “If a fourth of a nation insists that it is somehow different from the other three-fourths, then it remains arithmetically a minority situation not matter how you define it politically.” He also noted that any claims of dependency were no longer valid, for there were clearly enough viable Slovak intelligentsia and administrators to run Slovakia’s affairs. These positive images were, nevertheless, rare.³³⁶

Slovak exiles also worked in cooperation with the Slovak-American nationalists. During a lecture tour around the United States, Osuský praised the Slovaks as representing three key components of Americanism, “democracy, love of liberty, and love of peace,” and he challenged negative stereotypes of Slovak development. He argued that their democratic vibrancy should serve as an example of the proper way forward in Europe. The SNCA followed suit. It produced many articles, ranging from one by Sidor accrediting Czechoslovakia’s existence to the Slovak-Americans, to another by Pridavok outlining the ill treatment of Catholics in the Third Republic. Another pamphlet argued that the Slovaks had proven their capability for independence, and simply wanted to live in peace under their own rule. It offered a ten-point proposal that included restrictions over Prague’s control, independent international representation for the Slovak nation, and separate elections held for Slovakia under western observation. The SAC made appeals, defending the Slovak State as a rational decision done for national survival. The Slovaks, as a small nation in a volatile region, were a victim, and Prague’s poor treatment of national

³³⁶ “Jurchak to Pir, 32 May 45,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. A.I. Goldberg, “Slovak State Held Test For Europe,” *New York Times*, Jun 28, 1945, 7. Owen Lattimore, “Co-Operation of Minorities,” *CEO*, 24, 19 (Oct 17, 1947), 294-295.

minorities should receive the blame from the breakup of Czechoslovakia. Prague was now duping the world, using the claim of Slovak fascism as a masquerade to justify its domination over Slovakia. Later appeals called for recognition of the Slovaks as an independent nation under the terms of the Atlantic Charter, including independent representation in international organizations, economic self-determination, and an independent Slovak state.³³⁷

The SLA later joined with the Canadian Slovak League, the SAC and the SNCA to produce a joint appeal to the European Peace Conference. This legal brief outlined Slovak claims to independence from before World War I, described its independent national identity, and criticized its treatment within Czechoslovakia. The appeal dismissed the idea of Czechoslovakism as simply as a tool to manipulate the west into allowing Czech domination of Slovakia, and it questioned why the Allies should consider the Slovaks guilty for forming their own state, but not the Czechs for their treatment of the Slovaks before Munich. It then warned that Prague was simply a willing tool of Moscow to bring about communist domination of Europe. The only solution would be a western-back independent Slovakia.³³⁸

Washington's Response

The one area where Slovak-American activism bore fruit was in support from within Congress. Slovak-Americans reached out both to individual congressional officials and to Congress as a body. One such pamphlet from the SLA positioned Slovakia at the “crossroads of

³³⁷ “Letter of Osuský to American Slovaks,” in SLA, *Plea*, Appendix B, 12-15. “Slovak Christian Heritage and Americanism,” *ŠO Papers*, B:56, F:19, HIA. “The Slovak League of America – its influence on political developments in Slovakia.” B: Sidor, SI. Peter Pridavok, “A Bill to Destroy the Christian Faith of Slovaks,” in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia*, 57. “Memorandum Slovenskej národnej rady v Londýne odovzdané veľvyslanectvu USA, June 1, 1945,” in Polakovič & Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie*, 103-104. “SNC Memorandum,” in SLA, *Plea*, Appendix C, 16-19. “Memoir,” in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia*. Ferdinand Ďurčanský, *Zur Existenzfrage der Tschechoslowakei* (Bratislava: Slovakische Bücherei, 1945). Slovak Action Committee, *Address of the Slovak Action Committee to the Council of Foreign Ministers* (Nov 1946). Slovak Liberation Committee, *Independence for Slovakia!* (New York).

³³⁸ SAC, SNC London, SLA, Canadian Slovak League, *Memorandum: Presented to the Peace Conference Concerning the Rationality of Existence of Czecho-Slovakia* (Paris: 1946).

civilization” and the center of Slavic Christianity, before making the usual complaints about the past treatment by the Czechs. It also appealed to American linkages to Slovakia: “America not only stood at the cradle of this new republic but was in every sense, its foster mother. The support, financial, and in fighting forced, which Americans and Americans Slovak ancestry gave to this movement made Czecho-Slovakia possible. On American soil it was solemnly declared and agreed that it should be the union of two equal nations.” It then noted how this agreement disappeared once America stepped out of the picture. The document pleaded for Washington not to allow Beneš to take ownership of Slovakia, and that the Slovaks should have the right to decide their own future, through free elections administered by the United Nations.³³⁹

Several legislators wrote to SLA leaders offering their sympathy and support, such as Arthur Capper, Robert Taft, and David Walsh. Alvin O’Konski expressed support by reading a text by Hrobak on the Slovak Question in Congress. Several Slovak-American leaders also built strong personal relationships with their representatives. Dubosh had regular communication with Michael A. Feighan from Ohio, who helped Dubosh pressure the War Relief Control Board to reconsider the SLA’s license application to collect funds for relief for Slovakia. As a member of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Feighan likewise promised to have the committee consider the Slovaks during a trip to Europe. Feighan also provided reports to Dubosh during their trip on the conditions in Europe. Congressman Daniel J. Flood from Pennsylvania wrote the forward to Jurchak’s history, praising the Slovaks and other small states as supporters of democracy and calling for American support for them. When Jurchak asked Flood for help getting SLA representatives sent to Slovakia as election observers, Flood told him that the Foreign Relations Committee was attempting to send their own observers to Europe and that they

³³⁹ Slovak League of America, *Plea on Behalf of the Slovak People to the United States Congress and the World Security Organization* (Slovak League of America, 1945).

would assuredly pay close attention to the Slovaks. Florian Billy communicated regularly with his senator, James Mead from New York. Mead promised to keep promoting Slovak freedom, and considered the possibility that he might be able to send some SLA officials to Slovakia as interpreters. Mead also pushed much of Billy's materials into the State Department, including one report on conditions in Slovakia directly to Byrnes. Where the Department was inclined to ignore Slovak-American appeals, intervention by congressional officials forced Department officials to at least consider them and reply.³⁴⁰

The other major success for the Slovak League came with the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in spring 1945. The Slovak-American nationalists made a priority to try to convince Washington to allow a separate Slovak delegation from the Czechs, who posed Jan Masaryk as their sole Slovak delegate. One letter criticized this treatment, because "those who suppressed (*the Slovaks*) at home and presented it as a backward, undemocratic nation abroad" had no right to speak in their name. Another letter warned against allowing the Czechs "to appropriate for themselves the merits for which the Slovak people suffered, fought and died at the side of the victorious Allied armies." The State Department refused, however, stating that the United States did not recognize an independent Slovak nation.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Dubosh at one point expressed worry that perhaps they should give Feighan a reprieve, fearful that Prague would begin trying to smear him for his vocal support for the Slovak autonomists. "Dubosh to Edward J. Behuncik, 11 April 45," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "U.S. Senators Capper, Taft, and Walsh Agree with Slovak League's plea for Slovakia's Independence," *SR*, 3, 13, May 1945, 1, 8. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 13 Aug 45," & "Dubosh to Yurchak, 6 Oct 45," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 17 June 1945," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. "Jurchak to John C. Sciranka, 11 July 1945," & "Jurchak to Dubosh, 21 July 1945," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. Daniel J. Flood, "Forward," in Yurchak, *Slovaks*, x-xiii. "Connelly to SoS, 13 Nov 1945," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. "Florian Billy to James Mead," 5 Dec 1945, No File #, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Billy to Dubosh, 12 Sep 1945," *PF: Billy*, SI. 91 *CR* A2147-49 (1945) Appendix - Extension of Remarks.

³⁴¹ Group of Americans of Slovak Descent, *Slovak Nation Wants its Sovereignty: Memorandum Submitted to the Honorable Delegates of the United Nations to the Conference Held in San Francisco, April 25, 1945* (New York: 1945). *Slovenský Národ: Memorandum predostreté slávnym zástupcom Spojených národov na konferencii vydržiavanej v San Francisku 25. Aprila 1945* (New York: 1945), in *B: Resolutions*, SI. "Dubosh General Letter, 25 April 1945," *B: Dubosh*, SI. "Dubosh to Jurchak, 24 Mar 1945," *PF: Jurchak*, SI. "Resolution of Canadians of Slovak Origin to the Canadian Delegates of the World Security Conference, San Francisco, California," 11 May 1945, No File #, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Grew to Guffey," F#: 860F.01/7-1445. "Grew to Myers," F#: 860F.01/7-1645.

The SLA nonetheless continued to prioritize the conference. Jozef Prusa, for example, travelled to Washington, where he connected with each of the American delegates before their departure and provided them with copies of the *Slovak Record*. Hrobak also produced a short appeal titled “For God’s Sake,” begging that the conference examine the Slovak’s case. He lamented how larger powers had long dominated Slovakia and how the postwar order was setting up this scenario once again. “Slovakia should not and must not be forced to accept an alien system of government without the free and unfettered consent of its inhabitants.” This campaign eventually hit pay dirt when the League received permission to send its own official observer. The League sent Ján Lach, due to his good standing as a priest and his success leading their war bond drives. Lach detailed the many officials with whom he became acquainted at the conference, and he expressed optimism about their willingness to consider his arguments. Lach in particular commended Dewitt Poole and Augustus Hecksher from the State Department for showing much interest and knowledge about the Slovak Question. Lach’s assistant, Edward J. Behunčík confirmed Lach’s praise, crediting Poole as the most knowledgeable American official on the Slovak Question. Lach also met with Jan Masaryk, who Lach said received him cordially and otherwise promoted the viability of the SNC in deciding the fate of the Slovaks. Overall, Lach praised the opportunity to expose the Slovak Question to leaders from around the globe, but felt the biggest achievement was his ability to help the good name of the SLA after the wartime attacks against it. He expressed pleasure that the League could now put to rest any doubts about its loyalty and patriotism. Behunčík seconded this view, praising how the SLA had “affected to great degree the negative, obstructionist and extremist position in which the State Department and other government agencies have regarded the League and its officials of the past.”³⁴²

³⁴² “Dubosh to Edward R. Stettinius, 21 April 1945,” “Prusa to Dubosh, 2 May 1945,” “Dubosh to Prusa, 4 May 1945,” “Slovenská Liga v Amerike na Medzinárodnej Konferencii v San Fransisco r. 1945,” “Medzi Slovákmi

Despite this optimism, American foreign policy officials responded to the Slovak-Americans much as they had in the past. Having received so many letters from American Slovaks, the White House consulted the State Department about formulating a response. Chief of Central European Affairs James Riddleberger replied, calling one letter “the most extreme examples of Slovak nationalism” that he had ever seen, and recommended no response. While he argued, “this government may unofficially favor a greater degree of decentralization than existed in Czechoslovakia prior to 1938,” he warned that a response might be interpreted as sympathy for Slovak independence. According to Riddleberger, such a notion would suggest American interference in Czechoslovakia’s internal affairs, or the ennobling of “an attack on an allied government,” and hurt America’s good relations with Beneš; a standard it did not hold for many other countries. In practice, the State Department tried to avoid even addressing the issue, and brushed aside any discussion of what it labeled the “the so-called Slovak state,” as an illegitimate claim on the Slovaks ability to run their own affairs. Riddleberger eventually sent out an internal memorandum remarking that the Slovak Question was a touchy issue that Washington had no reason to get involved in, and he mandated that Department policy should be to file Slovak-American letters with no response. The Department treated many letters in this manner, although it replied to letters forwarded through elected officials. Its formulaic replies simply promoted Slovak status with the Czechoslovak government, and referenced the Košice Agreement to show that the Slovaks had received local autonomy. It assured that “the Slovak people themselves are

v San Francisco (Zo San Fransisco, IX),” & “Návšteva u Rôznych Delegácií (Zo San Fransisco, X),” *SLA Cabinet*, F: Slovak League Delegation to the UN Conference, SI. “U.S. Delegates to San Francisco Conference Acknowledge Literature on Slovaks,” *SR*, 3, 12, April 1945, 2. Philip James Anthony, “For God’s Sake: Review the Case of Slovakia,” in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia, Victim*, 42-45. “Dubosh to Hrobak, 19 May 45,” & “Edward J. Behunčík to Dubosh, 18 May 45,” *B: Hrobak*, SI. “Billy to Dubosh, 23 May 1945,” “Dubosh to Billy, 24 May 1945,” “Billy to Dubosh, 26 May 1945,” & “Dubosh to Billy, 11 June 1945,” *PF: Billy*, SI. “Lach to Dubosh, 3 May 1945,” *PF: Lach*, SI. Šprinc, “Slovak League,” 89-91. Stolárik, “Slovak League,” 26-27.

carrying out the difficult tasks of reconstruction,” and that the Košice Agreement would “enable the Czech and Slovak peoples to work together to solve their common problems.”³⁴³

Democracy, Political Parties, and the Elections

Next to sorting Slovakia’s position in the post-war government, the Košice system also dealt with the organization of democracy. Prague conceptualized its government, however, as a “guided democracy,” a top-down organization based on ‘elite’ guidance, which, according to historians Toma and Kováč, was for Slovakia democratic mostly just in that it let citizens vote for political party representation. Politically, Slovakia stuck primarily to the Democrat and Communist Parties, with the addition of only two smaller parties on the periphery. The May 1946 elections ultimately divided the Czechs and Slovaks once again. While the Czechs elected a Communist majority, the Slovaks supported the DP by 62% of the electorate, compared to 30% support for the CPS. The central government in Prague therefore maintained a slim Communist-led government, while the SNC became majority liberal. The DP’s electoral success resulted primarily from gaining most of the Catholic vote, which was largely anti-communist, and whose pre-war parties the new government had disenfranchised. The DP leadership was predominantly Lutheran, however, with only a tenuous hold on its Catholic constituents. The DP in turn saw an increased Catholic influence, including a firm entrenchment within the party in support of Slovak

³⁴³ “Boettinger to Hastert, 7 Mar 1945,” *OF*, F:536a, Czechoslovakia 1940-1945, FDR. “Memorandum for Mr. Hassett,” 24 Feb 1945, F#: 860F.00/2-2445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Memorandum for Mr. Connelly,” 4 May 1945, F#: 860F.00/5-445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Office Memorandum: Riddleberger to Willis,” 15 June 1945, F#: 860F.01/6-745, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “David Harris to Hrobak,” 6 July 1945, F#: 860F.01/7-645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Joseph G. Grew to Joseph Guffey,” 14 July 1945, F#: 860F.01/7-1445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Grew to Francis J. Myers,” 16 July 1945, F#: 860F.01/7-1645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Henry P. Leverich to Dubosh,” 4 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-445, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Note: Williamson to Riddleberger,” 1 Oct 1945, No File #, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

autonomy. The electoral failure of the CPS, alternatively, required it to submit itself to the central Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS) led by the Czech communists.³⁴⁴

When the U.S. embassy in Prague opened in May 1945, the embassy staff provided only brief summaries of events in Slovakia. Initially these reports focused on the cooperation of the Slovaks in the new state, but they later began to acknowledge the internal shifts on the Slovak Question. After Ambassador Lawrence Steinhardt arrived in Prague in July, embassy activities picked up. Steinhardt, a former lawyer who became a diplomat in the 1930s after supporting Franklin Roosevelt's election, had little experience with Czechoslovakia, but was fond of the Czechs and strikingly anti-communist. Much like past ambassadors, Steinhardt regularly portrayed a negative bias toward the Slovaks, and was prone to frame Slovak affairs through the lens of Prague. For example, while attending a meeting of Czech and Slovak politicians in Banská Bystrica designed to address the Slovak Question, Steinhardt lauded the meeting as a resounding success in favor of Czech and Slovak unity and the "fullest support to Beneš."³⁴⁵

Nonetheless, the embassy broadly showed a greater interest in the Slovaks, likely due to the influence of embassy counselor John Bruins, a career foreign service officer with ample experience in Czechoslovakia from before the war. The existence of the wartime Slovak Republic and the early success of the SNC for Slovak autonomy had mandated that the embassy show more interest in the Slovaks than in the past. American officials began communicating with and citing Slovak sources more often, such as Lettrich, Ursíny, Hodža, and Slovak communist

³⁴⁴ Felak, *After Hitler*, 47-85. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 159-172. Jelinek, *Lust*, 93-95. Kirschbaum, *History*, 228-230. Barnovský, "Slovak Question, 1945-1948," 229-246. Karel Kaplan, *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), 55-66. M. R. Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 98-104.

³⁴⁵ "Summary of Political Events (SoPE) for the week June 27 to July 3, 1945," 9 July 1945, F#: 860F.00/7-945, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SoPE for the week July 11 to 17, 1945," 10 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-1045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SoPE for the week October 24 to 30, 1945," 26 Nov 1945, F#: 860F.00/11-2645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SoPE for the week November 7 to 13, 1945," 6 Dec 1945, F#: 860F.00/12-645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 275," 30 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-3045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. For more on Steinhardt and other embassy staff, see: Lukes, *Edge*. Ullmann, *United States*.

leader Gustav Husák, and showed more balance in expressing the varying positions of the parties in Slovakia and their relations to the federal government in Prague. Some early reports were less than positive, such as an OSS report that overestimated the popularity of the CPS, and dismissed growing Catholic turn toward the DP as former SPP supporters trying to “cloak their former fascist practices.” By late 1945, reports showed more optimism and recognized the difficulties of the Slovak Communists in favor of the Slovak Democrats. They also showed understanding of the situation in Slovakia, such as the sense of political disenfranchisement among Slovak Catholics and the DP’s tenuous efforts to accommodate them. Another OSS report also provided a balanced history of the Slovak Question, one that fleshed out all sides of the argument.³⁴⁶

As this interest consolidated, in a noted shift from the past, American officials largely brushed aside any claims of popular support in Slovakia for centralism. One OSS report noted how the legacy of the state gave the Slovaks a stronger sense of right to self-determination and experience in self-rule. It praised the Slovak Uprising as having exonerated the Slovaks from the stigma of collaboration and having given them a “moral basis” for their subsequent claims for autonomy. The author warned that a return of Prague centralism would be unacceptable, and that finding a solution to the Slovak Question was essential for peace in Central Europe. By the end of the year, Steinhardt also recognized the widespread support for autonomy in Slovakia. As the divergence between Czech and Slovak support for communism clarified nearing the elections, many of the embassy officers began showing positive images of the Slovaks. Steinhardt and Bruins visited Slovakia in January 1946, after which Steinhardt presented the Slovaks as pro-

³⁴⁶ The embassy also provided accurate descriptions of the smaller parties in Slovakia, most notably the Liberty Party, created by the old centralist leader Vavro Srobar to serve as the arm of Beneš in Slovakia. “Program,” F#: 860F.00/4-1045. “Steinhardt,” F#: 860F.00/11-1745. “Steinhardt,” F#: 860F.00/11-1745. “Impending,” F#: 860F.00/12-345. “Political,” F#: 860F.00/12-1545. “Steinhardt,” F#: 860F.00/12-2245. “Third Political Party in Slovakia—Labor Party,” 3 Feb 1946, F#: 860F.00/2-346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Fourth Slovak Political Party,” 4 April 1946, F#: 860F.00/4-446, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Changes in the Slovak Democratic Party,” 11 April 1946, F#: 860F.00/4-1146, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Position,” *O.S.S., Part V*.

American and eager for American support. Their report noted a “more intimate feeling of connection with the U.S. among the Slovaks than is apparent among the Czechs,” which they credited to the past large-scale Slovak immigration to America. The report likewise asserted that the Slovaks were less statist in mindset, and more positive in outlook.³⁴⁷

After the elections, this positive sentiment became even more explicit. In one report, Steinhardt repeated his assertion of greater pro-American sentiment in Slovakia in order to example the need for closer U.S.-Czechoslovak relations. Bruins highlighted a “striking difference in political atmosphere and sentiment,” and emphasized the DP’s support for private enterprise. Embassy First Secretary Charles Yost, however, became the most pro-Slovak voice. Yost praised the Slovak’s love of America, going so far as to praise that “the attitudes of most Slovaks continues to represent an independence of spirit and a rugged individualism which are more characteristic of the United States than of most parts of Europe at the present time... Slovakia continues to be attached to private capitalism and to permit only reluctantly and tentatively the intrusion of socialism.” The embassy thus provided, overall, some fair and accurate views of Slovak behavior. Nonetheless, this shift was not comprehensive. Steinhardt never quite abandoned old stereotypes. He continued to present a Slovak neediness for the Czechs, and in one report accused the Slovaks of exaggerating wartime damage to try to exploit foreign aid. Steinhardt’s post-election report also hinted frustration that the Slovaks proved more anti-communist than the Czechs had. Steinhardt explained away the Communist success in Czechia, while brushing aside the DP’s success. He instead turned to the usual stereotypes about

³⁴⁷ The report explained this difference in mentality to a lack a gestapo terror during the war, although Steinhardt gave no credit to the wartime government for this result. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 592” 17 Nov 1945, F#: 860F.00/11-1745, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 624,” 24 Nov 1945, F#: 860F.00/11-1745, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Impending Changes in Political Party Structure in Slovakia,” 3 Dec 1945, F#: 860F.00/12-345, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Political Situation in Slovakia,” 15 Dec 1945, F#: 860F.00/12-1545, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 624,” 22 Dec 1945, F#: 860F.00/12-2245, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 164,” 31 Jan 1946, F#: 860F.00/1-3146, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Position,” *O.S.S., Part V*.

the Slovaks being “less politically mature” and having “simpler reactions,” and that the Slovaks voted for the DP because of the harsher Soviet occupation and a lack of other options.³⁴⁸

The Slovak-American response to democracy in Slovakia prior to the elections showed a high degree of skepticism. In light of events elsewhere in Central Europe, the League continued to push for the placement of American observers to assure the legitimacy of the elections in Slovakia. Government behavior outside of electoral politics also caused them a high degree of concern. Hrobak highlighted programs in Czechoslovakia, such as nationalization of schools, land reform, and the annexation of Ruthenia into the Soviet Union in appeals for American intervention. Dubosh complained about how the two most popular pre-war parties in Slovakia, the SPP and the Agrarians, were both disfranchised, which he attributed to their opposition to communism. Billy likewise sent the State Department a report from a Slovak-American in the U.S. Army who warned that the situation in Slovakia was gearing toward communist domination, “disguised as democracy.” After a response from Riddleberger claiming that the situation in Czechoslovakia was favorable, Billy provided counter reports from other sources in Slovakia, highlighting aspects of Soviet influence and hostility toward Catholics. Billy stated his doubt that free elections would occur without American support. After intervention by Senator Mead, Riddleberger agreed to meet with Billy and his colleague, George Varga. At this meeting, Billy focused on restrictions on freedom of the press and religious freedom in Slovakia, and expressed his fear of an imminent Soviet takeover.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ “Steinhardt to SoS,” F#: 860F.00/1-3146. “Analysis of the outcome of the Czechoslovak Election of May 26, 1946,” 29 May 1946, F#: 860F.00/5-2946, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Post Election Statistics and Analysis,” 4 June 1946, F#: 860F.00/6-446, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Comments on Department’s Report OCL-4178,” 31 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-3146, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Situation in Slovakia,” 25 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-2547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “New Developments,” F#: 860F.00/2-2147. “Influence of the Non-Communist Parties in Czechoslovak Political Life,” 13 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

³⁴⁹ “Hrobak to Truman,” F#: 860F.01/7-645, “Hrobak to Guffey,” F#: 860F.01/6-1245, “Hrobak to Myers,” F#: 860F.01/6-1245. “Dubosh to Byrnes,” F#: 860F.00/8-2145. “Joseph G. Prusa to Byrnes,” 21 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-2145, *DoS CS 1945-49*. To both requests, the Department of State refused. “Harris to Prusa,” 11 Sep

After the elections, American Slovak pessimism still did not abate, although the election results became a rhetorical weapon the Slovak-Americans used with regularity. Hrobak praised the Slovak vote—"surrounded by a sea of communism, they still voted against it"—but complained that they were not allowed to vote for "what they wanted," only against the Communists. He also expected communist retribution, for "they have voted against communism, yet they are forced under the rule of a synthetic political state that has gone communistic." A letter from the SLA Chicago branch to their senator, Scott Lucas, worried that despite voting for a "Christian Democracy," in reality "a communistic regime, with the aid of a subservient minority, actually rule Slovakia." It appealed for Washington to help against Communist domination by linking U.S. aid and loans to "greater justice for the Slovak (*Catholic*) majority," and greater press and religious freedom. A letter to Truman, Congress, and the United Nations from a combined group of Slovak-American organizations called for American support for a Slovak plebiscite, in the name of natural rights, the Slovak support for American values and anti-communism in the 1946 elections, and in the name of peace and protection from the communist threat. The ban of Slovak-American papers in Czechoslovakia in late 1946 became the prime symbol for Slovak-American nationalists of the fallacy of Czechoslovak democracy. A letter to Truman from the FCSLU, for example, cited the issue as evidence that "confirms our contention that there is no true democracy and liberty for the Slovaks in the renewed Czecho-Slovak Republic," and pleaded for Washington to respond by refusing to receive Czechoslovak officials in the U.S. and by cutting off exports to Czechoslovakia.³⁵⁰

1945, F#: 860F.00/8-2145, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Leverich to Dubosh," F#: 860F.00/8-2145. "Billy to Mead," 5 Dec 1945, No File #. "Billy to Riddleberger," 1 Feb 1946, F#: 860F.00/2-146, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Billy to Mead," 5 Dec 1945, No File #, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "MoC: Conditions in Slovakia, Florian Billy, George Varga, F James W. Riddleberger, M. W. Jarabek," 11 Feb 1946, F#: 860F.00/2-1146, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

³⁵⁰ "Slovak or Czechoslovak" *SD*, 1, 1, (Nov-Dec 1946), 2-5. "Hrobak to Byrnes," 26 June 1946, F#: 860F.00/6-2646, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Anna Merkovsky to Truman, 21 Nov 1946," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. "Ray J. Madden to Byrnes," 2 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-246, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Mary T. Norton to Truman," 4

The White House responded to a few of these letters, noting that it was “considering” the issue. As more letters came in, however, the White House established the habit of simply forwarding them to the State Department for response. The Department’s formulaic replies continued, noting that any such action would be “interfering” in the internal affairs of a friendly state. The Department’s response to the election results likewise proved non-reassuring. It noted that despite the Communist victory in Czechia, the non-communist parties still had “influence” and highlighted the DP success as a sign that the Slovak-Americans concerns about Slovakia were unfounded. Concerning the banned papers, the Department trotted out the excuse that Prague had justifiably banned the specific U.S.-based papers for being “subversive,” and that it was “unclear” whether press restrictions would be a reoccurring trend. In his meeting with Billy, Riddleberger agreed to accept further information, but otherwise just brushed off the Slovak-American leader, assuring him there was little concern about a democracy failing in Czechoslovakia. As Slovak Americans began to criticize Washington in response to these unsatisfying replies, the State Department’s counter was to push an image of Slovak guilt for complicity with Germany. Even the visit of DP head Jozef Lettrich in November 1946 did not spur a reaction. The White House contacted the State Department on the matter, and Riddleberger convinced it to deny a proposed visit, since it did not offer one to Jan Masaryk.³⁵¹

Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-446, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Homer Ferguson to Byrnes,” 26 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-2646, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Emil Duris to Marshall,” 23 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “SLA Assembly #30 to Scott W. Lucas,” 26 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-3047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “An Appeal to the President and Congress of the United States and the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of Slovakia,” *NSS*, B:168, F: SLA, IHRC. “Apel na Prezidenta a Kongress Spojených Štátov a na zástupcov Spojených Národov,” & “Appeal to the United Nations,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI.

³⁵¹ “Vaughan to Zeman, date unk,” & “Connelly to Zeman, 4 Aug 1945,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “Dean Acheson to Madden,” 9 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-246, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Acheson to Norton,” 12 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-446, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Byrnes to Ferguson,” 2 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/12-2646, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Harold C. Vedeler to Duris,” 5 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Acheson to Lucas,” 11 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-3047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “MoC: Conditions,” F#: 860F.00/2-1146. “Riddleburger to Stanley Woodward, 4 Dec 1946,” & “Connelly to Kane, 4 Dec 1946,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT.

Conclusion

When examining the post-war order, the Slovak-Americans were on the one hand unrealistic in their expectations. Any notions of Slovak independence were little more than a pipe dream, stained by the negative image of the wartime Slovak Republic. Washington was not going to change its position on the recreation of Czechoslovakia. This reality continued to frustrate Slovak-American autonomists, as the proven ability of the Slovaks to sustain their own state became a point of pride, unfairly dismissed by many due to the republic's unavoidable linkage to Nazi Germany. The SLA was aware of this reality, as shown by its initial willingness to cooperate with the SNC, but the deep wounds caused by the breakup of the state made unity difficult. Prague likewise made sure that the influence of Slovak-American nationalists did not move into Czechoslovakia as it had after World War I, and the Slovak-Americans thus remained largely isolated from the state. This exclusion encouraged them to become even firmer in support of an independent Slovakia. They found willing partners among the Slovak exiles.

Where the Slovak-Americans were clearly ahead of Washington, however, was in relation to the communist threat. They interpreted events quite effectively as precursors to a communist takeover of the state, whereas Washington was willing to overlook such actions because of the wartime experiences or downplayed them due to its trust in Beneš. Nevertheless, the specter of the Cold War earned the Slovaks more favorable attention than in prior periods. The Slovak Democratic Party received ample interest from the American Embassy, while the Slovak-Americans gained support from many elected officials in Congress. Between the Slovak-Americans, the Embassy, and these congressional officials, the higher-level staff in Washington had plenty of motivation to show a greater consideration to events in Slovakia and react to them. Nevertheless, to the extent it showed any interest at all, it dismissed Slovak considerations either

negatively, linked to the former Slovak state, or when positively, simply through the lens of its relationship with Prague. The Slovaks in America ultimately faced the same frustration of many others from Central and Eastern Europe concerning the United States' treatment of the region. Washington treated Nazi totalitarianism as something to be defeated to total victory and for the liberation of the region, but it acquiesced to Soviet totalitarianism in the region, even at the peak of the Cold War. This failure to pay attention to the Slovaks contributed to an inability for Washington to shape events in its favor in post-war Czechoslovakia.

Chapter 8

The United States and the Communist Coup in Slovakia

After the elections of 1946, the Slovak Question once again became a point of contention when ratification of the new Czechoslovak constitution came to a standstill over the question of Slovak autonomy. Likewise, the failure of the Slovak Communist Party led the Czech Communists to perceive Slovakia as an immediate threat and to use Slovakia as the testing grounds for its eventual putsch to take control of the entire state. The communists targeted the Slovak Democrats, using the Slovak Question as a weapon to try to splinter the Catholics and Lutherans from within the DP, to divide the Czech and Slovak non-communists, and to justify police action against DP members. Many Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic reached out to Washington to expose this reality and to encourage action in Slovakia's defense. Czech-Slovak divisions though continued to fester, most notably during the trial of former Slovak President

Jozef Tiso, which led Washington once again to dismiss Slovak appeals. When the Czech and Slovak communists organized a campaign to destroy the DP in 1947, Washington overlooked this action and did not react. The result was a successful undermining of anti-Communist political strength in Slovakia, which set the stage for the ultimate communist coup in February 1948. A lack of recognition of the Slovak Question, thus, abetted an inadequate American policy that facilitated the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, and much like before World War II, neglected a possible outcome more favorable to both Czechoslovakia and the United States.

Washington and the Slovak Question following the 1946 Czechoslovak Elections

The months immediately following the elections marked a period of sorting through Czech-Slovak relations. Although the CPS had previously allied with the DP on questions of Slovak autonomy, it made an about face as the CPCS consolidated the CPS due to the latter's electoral failure. The DP's electoral victory thus had the consequence of leaving it standing alone in the fight for Slovak autonomy. The immediate result was the Third Prague Agreement, which Prague forced on the DP by threatening to exclude it from the government. While the DP had a two-to-one lead in representation in electoral bodies, Prague appointed Slovak Communists throughout administrative positions in Slovakia, including the chair of the SBC, which Prague assigned to Gustav Husák. The DP, however, continued to fight, holding up ratification of the Czechoslovak constitution to maintain as much autonomy within the document as possible. Ultimately, the Slovak Question increased the alienation of the DP, as the Czech non-Marxists parties hesitated to form an anti-Communist alliance due to disagreement on the issue.³⁵²

³⁵² Felak, *After Hitler*, 68-85. Jelinek, *Lust*, 95-100. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 171-173. Kirschbaum, *History*, 229-231. Barnovský, "Slovak Question, 1945-1948," 229-246. Krystufek, *Soviet Regime*, 19-21.

The American embassy staff clearly noted this shift back towards Prague centralism. For example, John Bruins highlighted a speech by Beneš that reduced decentralization simply to regional administration, and then later speeches where the Czech President criticized Slovak autonomy as leading toward an unsustainable separation between the two nations. Beneš reaffirmed his sentiment in an interview with American officials. He criticized Slovak Catholics for not showing adequate support for the state and he scorned the idea of Prague giving up authority over Slovakia. The embassy also reported how Gottwald, the federal Prime Minister following the elections, made regular attacks against Slovak autonomy. Steinhardt and Bruins also both reported on the institutional changes to reestablish Prague Centralism, which Bruins labeled an “outright attack” to deny the DP the fruits of its victory. Bruins also reported Prague’s willingness to use force, or even Soviet intervention, against excessive autonomist sentiment.

Bruins and Yost nonetheless highlighted the DP’s effort to hold firm on the Slovak Question, and provided views from Slovak politicians criticizing Beneš’s stance. Bruins reported statements from Lettrich defending autonomy and denying its link to separatism, as well as from Andrej Cvinček, head of Catholic wing of the DP, stating, “Slovak Catholics, after the bitter experiences from the last Republic, know very well that the days are past when they let some individuals or opponent parties use them as instruments for their purposes.” Bruins openly acknowledged the DP position and challenged the attacks by Prague against the DP’s plan for autonomy. Bruins asserted that the DP was “well led and courageous,” and was not backing down against an unrepentant pressure from Prague, despite communist control over the means of institutional violence and support from the Soviet Union. Although he recognized how its firmness on Slovak autonomy kept the DP isolated, and how internecine divisions bubbled up within the party, Bruins nonetheless credited the leadership with holding the party together. Yost

likewise attended two conferences on the Slovak Question and expressed favorable views about the sentiments he heard there. He praised DP proposals, which he believed were consistent with an American style federalist system, based on a separation of powers between branches of government. Yost argued that Czech claims of the Slovaks threatening the state were false, exemplifying texts outlining the DP's position. The head of information and cultural affairs at the embassy, William Kugeman, likewise appealed for more support from Washington, and he even encouraged Washington to reach out to the Slovak-Americans for this support. He noted that "regardless of the more publicized activities of certain of their organizations," they would prove very useful in linking the U.S. to Slovakia. Kugeman also petitioned for a larger American presence in Slovakia, stating that Washington was neglecting an area "that shows tendencies towards autonomy and where quite different attitudes and feeling prevail." He pushed for the establishment of an American cultural institute and an information office in Bratislava, and he noted that the SNC offered to donate a building for this purpose and pay for its renovations.³⁵³

Once again, this sentiment did not spread to Washington, which continued to prioritize Slovak acquiescence to Prague. The State Department's policy guide on Czechoslovakia stated as a goal to "encourage and sustain those moderate Czech and Slovak elements which continue to be sympathetic to American democracy and Western orientation." It presented the Slovaks in

³⁵³ "Competence of Czechoslovak Constituent National Assmebly," 24 April 1946, F#: 860F.00/4-2446, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Post-election Developments," 7 June 1946, F#: 860F.00/6-746, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bruins to SoS, no. 1000," 7 June 1946, F#: 860F.00/6-746, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Readjustment of Constitutional Status of Slovak Legislative and Executive Organs," 2 July 1946, F#: 860F.00/7-246, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Transmitting Address of President Beneš in Brno," 12 July 1946, F#: 860F.00/7-1246, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bruins to SoS, no 141," 14 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-1447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Influence," F#: 860F.00/3-1347. "Bruins to SoS, no. 150," 19 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-1947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "New Developments," F#: 860F.00/2-2147. "Czech-Slovak Relations," 4 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bruins to SoS, no. A-140," 11 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. 413," 4 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Slovak Democrats Answer," 6 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. 519," 9 July 1947, F#: 860F.00/7-947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "The New Constitution and Czech-Slovak Relations," 13 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.011/8-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Slovak Democrat Constitutional Views," 26 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.011/8-2647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Report by William Kugeman, 26 Jan 1946," "Supplement to our Report 'Other Government Information and Cultural Activities,' 23 May 1946," & "Kugeman to Bruins, 23 May 1946," *Papers of Charles Hulten (CH Papers)*, B: 8, F: Monthly Reports - Czechoslovakia, HT.

a generally respectful tone, and even accepted Slovak independent identity. “Expressions of U.S. interest in Czechoslovak internal unity should never forget to show our recognition of the differences between Czech and Slovak cultures yet strongly imply that such differences need not impair internal unity.” It, however, criticized Slovak autonomy. The writer gave credit to Prague for allowing an autonomous Slovakia, but complained that the SNC had “exploited” this gesture, and “the Council’s interpretation of state autonomy has frequently impaired the work of the national Government in Prague.” The guide blamed this result on Catholic influence, complaining that the DP had “been compromised by being the receptacle of surviving Hlinka (collaborationist) elements,” and it asserted that Slovak autonomy aided the Soviet Union. It recommended that U.S. policy should “do what is possible, short of intervention in Czechoslovak domestic affairs, to help maintain internal Czech-Slovak unity.” The writer’s solution was for the Slovaks to give in to centralism completely, in order to coax the Czech non-communists into creating a united front. An intelligence brief on the Slovak Question from early 1947 offered a similar view. It criticized Catholic influence as stirring up tensions, attributing their support for autonomy to the memory of the Slovak state: “for many Slovaks this period was a happier and more profitable one than that of the Czechoslovak Republic. Their vote in part reflects a desire to return to these conditions.” The writer, though, also applied the usual stereotypes. He claimed, “The Slovaks, who in general have little political education, often take their cues on political matters from the pulpit.” The report complemented Prague’s effort to wean away Slovak autonomy, reporting that Prague strongly supported centralization because “it distrusts the political elements that might get the upper hand in Slovakia if the Democratic Party were to be given a free hand there.” The writer felt that industrializing Slovakia and removing social inequality there would change this situation, but expressed a need for an immediate solution.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ “Czechoslovakia Regional Issues Guide,” *CH Papers*, B: 8, F: Program Planning Board -

The Tiso Trial

Czech-Slovak tensions reached their peak during the trial and execution of former Slovak Republic President, Jozef Tiso, from December 1946 to March 1947. In a purge of the wartime past, the Czechoslovak government held a series of trials through 1946 and 1947 against Czech and Slovak leaders connected to the wartime states. While this process generally proceeded with limited controversy, Tiso's trial proved to be a different case. While the trial might have prioritized issues such as political oppression and the treatment of the Jews, state officials instead made Slovak separation from the Czechs the emphasis of their condemnation of Tiso. Beneš made this sentiment clear: "Tiso and his companions at the same time deliberately committed base treason, infamously stabbing their own nation in the back. There are matters of law, and principles of political morality, which must not be sacrificed at any price... For us, one such legal right and principle was, and is, our unified national State." By staging the trial as retribution for Tiso's perceived treason against the Czechoslovak Republic, Czech nationalists strived for vengeance and hoped to use the event to quash Slovak nationalism. This approach had the opposite effect. Many Slovak Catholics perceived the trial as an attack on the Slovak right to self-determination—an image exacerbated after Prague gave Czech collaborators lighter sentences—and protested against it. Tiso's sympathizers perceived the former President as having led an honest attempt to protect the Slovaks, whatever his other failings as a leader, and felt his decision to declare independence was justified given threat posed by Nazi Germany. There was also sharp sentiment against executing a Catholic priest. The DP supported the trial, but representing Slovak Catholics, it ultimately pressed for moderation on Tiso's treatment. It

Czechoslovakia, HT. "Domestic and Foreign Politics of Czechoslovakia since the Liberation, 22 April 1947," *O.S.S., Part V*.

first questioned the fairness of the trial after the appointment of Communist Igor Daxner as presiding judge, a former political rival of Tiso with dubious claims to impartiality, and appealed for a replacement. It then hoped to convince presiding officials to give Tiso life in prison over the death penalty. Both of these appeals failed. The state convicted Tiso on April 15 and executed him three days later. The conflict over the trial, nonetheless spurred the most tenuous point in Czech-Slovak relations since the breakup of the state.³⁵⁵

The Tiso trial also became the most heated transatlantic issue involving the Slovaks. Several former Slovak leaders voluntarily turned themselves over to the United States in May 1945, and Tiso did likewise after American officials discovered him at a Benedictine convent in Kremsmünster, Austria. These Slovak officials turned themselves in expecting the United States to treat them fairly and hoping to remain in American custody and jurisdiction. Tiso later claimed that American officials promised him at the time that they did not regard him as a war criminal in the ordinary meaning of the term, and would treat him accordingly. On the other hand, Prague pressured Washington for the immediate turnover of the former Slovak leaders. Czechoslovak ambassador Vladimir Hurban made the appeal based on the Slovak state's affiliation to Nazi Germany: "To characterize their treasonable actions, it is sufficient to recall their collusion with Hitler, resulting in the proclamation of an 'Independent Slovak State', and as such had declared war on the United States and its allies."

Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew initially informed Hurban that he needed to coordinate with the U.S. Army on the matter. When Grew followed through, American military

³⁵⁵ At the same time, the trial commission convicted Ďurčanský in absentia and sentenced him to execution, although it gave Mach, a much more malignant figure, a lighter sentence for testifying against Tiso. Edvard Beneš, *Memoirs of Dr. Edvard Beneš: From Munich to New War and New Victory*, trans. Godfrey Lias (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954), 58-59. Felak, *After Hitler*, 86-124. Bradley Abrams, "The Politics of Retribution. The Trial of Josef Tiso in the Czechoslovak Environment," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath*, eds. Istvan Deak, et al (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 262-279. Ward, *Priest*, 257-267. Kirschbaum, *History*, 229-230. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 168-170.

leaders were hesitant in their response. They considered whether Tiso and the other Slovak leaders would receive fair treatment if turned over to Prague. State Department liaison to the U.S. Army Robert D. Murphy expressed the Army's desire to delay handover until "questions of principle," were sorted out between the 'big three' Allied governments. Murphy later noted that none of the requested figures was "wanted by the U.S. in connection with war crimes," and that the Army was disposed toward delivering them to Prague upon confirmation from Secretary of State James Byrnes. Byrnes wrote to military officials stating firm support for the handover, but remarked that Washington was still working to convince the British, who wanted the handover delayed until Prague provided "*prima facie* evidence" against the Slovak leaders. British officials told Washington that they were "anxious to avoid releasing any person who might be persecuted because his political views did not correspond with those of party in power in any given eastern European government." The State Department believed otherwise. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson made clear that Washington did not share British concerns and supported an immediate handover of the former Slovak leaders. Prague continued to pester American officials on the issue, frustrated by the delays. The allied leaders eventually came to an agreement, and the U.S. Army transferred custody of the Slovak leaders to Prague in October 1945.³⁵⁶

The outcry over the trial also spread to the United States. The moderate nationalists, such as the National Slovak Society, having not approved of the Slovak state, supported the trial even

³⁵⁶ "Surrender," in *Slovakia: Political*, 243. Jozef Tiso, *Dr. Jozef Tiso o Sebe* (Passaic, NJ: Slovensky' Katoli'cky Sokol, 1952), 116-118. "Hurban to SoS," 18 June 1945, F#: 860F.00/6-1845, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Grew to Hurban," 18 June 1945, F#: 860F.00/6-1845, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Hurban to SoS (2nd)," 18 June 1945, F#: 860F.00/6-1845, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Robert D. Murphy to SoS, no 120," 7 July 1945, F#: 860F.00/7-745, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Robert D. Murphy to SoS, no 384," 27 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-2745, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Byrnes to Murphy," 29 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-2945, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Dean Acheson to Hurban," 30 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-3045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Hurban to SoS," 30 Aug 1945, F#: 860F.00/8-3045, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Byrnes to Chauncey W. Reed," 31 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-2345, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant)," Sep 11, 1945, "Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State," 26 Sep 1945, & "Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant)," 4 Oct 1945, in *FRUS*, 1945, V4 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 527-530. Ward, *Priest*, 258-259.

though they continued to criticize Czech treatment of the Slovaks. A left-wing Slovak-American group also wrote to the State Department demanding the handover of the Slovak leaders. It insisted that Prague would provide fair trials, and if Washington failed to deliver the officials, America would “become partners in crime with the former puppet rulers.” The general American press was also hostile toward Tiso. *Time*, for example, condemned “the fat, bullet-headed, Josef Tiso,” as having “successively sold out the Slovaks to the Austrians and Hungarians, and then helped sell out the Czechoslovak Republic to the Nazis.”³⁵⁷

The volume of such sentiments nonetheless paled in comparison to those in support of Tiso trying to change American policy. A statement by the Bishop of Trenton that Slovak-American Catholics had “an intense feeling on this particular situation” proved a stark understatement. SLA President Jurchak called to arms on the matter, presenting Tiso as a victim of circumstance and decrying that Tiso’s trial was not in accordance with the standards set by Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson for the Nuremberg trials. Jurchak encouraged Slovak-Americans to appeal en masse to officials on both sides of the Atlantic on the matter, and the Slovak-American Catholics responded in force. They deluged the State Department, their congressional representatives, and President Truman with correspondence petitioning for U.S. intervention on the matter. There remain over 100 letters in White House and State Department files, from Slovak-American leaders, local and national organizations, and from individuals from across the United States and Canada, although the SLA claimed that the Slovak-Americans sent more than 20,000 letters overall. Their appeals were rooted directly in the Slovak Question, as

³⁵⁷ Willo, *Souvenir*, in: *B: NSS*, SI. “Robert Crosser to DoS,” 16 Oct 1945, F#: 860F.00/10-1645, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Journeyman Traitor,” *Time*, 48, 25, Dec 16, 1946, 39.

they perceived the affair as an unjust puppet trial arranged to punish Tiso as a symbol of Slovak national self-determination and anti-communism.³⁵⁸

The appeals took several different tracts. Many presented Tiso as a national hero, having ‘saved’ Slovakia in the face of impossible circumstances. They argued of the legality of the Slovak Republic, and placed the blame on Prague for the breakup of the state. They claimed that Tiso had tried to limit German influence and deliberately avoided war on the United States. The Youngstown, Ohio branch of the Slovak Catholic Sokol, for example, claimed Tiso had done “his utmost to avoid bloodshed and prosecution of the Slovak people.” A detailed plea by the SLA branch in Webster, Massachusetts stated that Tiso was “not a war criminal but a true leader,” who did his best to spare Slovak independence, and had regularly “sidestepped German plans,” despite being under threat of German persecution. It blamed the Munich pact for the Czech-Slovak split, referenced the wide European recognition of the Slovak state, and defended that the Slovak Republic had never officially declared war on the western Allies. Other appeals emphasized the unfairness of the trial, and tried to delegitimize it as an attack on the Slovaks and part of a plan for communist subversion in Czechoslovakia. In a piece targeting Beneš, Hrobak presented the trial as a farce for Beneš to extract his revenge and to scapegoat the Slovaks for the breakup of the state. A Catholic veteran’s organization from Scranton, Pennsylvania argued that saving Tiso was not an action solely for saving one man, but for “destroying communistic activities in this country as well as abroad.” Several letters repeated the argument that the trial violated parameters established by Judge Jackson at Nuremburg for the trials of war criminals.

³⁵⁸ “General Letter from Jurchak on the Tiso Trial, 16 Dec 1946,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. Joseph Paučo, “Under Dynamic Leadership,” in *Sixty*, 112-116.

Others complained that Washington had handed Tiso over to Prague, while holding other leaders, such as Victor Emanuel and Miklós Horthy, under United Nations protection.³⁵⁹

Jurchak, however, provided the most thorough defense of Tiso. The SLA president produced a political pamphlet that he labeled a means to set the record straight on Tiso against an ill-informed and hostile American press. He detailed evidence of the unfairness of the trial, citing a stacked jury, the assigning of Daxner as presiding judge, the denial of Tiso of his own lawyer, and the confiscation of a fundraising effort to support Tiso's defense. The majority of the piece, however, focused on showing the justness of Slovak national self-determination in order to present Tiso as acting in defense of this principle and not on behalf of Nazi ideology. After detailing the past treatment of the Slovaks, Jurchak positioned Tiso as a supporter of the Czechoslovakia state and condemned Prague for forcing Tiso's turn to independence. Jurchak claimed that the Slovaks only gave into Hitler's demands in order to nullify the threats against them. Jurchak argued that Beneš ran away, abandoning his people, whereas Tiso instead stood with his and cut the best deal possible, and he praised how Slovakia made clear cultural, economic, and political advancement during that time. Jurchak likewise argued that Slovak leaders based the Slovak Republic's constitution on Christian principles, not fascism, and that the Slovak declaration of war on the United States was a lie. He also tried to argue that Tiso attempted to mitigate anti-Semitic programs pushed by Germany. Jurchak then linked the issue to the budding Cold War, remarking that the decision to give communist control over Eastern

³⁵⁹ "Billy to Dwight D. Eisenhower," 29 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "SLA Lodge 190 to Marshall," 23 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Augustine B. Kelly to Marshall" 21 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "John Navak to Truman, 14 Mar 47," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. "SKS Branch 159 to Truman, 9 Mar 1947," "Rev John G. Hamrack to Truman, 21 Dec 1946," & "Rev Joseph L. Altany to Truman, 27 Jan 1947," *General File (GF)*, B: 2451, F: Tiso, Jozef, HT. Anthony, *Beneš*.

Europe “will be considered a much greater crime in the history of true democracy than the involuntary submission of Tiso to the ultimatum given to him by Hitler.”³⁶⁰

The Slovak exile organizations also came to Tiso’s defense. Prídavok, for example, remarked that the trial did not meet the standards of the civilized world, and was mostly just about putting the idea of Slovak independent identity on trial.³⁶¹ The SAC likewise sent a detailed legal brief to several American leaders, calling the trial a ruse to squash the Slovaks for resisting Czech and communist imperialism. After defending the legality of the Slovak state, the memorandum challenged the legitimacy of the trial, because the Slovaks themselves had not organized it, it did not pass the impartiality and objectivity tests, and it did not allow Tiso proper legal representation. The SAC condemned the trial as really about “the political concept of the independence of Slovakia.” It cited the Allied Agreement on War Criminals to argue that Washington should have held Tiso as a prisoner of war under its own jurisdiction, and requested American intervention on the matter.³⁶²

The Slovak-American Catholics hoped at first for American intervention to assure a fair trial. Once Washington handed over the former Slovak President, the SLA made an effort to get American representatives to oversee the trial to assure it fairness, and appealed for permission to send SLA representatives as observers. Once the trial began, they adopted a greater urgency and raised their appeals to direct U.S. intervention to stop the trial entirely. Hrobak, for example, requested that American officials interview Tiso to get his perspective and then intervene to establish a new trial under fair conditions. Many letters in turn presented inaction as a betrayal of

³⁶⁰ Peter P. Yurchak, *The Case of Dr. Tiso* (1947).

³⁶¹ “V Otázke Slovenského Štátu a Osoby Prezidenta Dr. Jozefa Tisu,” *B: Sidor*, SI. “Beneš, Daxner...Prezident dr. Tiso,” *B: SNCA*, SI.

³⁶² The Tiso trial also played into the feud between the SNCA and SAC, as both organizations tried to build support by positioning themselves as the heirs to Tiso, while trying to discredit the other as a fraud on the matter. “SAC to Truman,” 25 Feb 1947, & “Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to the United Nations in the Trial of Dr. Jozef Tiso,” F#: 860F.00/2-2545, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

American values. One such letter encouraged Truman to intervene so that “justice may prevail and men of all colors and creeds and nations may look to America as the standard bearer of freedom and justice for mankind.” Jurchak warned that standing on the sidelines “weakens the position of the United States and protracts the eventual success of democratic government in countries which are our most loyal allies.” After conclusion of the trial, the appeals shifted almost entirely for intervention to spare Tiso from the gallows. One Slovak-American pleaded that “a cablegram would no doubt save his life.” A petition from the SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania suggested, “a kind word or a diplomatic letter to the Czechoslovak government might spare the life of the leader of the Slovak people,” otherwise the Slovak Question might lead to war in the region. A final letter chastised Washington’s inaction, but begged Truman to make amends by standing up for Slovak national self-determination.³⁶³

The Slovak-American Catholics did gain a fair amount of support from outside of their own ranks. Monsignor Domenico Tardini at the Vatican questioned the fairness of the trial, given the national animosities involved, and worried that the U.S. turnover would be “terrible punishment” for the Slovak leader. Later, many other Catholic clergymen from across the U.S. responded in support of intervention. Bishop Thomas J. Toolen of Mobile, Alabama, for example, noted “his trial was a travesty of justice, his execution would be murder,” while Bishop Joseph E. McCarthy of Portland, Maine appealed to Truman’s “illustrious office and Christian understanding of fair play and justice” on the matter. Several congressional officials also forwarded appeals from Slovak-American groups, and requested for American action. The

³⁶³ “Dubosh to Sinko, 1 Aug 45,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. Anthony, *Beneš*. Yurchak, *Case*. “Kelly to Marshall,” F#: 860F.00/3-2147. “Dubosh to Byrnes,” 860F.00/8-2145. “Chauncey W. Reed to Byrnes,” 23 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-2346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Anthony and Ernestine Mano to Truman,” 21 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Duris to Marshall,” F#: 860F.00/1-2347. “SLA to Lucas,” F#: 860F.00/1-3047. “William A Griffin to Truman,” 11 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Hrobak to Marshall,” 5 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Andrew Fekety to Truman,” 10 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Altany to Truman, 27 Jan 1947,” “Hrobak to Truman, 5 Mar 1947,” “SKS to Truman, 9 Mar 1947,” “Isabel Erdlitz to Truman, 17 April 1947,” “Alojz Misik to Truman, 19 April 1947,” *GF*, B: 2451, F: Tiso, HT.

Slovak-American nationalists gained a strong supporter in Representative Philip Philbin from Massachusetts. Philbin urged the State Department to act in support of Tiso, for he saw U.S. acquiescence to the trial as a sign of weakness against communism. O’Konski presented materials in Congress that defended Tiso and condemned attempts to link Slovak nationalism to fascism as a trick by Beneš and the Communists to set the stage for a communist takeover of Czechoslovakia. Representative Ray J. Madden from Indiana, who became one of the most ardent supporters of the Slovaks in the late 1940s and 1950s, gave his own speech. He argued that Tiso was an “acclaimed a hero in the eyes of nearly all the people of Slovakia and the prevailing majority of Americans of Slovak ancestry.” He then presented the Tiso trial as part of a communist plot to take over Czechoslovakia, and bemoaned how the U.S. spent so much blood and treasure to save Europe, only to abandon it communism. Madden claimed, “The ways of the Communists are devious and it behooves us to understand more of the Slovakia situation...I ask the Members of Congress to join with me in protesting this unjust conviction by interceding with President Truman and Secretary Marshall to use their good offices to prevent this injustice.”³⁶⁴

This support did not spread to American foreign policy officials. After Florian Billy wrote to Dwight Eisenhower on the matter, the War Department responded noting that the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg had not interrogated Tiso, thus the former Slovak President was not under their jurisdiction, and that there was no record of the United States ever

³⁶⁴ “Tittman to SoS,” F#: 860F.00/7-945. “Tittman to SoS, No. 218,” 3 Nov 1945, F#: 860F.00/11-345, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Leverrett Saltonstall to Marshall,” 28 Jan 47, F#: 860F.00/1-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “John Thomas to Marshall,” 29 Jan 47, F#: 860F.00/1-2947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Philip Philbin to Acheson,” 28 Jan 47, F#: 860F.00/1-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Philbin to Marshall,” 3 Mar 47, F#: 860F.00/3-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Griffin to Truman,” F#: 860F.00/3-1147. “Bishop Thomas J. Toolen to Truman,” 13 Mar 47, F#: 860F.00/3-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Kelly to Marshall,” F#: 860F.00/3-2147. “Edwin Arthur Hall to Marshall,” 15 April 47, F#: 860F.00/4-1547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bishop Edmund F. Gibbons to Truman, 11 Mar 47,” “Frederick A. Muhlenberg to Truman, 11 Mar 47,” “Bishop Joseph E. McCarthy to Truman, 12 Mar 47,” “Bishop Charles D. White to Truman, 12 Mar 47,” “Bishop Eugene J. McGuinness to Truman, 13 Mar 47,” “Feighan to Truman, 16 April 1947,” *GF*, B: 2451, F: Tiso, HT. 93 *CR* A1496 (1947) Appendix - Extensions of Remarks. 93 *CR* 2928 (1947) House of Representatives - Monday, March 31, 1947. “Ray J. Madden to Truman, 16 April 1947,” *GF*, B: 2451, F: Tiso, HT.

holding Tiso. It did report, however, that the Chief Prosecutor for Bratislava would visit Nuremberg soon and would inform them on Tiso's status. The official then forwarded to Billy a copy of a *Time* article on the matter. Billy wrote back decrying the response an embarrassment. He bemoaned how little American officials knew about the issue and he added that it "nettles our ire and raises our blood pressure because of the fresh, smart-aleck, flippant manner in which a story is portrayed for public consumption." Billy then offered to provide them information at any time on the issue and provided an article describing the inequities of the trial. The War Department ultimately just forwarded all of Billy's subsequent letters to the State Department.

The White House, alternatively, passed all letters on to the State Department without response. The State Department responded to Dubosh's early request for observers as not possible because such observation would "constitute interference in Czechoslovak internal matters," and because the Department "has every reason to believe that the Czechoslovak judicial system will insure fair trials." To the later flurry of complaints, it presented the same stock letter. It asserted that it could not intervene due to its policy of leaving the judgment of all wartime leaders of United Nations countries to their country of origin. They had decided to return the Slovak leaders to Czechoslovakia and remained "unable to take further action." Later letters then included a final paragraph stating that Nazi designs had established the Slovak state and that it had declared war on the United States. The trial was thus justified, as the Slovak people and government as represented by the SNC desired its completion.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ "Billy to Eisenhower," F#: 860F.00/1-2947. "Daniel Noce to Billy," 7 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-747, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Billy to Noce," 24 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Noce to Billy," 14 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Leverich to Dubosh," F#: 860F.00/8-245. "DoS to Reed," 31 Dec 1946, F#: 860F.00/12-2346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Acheson to Lucas," F#: 860F.00/1-3047. "Acheson to Walter E. Huber," 6 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Francis T. Williamson to Billy," 8 Apr 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1447, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

Despite brushing off the Slovak-Americans, the State Department showed some degree of anxiety on the issue. In response to the ample Congressional interest, Dean Acheson showed diligence in proving the Slovak declaration of war against the United States and requested copies of Tuka's press communiqué and a letter from the Vatican condemning Tiso for "answering wide-spread criticism in the U.S. of the Tiso trial." Acheson also requested evidence proving the fairness of the trial, although he urged the American embassy in Prague to do so "without committing US to any policy or sending any observer to Bratislava." In the initial response, Bruins told Acheson that the Embassy felt the trial was fair. Bruins then noted that his sources claimed that Tiso had called for the war against the United States, but he admitted that the only evidence was Tuka's press announcement. Bruins asserted that the Slovak people, however, never took the declaration seriously. Steinhardt later sent a facsimile of the press report, admitting that no originals existed and the evidence shown at the trial was not verifiable. He also noted Tiso's claim that Tuka had made the declaration without his consent. Despite the obscure circumstances surrounding the declaration, convinced of Slovak guilt, U.S. policymakers adhered to the communiqué released by Tuka as evidence of a Slovak declaration of war.³⁶⁶

The Department of Central European Affairs also acquiesced to a meeting with leaders of several Slovak-American groups, arranged by Congressman Michael Kirwan of Ohio. Jurchak initially asked Kirwan to arrange a meeting with Truman, but when Kirwan made his request, the White House forwarded it to Acheson. Acheson recommended to the White House, "it would be inadvisable for the President to receive representatives of a group strongly sympathetic to the former Slovak Government," and provided them with a stock reply for Kirwan. Acheson

³⁶⁶ "Bruins to SoS, no. 240" 18 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, 304," 2 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-247, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Acheson to to US Embassy, Prague," 13 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Acheson to US Embassy, Prague," 18 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1847, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

nonetheless agreed to have the State Department receive them, due to “receiving an increasing number of Congressional inquiries concerning this matter.” Jurchak, Dubosh, and Lach attended the meeting representing the Slovak League, along with several other Slovak Catholic leaders.³⁶⁷ After arguing Tiso’s case, the Slovak-American leaders insisted that the Slovak people admired Tiso and pleaded for Secretary of State George Marshall and Truman to put pressure on Prague to reduce Tiso’s sentence to life in prison. State Department official J. D. Hickerson told them that he would pass on the message but reminded them of the “difficulties involved” in interfering in Czechoslovak affairs. This meeting was never a serious appraisal. Francis T. Williams of Central European Affairs provided a report in advance of the meeting that outlined how the Department would respond, which condemned Tiso as an anti-Semite and for declaring war on the United States, although it added, “The United States never took cognizance of the declaration of war...since the United States never recognized the Slovak State.” It told officials to insist that the trial was fair and “there is not the slightest doubt that Tiso is guilty of treason and collaboration with the Germans,” and to emphasize the success of the Slovak Democratic Party. More importantly, however, it condescended against the group specifically, labeling the SLA as “men who were closely associated with Tiso and other officials of the pro-German Slovak Government until the outbreak of war in 1941,” and then chided them as hypocrites “posing as a protector of the Slovak people against communist rule.” The Department seemed to accept the meeting only with the hope of mollifying some of the uproar over the trial. The meeting had the opposite effect. Jurchak expressed disappointment that the meeting had only spurred his fear that Washington was mistakenly aiding communism in Czechoslovakia, and wrote to Truman to

³⁶⁷ Joining the three SLA representatives were M. M. Tondra from the FCSLU, Frank Bobusch from the SCS, John Kridlo from the Pennsylvania Slovak Union, and Michael Vargovich from the FCSU.

complain how the State Department had brushed them off. He pleaded that theirs was a sincere efforts to get a personal hearing in the interest of “justice and of the cause of true democracy.”³⁶⁸

The embassy reports during the trial were neutral, focused on just detailing the result of the trial and short reports on the politics involved, including the debate over Tiso’s execution and the widespread protests across Slovakia. America’s emissary to the Vatican, Myron C. Taylor was the only diplomat to criticize the trial outright. He noted how many Slovaks still admired Tiso and he remarked that the trial failed to meet standards of judicial impartiality. He criticized Beneš for not sparing Tiso’s execution, which he bemoaned “left a deep wound in the soul of the Slovak people and blighted promising initiatives of friendly approach between Slovak and Czech Catholics,” to the benefit of “the enemies of the Church and of civilization.”³⁶⁹ In the lust for retribution against those who had collaborated with Nazi Germany, the U.S. government clearly supported the process and outcome of the Tiso trial, even though it faced much scrutiny from Slovak-Americans, Catholics, and several congressional officials. Nevertheless, after transferring the Slovak leaders to Prague, American foreign policy decision makers simply remained uninvolved. They seemed content to express support for the trial and let events play themselves into resolution. While this was the easy road, Washington neglected how the politics of the trial affected its interests. It failed to acknowledge how it ravaged Czech-Slovak relations and set the stage for the Communists to use the issue to begin undermining democracy in Slovakia. These

³⁶⁸ “Jurchak to Kirwan, 6 Mar 47,” “Kirwan to Connelly, 10 Mar 47,” “Connelly to Acheson, 11 Mar 47,” “Acheson to Connelly, 18 Mar 47,” “Connelly to Jurchak, 18 Mar 47,” & “Jurchak to Truman, 16 April 47,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “Memorandum of Conversation w/ Slovak-American Leaders, Trial of Dr. Tiso,” 26 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Williamson to Hickerson,” 24 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

³⁶⁹ “Bruins to SoS,” F#: 860F.00/3-1847. “Steinhardt to SoS,” F#: 860F.00/4-247. “Bruins to SoS, no 275,” 28 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, no a-197,” 28 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, no 322,” 3 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS,” 3 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Verdict in Tiso Trial,” 17 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-1747, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no. 394,” 18 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-1847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Supplemental Memoranda Regarding Religious and Political Situations in Albania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia,” *Confidential File (CF)*, B: 6, F: 7, HT.

were concerns that even a moderate attention to Slovak-American appeals would have revealed, but the State Department brushed them aside.

After Tiso's execution on April 18, 1947, the U.S. embassy nevertheless kept a close eye on its impact. Steinhardt initially provided Prague-centric reports, citing Czech sources, one that claimed a likely breakup of the DP, and another that claimed that the DP might use the event to purge Communist officeholders in Slovakia.³⁷⁰ After Bruins spent a few days in Bratislava to gauge the impact of the trial, the embassy changed its tune. Bruins reported how the execution had a "profound psychological effect on the bulk of the Slovak population" and spurred a further estrangement between the Slovaks and the Czechs. After a discussion with Fedor Hodža, he also reported claims that Prague was trying to use the issue to divide the DP and had hoped to use the issue to eliminate the party's veto power over the gridlocked constitution. Steinhardt later reported that despite the internal divisions caused by the trial, all parts of the DP realized the peril of disunity and its "able and adroit" leadership had plenty of time to resolve the issue. In a final report, Steinhardt noted DP criticisms of Beneš for letting the issue severely harm Slovak-Czech relations by ignoring the appeal for mercy. Taylor was the only official to express fear that the trial was a precursor to communist action in Slovakia. These considerations were, however, after the fact, and there is no indication Washington even considered them.³⁷¹

At one point during his two-day testimony during the trial, Tiso spoke out to the Slovak-Americans. He remarked how they were a genuine part of the Slovak nation with a right to have a say on its affairs, and he reflected on his visit there in 1937 and the positive impression it had

³⁷⁰ Considering that the Communists controlled the national government, and all police agencies, it is uncertain what compelled Steinhardt to believe this possibility.

³⁷¹ "Steinhardt to SoS, no 401" 21 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Reactions to Tiso's Execution," 25 April 1947, F#: 860F.00/4-2547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Slovak Democrat Party on Tiso's Execution," 8 May 1947, F#: 860F.00/5-847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. A-323," 13 May 1947, F#: 860F.00/5-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. A-410," 3 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Supplemental," *CF*, B: 6, F: 7, HT.

made upon him. He praised the Slovak-Americans for showing “so much strength, so much understanding, and so much heartfelt effort” to help Slovakia and he defended them against claims that they were not true Slovaks. Tiso also appealed to Wilsonianism, the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms, to argue that the Slovak nation would survive and continue to fight for its self-determination. On the other side of the Atlantic, Jurchak called the effort to spare Tiso from execution the most heartbreaking and difficult recent task for the Slovak-Americans. He commended all League members and he expressed his belief that they did what they could, given their resources, and managed to get many to consider contrary viewpoints. They simply could not compete with the sheer number of alternative presentations. Representative Melvin Price of Illinois likewise posted in the Congressional Records a series of articles sent to him by Slovak-American constituents after the execution. These accounts bemoaned Tiso’s execution as a national tragedy. “American Slovaks are filled with anxiety and grief, rather than surprise and shock, because they felt that they had reason to hope that our United States authorities could and would influence the Government of Prague, which tells us so much of its American-like democracy and United States style of freedoms.” It decried how Slovak autonomists are “guilty of no other ‘crime’ except ‘wanting to have their own independent Slovak state and government,” and hoped their fellow American citizens would one day recognize their efforts.³⁷²

The debate over Tiso continued well past his execution, with many Catholic Nationalists in the United States continuing to fight on behalf of the view that Tiso was an honest patriot who did what he could for the Slovak people in their fight for self-determination. A copy of Tiso’s testimony quickly spread among Slovak-Americans after his execution, and the Slovak-Americans later published another version for distribution. Slovak-American Catholic nationalist

³⁷² Tiso, *Tiso o Sebe*, 17-19, 102-103, 157, 329-330. “The Tiso Trial,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. 93 CR A2115-6 (1947) Appendix - Extensions of Remarks. Hrobak, “50 Years,” 10-18.

publications likewise placed him next to Hlinka in public reverence. They perceived Tiso as an exemplar of the Slovak Nation and Slovak Catholicism. They, however, downplayed the undemocratic organization of the Slovak State and its role in the holocaust, which they perceived as forced upon the Republic by Germany.³⁷³ Ultimately, the Slovak-American support for Tiso was well meant. The Slovak-American nationalists had been shot down in their aspirations so many times, they needed something to aspire to and the Slovak state offered a symbol of the Slovaks ability to run their own affairs in the face of long-standing stereotypes of Slovak backwardness. They saw Tiso from afar, cut off by the war from the uglier realities of the Slovak state. Their own memory of the Slovak President personally was from his visit to the United States in 1937, the Jubilee Celebration in 1938, and their correspondence in the early foundation of the Republic, as well as the reflections of Slovak exiles who were involved with the state. The Slovak-American nationalists broadly did not condone the Slovak Republic's treatment of the Jews nor its alliance with Hitler, but they excused these elements as a tragedy put in place by Hitler's dominance. They saw what was right in Tiso's battles for Slovak autonomy, and downplayed the rest, similarly to the way many Americans still revere George Washington and Thomas Jefferson despite their having been slave-owners. While their view many not have been historically accurate and downplayed atrocities, it is nonetheless understandable.

Communist Action against the Slovaks

In late 1947, the situation in Slovakia took a turn for the worse, with a Communist campaign to marginalize the Democratic Party. Despite losing the elections convincingly, the

³⁷³ Jozef Tiso, *Die Wahrheit über die Slowakei: Verteidigungsrede gehalten a 17. Und 18. März 1947 vor dem „National“ – Gericht in Bratislava*, ed. Jon Sekera (Bibliothek des „Tiso tovarištvo“, 1948). Tiso, *Tiso o Sebe*. “Tiso a Saint,” B: SLA, SI.

Slovak Communists maintained administrative power disproportionate to their popular support, particularly in the areas of internal security, propped up by the communist led central government. The Communist effort to overthrow the DP began immediately after the elections. The Communists applied a strategy to exploit the Slovak Question to sow discord within the DP, between Catholics and Lutherans, and to divide the Czech and Slovak non-communists. Stirring up conflict over the Tiso trial was a major part of this effort, but the direct campaign centered on the charging of DP officials of 'anti-state activities.' The Czech and Slovak communists thus concocted accusations by linking DP party officials to the wartime state and by claiming that the DP was cooperating with Slovak exiles to subvert the Republic. After a year of pressing the issue, the Communist controlled national Ministry of the Interior would 'discover' in late 1947 a number of claimed conspiratorial plots linked to DP leaders. Charging the accused of 'anti-state activities,' Communist leaders forced their resignation or arrest without real evidence. These targets included not just Slovak Catholics, but also Lutherans who had opposed the Slovak state, most notably Jan Ursíny, the highest-ranking Slovak in the national cabinet. Along with this purge, Communist Prime Minister Gottwald forced the resignation of the DP members of the Slovak Board of Commissioners and reconstituted it to eliminate the DP majority. While these attacks did not destroy the DP, it ceased to have any relevant function afterwards. This action served as a testing ground for the later communist coup. The communists destroyed the most ardent anti-communist base in Czechoslovakia, honed their methods, and gauged the anti-communist response. During the communist campaign, the DP received little tangible support from Beneš and the non-Communist Czech parties, who, eager to weaken Slovak autonomist sentiment, accepted the legitimacy of these charges. Although the DP later made mutual

advances of support with the Czech non-communists, these came too late once the Communists moved forward with their full-fledged coup in February 1948.³⁷⁴

Shortly after the elections, the American embassy began reporting the first communist attacks against the DP, but the reports assumed that these attacks were simply an attempt by the CPS to maintain influence. It was not until mid-1947 that the embassy began to show considerable interest in the topic. To its credit, the embassy uniformly recognized how the Slovak Question was at the center of communist designs. In several reports, Steinhardt acknowledged how the communists perceived the DP as the front line against them and designed to use the Slovak Question to divide the DP from Prague. He highlighted how the communists began using arguments for Prague centralism to justify the elimination of any remaining powers held by the DP and to create a wedge issue that discouraged the Czech non-communists from supporting the DP. Steinhardt noted the effectiveness of this approach, and he in turn criticized inability of the Czech and Slovak non-communists to work together, “foundered on the ubiquitous rocks of the Slovak autonomy issue.” The American ambassador feared “grave consequences” for Czechoslovak political life if they did not. He nonetheless expressed optimism that the Czech non-communists would eventually side with the DP.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Felak, *After Hitler*, 125-199. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 177-191. Jelinek, *Lust*, 98-105. Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's Role*, 212-217. Barnovský, “Slovak Question, 1945–1948,” 229-246. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 170-176. Kirschbaum, *History*, 229-231. Mikuš, *Slovakia*, 218-219. Kaplan, *Short*, 90-104.

³⁷⁵ “SoPE for the week Aug 28 to Sep 3, 1946,” 23 Sep 1946, F#: 860F.00/9-2346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, no. 69,” 24 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “New Developments,” F#: 860F.00/2-2147. “Ministry of Interior Attack on Slovak Democrats,” 13 June 1946, F#: 860F.00/6-1346, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Progress of the non-Communist Parties,” 16 May 1947, F#: 860F.00/5-1647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 589,” 28 May 1947, F#: 860F.00/5-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Changes in National Socialist Policy,” 24 July 1947, F#: 860F.00/7-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Growing Tension in Czech-Slovak Relations,” 29 May 1947, F#: 860F.00/5-2947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. The U.S. Embassy in Prague showed little interest in the Slovak exiles up until this point, but made several reports on their activities when the communists began using them to justify actions against the DP. See: “Steinhardt to SoS, no a-848,” F#: 860F.00/10-2747. “Steinhardt to SoS, no 1444,” 31 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-3147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Steinhardt to SoS, no a-906,” 21 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

Into the summer of 1947, the embassy nevertheless still downplayed the seriousness of these attacks. Bruins marked the Czech response to accused separatists positively, figuring that Prague only wanted to target individual radicals and was shifting away from direct attacks on the DP. After a meeting of the combined Slovak parties to address the Slovak Question in June 1947, Steinhardt felt contented that a lack of fireworks showed a Communist desire to focus on real subversion and that the Communists were not interested in destroying the DP. Steinhardt shortly thereafter expressed his belief that the issue was dying down thanks to efforts by Beneš to ease Czech-Slovak relations and he predicted future calm on the issue. Several officials also compared the environment to the recent communist coup in Hungary in order to show no need for concern. The relative quiet on the ground in Slovakia up to this point seemed to assuage the embassy staff, content with the idea that the general Slovak anti-communism and the handling of the accusations by the DP would continue to prevent successful Communist influence.³⁷⁶

During this time, Slovak officials nevertheless regularly requested American support because they feared an impending coup. The Slovaks maintained a very positive view of America, and the DP hoped to build a stronger American presence in Slovakia to help counter their isolation.³⁷⁷ When Yost visited Slovakia in June 1947, Lettrich asserted the DP's innocence in light of the communist attacks and petitioned for "the sympathy and understanding of the United States." Lettrich then expressed the "earnest hope" that the United States would open a consulate in Bratislava. The DP head noted that such a move "would have an important effect in demonstrating concretely the interest which (*the United States*) takes in Slovakia." Other leaders reaffirmed this fear of communist subversion, and Yost praised their mentality: "Their

³⁷⁶ "Steinhardt to SoS, no. 697," 13 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-1347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Purge of Hlinka-ists," 18 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-1847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 775," 24 June 1947, F#: 860F.00/6-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no. 519," 9 July 1947, F#: 860F.00/7-947, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

³⁷⁷ One symbolic representation of this positive view of America was the opening of Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hospital in Banská Bystrica. "Pamätník," *B: Slovenske Povstanie*, SI.

determination to maintain democratic liberties in the face of Communist attacks, their confidence that the vast majority of the Slovak people support them in this intention, and their admiration for the United States as the chief buttress of democratic liberties in the world.” The only exception was Husák, who simply affirmed the CPS efforts to root out separatists, but downplayed any targeting of the DP as a whole. Yost seemed to accept the urgency of the DP officials, but otherwise just noted the need for the non-communists in Czechoslovakia to unify.

When embassy Second Secretary George D. Bogdarus toured Slovakia in late July 1947, this sentiment became more urgent. The Vice-President of the SNC, Rudolf Frašťacký, expressed a need for urgency in opening the American consulate, and offered to try to expedite the process. He warned of a major communist offensive, against which the DP would need American support. In light of Prague’s recent rejection of the Marshall Plan, Frašťacký warned that Washington needed to double down on support, for “democracy definitely was in jeopardy and it was in the American interest, as well as in the Slovak interest, to do everything possible to safeguard Czechoslovak democracy.” He warned that until a consulate was established, American officials needed to maintain regular contact with DP leaders and visit Slovakia every couple of weeks.³⁷⁸ Slovak leaders also pushed for the creation of a stronger cultural relationship between Slovakia and the United States, including an American Institute for Slovakia and a joint U.S.-Slovak periodical for distribution in the two countries. They also asked for support in obtaining a printing press through German reparations. In a separate meeting, Husák once again expressed his sentiment that the Americans should have no fear of Slovak democracy. In response, Bogdarus just encouraged the Slovak leaders of the need for unity, quoting Ben Franklin about “hanging together,” lest they hang separately. The Slovak leaders responded that they had

³⁷⁸ Frašťacký also appealed that a consulate could expedite compensation of American property owners in Slovakia for property taken by Prague’s nationalization programs.

regularly appealed for cooperation, and had gained support from Czech Catholics, but complained that Beneš and the National Socialist Party were holding out support due to the Slovak Question. Bogdarus only otherwise affirmed support for a stronger cultural relationship. He noted the delivery of a printing press through reparations was unlikely, but offered help in arranging the purchase of one from America. In response to these appeals, Steinhardt petitioned Washington for the opening of a Slovak consulate, “in view of the degree of autonomy exercised by the Slovaks, special character of Slovak problems, and strategic location of Bratislava.” He noted, “Not only would consulate general Bratislava provide most useful observation post at this juncture, but I am convinced that our failure to respond to repeated requests by principle Slovak officials may come to be interpreted by Slovaks generally as indicating lack of interest by the U.S. in their fate.” The State Department followed through, but not until November after the outset of the coup against the DP.³⁷⁹

By the fall, some of the embassy staff began to report on events with urgency. Yost reported on the communist demand to purge all officials linked to the SPP from government positions, and noted that DP officials were highly concerned that the Communists would soon use their control of the police and armed forces to eliminate their party. While Yost noted that this sentiment might be an overreaction, the liquidation of the DP did seem the likely goal. Yost promised to get more information while attending the third anniversary celebration of the Slovak Uprising, where the SNC named Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin honorary citizens.³⁸⁰ Yost concluded with a recommendation that Washington send a message of support to Lettrich. After the celebration, Yost reported that the Slovaks put more emphasis on Roosevelt than they did on

³⁷⁹ “Situation,” F#: 860F.00/6-2547. “Transmitting,” F#: 860F.00/8-147. Ullmann, *United States*, 21. “The Ambassador in Czechoslovakia (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State” 19 June 1947, in *FRUS*, 1947, V4 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 213-215.

³⁸⁰ While the Slovaks initially wanted to make the offer to a living American, they chose the former President as a ‘safer’ choice given the budding tensions with the Communists

Stalin. He informed Washington that the DP was holding firm against the accusations and were looking for the Czech non-communists to back them up, although the party still feared its survival. Yost noted that these attacks were not surprising given that Slovakia remained the only area in the region not under the Soviet thumb, and he then came to the DP's defense. "The crisis which is being created is wholly artificial and contrary to the wishes of the vast majority of the Slovak population, including very probably a considerable proportion of the Slovak communists." He defended the Slovak leaders as innocent of the accusations, and praised the DP as effectively "rolling with the punches" in response to the attacks. Washington surprisingly transferred Yost to Vienna in November of 1947, removing the official most interested and in support of the Slovaks. Yost later bemoaned this decision, noting that he had seen the situation in Slovakia for what it was, a precursor to the coup in Prague, and had tried to make it known to Washington before his transfer. The new Bratislava Vice Consul Claiborne Pell, in his first report upon arrival, marked the communist efforts a failure and unpopular with most Slovaks, although he noted that it did show communist power in Czechoslovakia. Husák likewise met with Pell and promised that the communists planned no other attacks.³⁸¹

Contrarily, Steinhardt downplayed the events from Prague. The American ambassador reflected a mixed view of the Slovak Democrats, positive so long as he sensed cooperation with the Czech non-communists, but willing to place blame on the DP over divisions spurred by the Slovak Question. In one report, he criticized the DP as "weak in organization and leadership," feeling that "only staunch support by the Czech non-communist parties can in the last analysis save them." After talking with Czech non-communist leaders, Steinhardt reported that internal

³⁸¹ "Yost to SoS, no 1119," 22 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-2247, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Yost to SoS, no 683," 28 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-2847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Situation in Slovakia," 3 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Yost to SoS, no a-728," 16 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-1647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Demonstration in Bratislava," 24 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Charles W. Yost, *History and Memory* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 225-226.

tensions were relaxing and that the attacks on the Slovaks were not a precursor for a larger purge. He also implied that the charges had some merit. On the same day, Steinhardt then had to turn around and reported on the purge of Ursíny. Steinhardt praised non-communist unity against this action, although he criticized the DP's official statement as ineffective. Steinhardt's conclusion, nevertheless, was to blame the victim. He condemned the Slovak Democrats for allowing the communists to take advantage of them through "corruption, ineptitude." Afterwards, Steinhardt concluded that the action was not a fatal blow to the DP, and the purge was to its benefit. He remarked, "The general impression in Slovakia shared by Czechoslovakia anti-Communist leaders and this Embassy (*is*) that Democratic Party in Slovakia has been badly in need of a housecleaning for a long time." After noting that 60 to 70% of the Slovaks remained ardently anti-communist, he remarked that once the disposed officials were replaced, "If they are courageous Democrats who do not bear the taint of their predecessors, consequences to party may even be good in the long run." Despite sharp warnings from Slovak sources that this action was a precursor to a full-fledged coup, Steinhardt largely dismissed the actions as nothing greater than posturing by the communists before the elections. He then reported that the restructuring of the SBC "might or might not be significant," and he ultimately concluded that the result was a "severe setback" for the Communists because they did not consolidate complete control.³⁸²

A report from Pell in late November revealed that optimism had disappeared. The American Consul declared the event as a clear communist victory, and he noted large numbers of arrests in Slovakia and the building of political concentration camps against increasing public

³⁸² Yost later criticized Steinhardt for misreading events in Slovakia. Yost, *History*, 225-226. "Steinhardt to SoS," 19 June 1947, in *FRUS*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 687," 31 July 1947, F#: 860F.00/7-3147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no a-742," 23 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-2347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 1342," 6 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 793," 6 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-647, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Slovak Democrat Rebuttle," 8 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 1451," 3 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 1347," 8 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, 1444m" 31 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-3147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, a-906," 19 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-1947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Ullmann, *United States*, 110-119.

protest. He soon expected a full Communist takeover in Slovakia and an expanded anti-American campaign. Reportage on Slovakia dried up in the months following. Pell continued to emphasize the high levels of anti-communism among Slovak Catholics and he noted Communist efforts to suppress this sentiment. Bruins chimed in not long before the coup and presented the “cleaning house” of Catholic influence from the DP as a mixed bag. Bruins noted that the DP was now immune to communist accusations and more amenable to the Czech non-communists, although it was internally weaker. He made no connection to a larger threat.³⁸³

The Slovak-Americans and Communist Action in Slovakia

In their religiosity and faith in American democracy, the Slovak-American nationalists feared the communist threat to Slovakia well before World War II ended. According to historian Jozef Paučo, the SLA sent over 40,000 letters in the post-war period warning against the communist threat over Slovakia, and Jurchak visited Washington D.C. on eight occasions to lobby personally on the issue. By 1947, their appeals for support became more about Slovak anti-communism than about Slovak autonomy. Many of these efforts focused on exposing communist ill-treatment. Hrobak produced a collection of articles from Slovak-American and general publications that provided first-hand accounts of communist tactics, from the domination of key ministries, to restrictions on political and social freedoms, and atrocities committed by the Red Army. Another Slovak-American wrote to her congressional representative, Robert Nodar of New York, describing how the Communists had arrested her nephew as a political prisoner. When the communist action against the DP took off, the Slovak-Americans thus tried to draw attention to it. In one letter, Jurchak compared the coup against the DP to those in the rest of

³⁸³ “Steinhardt to SoS, a-927,” 24 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, a-939,” 25 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-2547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, a-983,” 9 Dec 1947, F#: 860F.00/12-947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Bruins to SoS, a-48,” 14 Jan 1948, F#: 860F.00/1-1448, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

Central Europe, and the SLA in turn sent a letter to various press outlets that linked ill-treatment of the Slovaks to communist domination in Europe. In an act of retribution for the SLA's wartime experience, the SLA also attempted to link this effort to Slovak Marxist organizations in the United States, such as Slovak Worker's Society and the American Slav Congress, both of which were under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee.³⁸⁴

These appeals in turn worked to show the Slovaks as diametrically opposed to communism and in favor of an American style system of government and society. The FCSU, for example, sent a memorandum to Truman and Congress warning "the change from one totalitarian master for another, whose ideology is no less foreign to the liberty-loving people of Slovakia, brings no liberation. Slovakia's age-old tradition and deep sense of individual freedom is at present subject to a new and most tragic experiment, that of imposing communism under the pretext of 'liberation' on a people who abhor and despise it." Billy praised Slovak religiosity and support for Christian democracy, whereas Jurchak claimed, "90 percent of the Slovak people are Christians who believe in the ideals for which America stands and for which our people gave thousands of lives in the recent war." Slovak historian Heinrich Bartek, in turn, praised the Slovaks as "a progressive and democratic minded people, are an ideal representative of all the small nations in central and eastern Europe".³⁸⁵

Many of these appeals also emphasized the linkages between the Slovak Question and communist action in Slovakia. Hrobak's collection put heavy emphasis on the ill-treatment of Slovak Catholics as a dual effort to weaken Slovak nationalism and anti-communism in kind.

³⁸⁴ Paučo, "Under," in *Sixty*, 112-116. "Emma Appelt to Robert Nodar, Jr.," 23 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-1047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia, Victim*. "SLA to 'Our American Neighbors,'" *NRC*, 302, B316F2, HIA. "Slovaks Fighting Communism," *B: SLA*, SI. "Podkriavcy to Kocur, 5 Nov 1945," *PF: Podkriavcy*, SI.

³⁸⁵ "Appeal to the President and the Congress of the United States of America," in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia*, 53-56. "Billy to Noce," F#: 860F.00/2-2447. "Jurchak to Truman," 8 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Prusa to Truman," 11 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-1147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Jurchak to Truman," 19 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-1947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Anna Kolena to Truman, 30 Oct 1947," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. Heinrich Bartek, "The Significance of Small Nations," trans. A.V. Pir, in *B: Heinrich Bartek, historian*, SI.

Journalist Winifred N. Hadsel, in an article in the *Slovak Review*, likewise provided a historical summary of events in Slovakia since the end of the war to show how the submission of the Slovak autonomy went hand in hand with the growth of communism and how the Communists were using it as a weapon to justify their actions. Journalist Stephen Palickar in turn condemned Beneš's "devil's bargain" with the Soviet Union for bringing this action against the Slovaks, and the SLA pamphlet on the issue posed Beneš collaboration with the communists as motivated by the Czech President's desire for retribution and domination over the Slovaks. The League also linked the past efforts to smear it as a fascist organization as a deliberate part of this campaign.³⁸⁶

Slovak-American nationalists thus fully embraced the Cold War. They declared it the duty of every American to stand up against communism, and they pressured Washington to intervene in Slovakia in the name of anti-communism. In its 1946 political manifesto, the SLA asserted, "As loyal Americans, as true Slovaks, and as Christians too, it is our sacred duty to fight communism no matter where it appears, except perhaps in Moscow, if they want it there, let them keep it there." A later call to arms then declared that only an all-out American offensive could hold communist domination at bay, and at a Slovak-American conference in Washington D.C. in late 1947, Jurchak declared, "the time has arrived for a formal demand upon the President and the State Department for its recognition of Soviet Domination in Slovakia." A flurry of letters met this challenge. Hrobak remarked on the urgency of intervention, noting, "It will be to the eternal shame of all truly democratic systems, if our statesmen and government continue to believe that they have truly liberated nations and abolished war for all time by saving them from the tyranny of Nazism and simultaneously thrusting them to the 'tender mercies' of a

³⁸⁶ Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia, Victim*. Winifred N. Hadsel, "Czechoslovakia's Road to Socialism," *Slovak Review*, 1, 3 (Spring-Summer 1947), 22-28. "Billy to Noce," F#: 860F.00/2-2447. "Slovakia vs. Communism Called Crucial Issue, 20 May 1944," & "Peace Finds Slovakia under a New Tyranny, 20 Sep 1945," in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 129-133. "Slovaks Fighting Communism," B: *SLA*, SI.

communist dictatorship.” Jurchak and Prusa each asked Truman to protest publically against the liquidation of the DP. Jurchak noted that a lack of action would make future liberation more costly and give the Slovak people no hope. “The moral value of the protest of the United States against the subjugation of Europe by the Soviet Union is more important than any material aid sent by this country. This sustains the spirit of the people of Europe without which all is lost.” Andrew Pir chided that America should feel ashamed for having “lacked the vision and the courage to defend helpless peoples from the Red avalanche.”³⁸⁷

The Slovaks in exile also supported this lobbying campaign. Osuský condemned Prague as “employing the most severe and even cruel means to reduce the Slovaks to submission to the Communist Government,” and warned that Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic were beginning to link the terms “Czech” and “Communist” as the same. Ďurčanský and the SAC also pursued a widespread effort to warn about communism in Europe, producing numerous pamphlets sent to American officials. One such publication stated that Moscow had given Slovakia back to Czechs as a reward for its subservience. A letter to Truman likewise claimed, “Czecho-Slovakia is the most dangerous satellite of Moscow as her representatives, with Mr. Beneš at the head, succeeded in presenting themselves as democrats. But in reality the Czechs copped brutal Nazi methods and became the most servile supporters of Soviet expansion in Europe.” Other SAC pamphlets attempted to show how the Slovaks were being mistreated, such as through deportations, forced migration of Slovaks to Czechia, the destruction and nationalization of the Slovak economy, political internment camps, and attacks on religious and press freedoms. “With communistic help Mr. Beneš oppresses the Slovaks because they resist Communism and the

³⁸⁷ “Slovaks Fighting Communism,” *B: SLA*, SI. “Yurchak to SLA Executive Committee, 10 Dec 1947,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. “Intro,” in Hrobak, *Czechoslovakia, Victim*, 3-5. “Beres to Marshall,” F#: 860F.00/7-2547. “Hrobak to Marshall,” 9 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-947, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Jurchak to Truman,” F#: 860F.00/11-847. “Prusa to Truman,” F#: 860F.00/11-1147. “Jurchak to Truman,” F#: 860F.00/11-1947. Bartek, “Significance.” Šprinc, “Slovak League,” 89-103.

Czech imperialist policy.” Ďurčanský continued to push the idea of a Central European federation as a means of promoting national cooperation, protecting small states, and joint defense against the Soviet Union. While he asserted that the Slovaks would continue to fight for survival, he conceded their need for support. “Our enemy is organizing all the forces of evil all over the world in order to try to deal a last blow to the Christian order and freedom of the civilized West and to impose his atheistic, materialistic, and oppressive way of life upon all the peoples.” The SAC encouraged the U.S. Senate to block any treaties not recognizing Slovak self-determination and asked Washington to extend the Truman Doctrine to Slovakia.³⁸⁸

The Communist Coup

In February 1948, the communists set in motion the final coup to submit the whole of Czechoslovakia to communist rule. On February 25, Beneš accepted the resignations of the three primary non-Marxist parties from the federal government, including the Slovak Democrats, who protested Communist strong-arm tactics. While the non-communists expected Beneš’s support to keep them in office, the Communists instead forced their expulsion from the country. In Bratislava, the Communists expelled the DP from the government, calling for the arrest of the DP leaders as they fled the country. Beneš did not resign until June 7, when Gottwald replaced him as president. The degree to which Moscow guided the coup is unclear, but the approach and

³⁸⁸ “The Line-up,” *ŠO Papers*, B:41, F:6, HIA. While Washington did not heed Osuský’s warning, American officials did coordinate with Osuský to broadcast over Voice of America. “Charles W. Thayer to Osuský, 26 Nov 1947,” *ŠO Papers*, B:30, F:27, HIA. Slovak Liberation Committee, *Independence*. “SAC to Truman, 10 April 47,” “SAC to Truman, 29 April 47,” & “SAC to Truman, 27 Nov 47,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “Ďurčanský to Truman,” 21 Jan 1947, F#: 860F.00/1-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Petition of the SAC to Trygve Lie,” 25 Feb 1947, F#: 860F.00/2-2547, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Petition of the SAC to the Senate of the United States of America,” 17 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1747, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Petition of the SAC to Harry Truman,” 17 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-1747, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “SAC to Truman,” 23 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-2347, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Proposal to the UN Security Council for the Creation of a Central European Federation,” 24 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/9-2447, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “SAC to Connelly & Bohlen,” 1 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Open Letter from the SAC to the Representatives of the Members of the United Nations,” 30 Oct 1947, F#: 860F.00/10-3047, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “SAC to Marshall,” 12 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-1247, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

resulting structure was similar to the preceding coups throughout Eastern Europe. Moreover, the prompt response in Moscow suggested that it clearly had advanced knowledge of the event.³⁸⁹

It is perplexing in retrospect how so many American officials failed to take heed of what events in Slovakia meant for Czechoslovakia as a whole. They had already seen the preceding communist crackdown in the rest of East Central Europe and had become quite knowledgeable of communist methods. While Yost recognized the warning signs before his transfer, other U.S. embassy officials still seemed optimistic for Czechoslovak democracy. In his reports of his travels in Europe in 1947, historian Thomas Bailey recollected with befuddlement Steinhardt's belief that Czechoslovakia would not turn communist, and Steinhardt's dismissal of the events in Slovakia certainly supports this perspective. Steinhardt was not an exception, however, as Bruins also presented the Slovak case as an isolated one, and even justified the claims against the DP somewhat. In one report, he noted how the Communist campaign against the DP proved that the communists would use every tactic short of force to destroy the opposition. Yet in the same report, he called Gottwald a "responsible" communist. He later reported on 'alleged' police suppression against the DP in which he noted that DP politicians were afraid to be seen speaking to American officials, right after noting how the DP purge was beneficial to the party. Even by late January 1948, Bruins criticized Fedor Hodža, after a meeting with the DP leader, as overly pessimistic about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Bruins only noted that he expected the Communists to attempt divide and conquer techniques in advance of the next elections.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Bradley, *Politics*, 27-38. Felak, *After Hitler*, 194-199. Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 181-191. Mikuš, *Slovakia*, 219-223. Myant, *Socialism*, 200-218. Donal O'Sullivan, *Stalin's 'Cordon Sanitaire': Die sowjetische Osteuropapolitik und die Reaktionen des Westens 1939-1949* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003), Wettig, *Stalin*, 152-153. Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's*, 122-123. Kaplan, *Short March*, 148-188. Krystufek, *Soviet Regime*, 43-52.

³⁹⁰ Yost, *History*, 225-226. Thomas A. Bailey, *The Marshall Plan Summer: An Eyewitness Report on Europe and the Russians in 1947* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 171-174. "Communist Techniques to Gain Voters in Czechoslovakia," 9 Jan 1948, F#: 860F.00/1-948, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bruins to SoS, a-48," F#: 860F.00/1-1448. "Alleged Gestapo Measures by Slovak Police," 19 Jan 1948, F#: 860F.00/1-1948, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Bruins to SoS, no 85," 29 Jan 1948, F#: 860F.00/1-2948, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

This complete lack of consideration, however, did not just extend to American embassy officials. Czech nationalist presentations to the West certainly perpetuated much of these mentalities. They argued that the actions against the DP were justified as part of a need to purge all former autonomist elements and they condemned the DP for allowing their participation. These publications also castigated Slovak Catholicism and Slovak nationalism as undermining the security and unity of the state, and as standing in the way of a unified Czechoslovak democracy. Ripka, who remained a key source for Washington, for example, chided the Slovaks for not giving up on autonomy in order to gain Czech nationalist support. He recounted, "All these parties were defending the traditional doctrine of national unity, and it was only grudgingly that they had to recognize the doctrine of two independent nations." The Slovak refusal to do so, according to Ripka, thus abetted the communist takeover. The general English language press often gave support to these views. An article in the Chicago *Sun Times*, for example, appealed for the need for Prague to act against the DP, because "The Czechs are a politically sophisticated people...the Slovaks are for the most part feudal-minded peasants accustomed for a thousand years to passive acceptance of an inferior status." A few journalists did recognize the actions in Slovakia as the precursor for the formal coup, such as a *Time* report that recognized "the Slovakian Democratic Party was the biggest singly stumbling block to absolute Communist power in Czechoslovakia." Such articles were the exception, though, rather than the rule.³⁹¹

Where the embassy provided a mixed message, the higher levels of the U.S. government showed little interest in Slovakia. In response to Slovak-American appeals, The Department of

³⁹¹ Josef Kudiček, "The Slovak Problem," *CEO*, 24, 12 (June 27, 1947), 177-178. Hubert Ripka, *Czechoslovakia Enslaved: The Story of the Communist Coup d'Etat* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1950), 27-29, 48, 106-112, 179-180. "Slovak Plot," *New York Times*. "Sun Times Report on Czechoslovakia," 2 Sep 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-2747, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "The Mixture as Before," *Time*, 50, 14, Oct 6, 1947, 35. An article by British journalist Robert Bruce Lockhart also recognized the significance of the Slovaks, although after the fact. Robert Bruce Lockhart, "The Czechoslovak Revolution" *Foreign Affairs*, 26, 4 (July 1948), 632-644.

State stuck to its vapid response that it could not interfere in a friendly country. In response to claims about political imprisonment, it responded that such cases “were not widespread and did not affect the great majority of the Czechoslovak people or intelligentsia.” After appeals from the Czechoslovak embassy in Washington, Central European Affairs advised its officials to stop responding to any letters that came from Slovak-Americans “which have acrimoniously criticized the present Czechoslovak government and president.” When communist action in Slovakia reached its apex, the Department only relayed that the U.S. Embassy had “protested gross misrepresentations of United States policies.” Upon the request of assistant Secretary of Labor John T. Kmetz, who had been communicating with Jurchak, Secretary of Labor Lewis Schwellenbach appealed to the White House to arrange a meeting with SLA officials before the 1948 coup and made a second appeal after the White House declined the initial request. This effort eventually bore fruit, but not until May 24, well after the coup had already ended.³⁹²

By the time of the February 1948 coup, Secretary of State Marshall made clear that the U.S. had already given up on Czechoslovakia. The coup had simply “crystallize(d) and confirm(ed)” the preconceived communist domination there. He expressed more worry about the overthrow bolstering communists in Western Europe. In consorting with its allies, the French gave a flaccid response, although they would later threaten sanctions, while the British openly acknowledged that the West proved “impotent” on the matter and felt that any action without hard support would only exacerbate the image of weakness. With the Czech side now subverted, Steinhardt suddenly became interested in an active response, in contrast to his almost ambivalent

³⁹² “Acheson to Kelly,” 21 Mar 1947, F#: 860F.00/3-2147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Internal Memo: E. Braunstein,” 1 Aug 1947, F#: 860F.00/8-147, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “DoS to Jurchak,” 26 Nov 1947, F#: 860F.00/11-847, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Connelly to Lewis Schwellenbach, 3 Feb 1948,” & “RLK to Connelly, 5 Feb 1948,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. Kmetz was himself of Slovak background, and Slovak-American organizations had petitioned actively, albeit unsuccessfully, for his appointment as Secretary of Labor. “John Crzma to Truman, 27 Oct 1947,” & “William Ulicny to Truman, 13 Nov 1947,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT.

response to the attacks against the DP. After the coup, he encouraged Marshall to make a statement to embolden underground movements, and he asserted that Washington should act in their support in order to show strength. He presented claims of Czech pro-Western sentiment to affirm his belief that American diplomatic assertiveness might be able to stop the coup. Washington responded with only a weak joint U.S.-British-French statement of disappointment about the turn of events, and Marshall otherwise suggested a minimal active response, primarily limited to using Voice of America. A follow up report by Charles Bohlen summarized Washington's sentiment that no possible response existed to change the situation, and it otherwise just suggested letting Czechoslovak Ambassador Juraj Slávik announce his resignation on Voice of America to condemn the coup. Shortly after, Washington also attempted to bolster democratic forces with a 25 million dollar credit, but by then it was too late.³⁹³

On March 7, 1948, the embassy sent a report stating that the Slovak Democratic Party no longer existed. When Steinhardt provided his final report on the coup, he paid little attention to Slovakia and said nothing of the events targeting the DP in 1947. He focused mostly on the Czechs, whom he praised as pro-American. His only particular consideration of the Slovaks was to praise the DP members on the SBC for standing up to the communists and refusing to abandon their offices. "Commissioner for Agriculture, Styx, a powerful man with a large Moustache and Bushy eyebrows, not only informed Husák that he refused to leave his position, but he physically ejected the Communist from his office." He then reported that the police raided DP headquarters. This report ultimately served as a microcosm of Washington's treatment of the Slovak Question

³⁹³ "Marshall to US Embassy, Paris," 24 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2448, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bonbright to SoS, no 1015," 25 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Douglas to SoS," 25 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Steinhardt to SoS, no 216, parts 1 & 2," 28 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2648, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Marshall to US Embassy, Praha," 26 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2648, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Bonbright to SoS, 1027" 25 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Office Memorandum from Charles E. Bohlen," 29 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2948, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Lukes, *Edge*, 183-202. Ullmann, *United States*, 146-157.

following the war. It was willing to express praise and support so long as the Slovaks aligned with the interests of Prague, but it was otherwise content with inaction.³⁹⁴

Conclusion

Slovak-American nationalists writing to the U.S. government clearly had an opinion as to who was to blame for the events in Slovakia. Beneš, the “Rasputin of Democracy,” had “bluffed the western countries that he is their friend and on the other hand sold Czechoslovakia to Stalin.” Beneš in turn “should be sent to Siberia—where he exiled thousands of good democratic Slovaks.” An SLA pamphlet clarified that they saw the Czech President “as the victim of his own machinations who without their consent, helped pace the conquest of Slovakia by the Communists for his own ends.” Another poked the finger at Washington for having “overlooked that the real democratic element in Slovakia not Bohemia overwhelmingly voted for democracy...because they were overshadowed by trick politics played by Beneš who tried to hide his Communist dealings.” Washington responded to these letters with just a copy of its joint statement on the coup. The perceived direct linkage between the Slovak Question and the communist takeover in Slovakia quickly normalized in the minds of Slovak-American nationalists. Stephen Palickar effectively summarized this mentality: “Victims of aggression, the Slovaks have been deserted and left to struggle unaided. Their unconquerable ideal, however, will enable them to thrive under the martyrdom of persecution remembering, meanwhile, the tyranny of Edward Beneš and his communist comrades for the destruction of Slovak liberty and the dastardly murder of Slovak leaders who sought freedom for their country.”³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ “Steinhardt to SoS, no 206,” 7 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-748, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “The Czechoslovak Revolution of 1948,” 12 Mar 1948, F#:860F.00/3-1248, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

³⁹⁵ “Slovaks Fighting Communism,” *B: SLA*, SI. “Louis Misik to Marshall,” 25 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/2-2548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Frank Balada to President Truman,” 5 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-548, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

The Slovak exiles also chimed in, posturing for influence. Osuský wrote to Truman, remarking on how Beneš had sworn in a “communist totalitarian government,” that was now openly hostile to the West. Osuský then condemned communism and expressed his firm conviction that the Czechs and Slovak people stood with the United States in the Cold War. The SAC wrote two letters to Truman that accused Beneš of playing the victim in order to hide how he had set up pro-Soviet policy in the first place to achieve his return to power, and how the Czechs essentially forced communism on themselves, without outside aid. It argued that an independent Slovakia, even if ultimately vanquished, would have put up more resistance than Czechoslovakia did, and it appealed for the United States to stand with the Slovaks against communism. Pridavok wrote Marshall shortly thereafter chiding that Beneš had a history of misleading the world into accepting his unsustainable vision, one that abetted Hitler’s control of the region and then Stalin’s.

Our voice, a voice shouting in the wilderness—in the wilderness of shortsightedness, expediency and unfaithfulness towards solemnly proclaimed ideals—though it could not be silenced, went unheeded and, until yesterday, Beneš was able to pose in the West as a paragon of a democrat and gentleman. Today the mask has fallen and the whole world can see in his hideous nakedness this greatest of all traitors of modern history.

Pridavok declared that a new order in Central Europe was necessary once communism was overthrown, and the best option would be a “United States of Central Europe.”³⁹⁶

After keeping its faith in Beneš since World War I, the American image of the Czech leader declined after 1948. American officials interested in the situation, such as Steinhardt and Kennan, showed no hesitancy toward criticizing Beneš’ handling of the situation. The histories

“Harold C. Vedeler to Misik,” 25 Feb 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Leonard R. Cowles to Balada,” 5 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. Palickar, *Slovakia*, 7-33.

³⁹⁶ “Osuský to Truman, 28 Feb 1948,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “SAC to Truman,” 4 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-448, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Statement on the Recent Events in Czechoslovakia,” 5 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Memorandum from the Slovak National Council in London to George C. Marshall,” 10 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-1048, *DoS CS 1945-49*.

concerning Washington's relations toward Prague are largely critical of American passivity, and they have been particularly unkind to Steinhardt. While they have praised Steinhardt's general temperament, they largely question his qualifications. Bailey, for example, criticized the American ambassador's "rather naïve view that Czechoslovakia was a free nation." Historian Walter Ullman noted Steinhardt's qualities as a businessman, but added that "one might question the wisdom of the State Department's decision to accredit him to a government which quite clearly had embarked on the road to socialism," noting Steinhardt's embroidered optimism and "addiction to platitudinous generalizations." Historian Igor Lukes' recent work on the topic likewise shows Steinhardt as more absorbed with his personal dealings in America than his work in Prague and Lukes criticizes Washington for not having held its ambassador accountable.³⁹⁷

At the policy-making levels, Washington seemed to acquiesce early on to a communist Czechoslovakia. This sentiment began with its liberation. With General Patton's Third Army advancing into western Czechia well ahead of the Red Army advance from the east, Winston Churchill encouraged Truman to beat the Soviets to Prague, seeing that it "might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries." The State Department's Central European desk supported the British Prime Minister on this position. Undersecretary Joseph C. Grew advised Truman "The success or failure of cooperation in Prague will have a profound effect on our entire position in Central Europe, which would be immeasurably strengthened by our occupation of Prague." Nevertheless, the American military leadership, including Eisenhower and Marshall, did not deem it a worthy enough risk, and convinced Truman to reject this possibility. As the Cold War developed, internal shifts toward communism in Czechoslovakia further eroded American interest. Government

³⁹⁷ "Revolution," F#: 860F.00/3-1248. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: Little Brown, 1972), 254-255. Bailey, *Marshall Plan*, 171-174. Ullmann, *United States*, 19-20. Lukes, *Edge*, 11-12.

nationalization of private property, Czech foreign policy support for the Soviet Union, anti-Americanism in the Czech press, and then the Communist victory in the 1946 elections led American officials to concede Prague to the communist sphere. For example, after seeing the Czech communists clapping during a Soviet tirade against the United States at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, Secretary of State Byrnes took it as an insult and rescinded a previously granted loan. Byrnes reflected that he then assured Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk that “we wished to be friendly with Czechoslovakia and we did not want to offend them further by giving them handouts.” When Juraj Slávik replaced Valdimir Hurban as Czechoslovak ambassador to the United States, Truman put off receiving him, passing the matter to Chief of Central European Affairs James Riddleberger. Prague’s rejection of the Marshall Plan in 1947, compelled by Moscow after Prague had initially accepted, then led Washington to detach itself from offering further support. Washington’s weak or dismissive response affirms how it felt adequate in sacrificing Central and Eastern Europe for the benefit of Western Europe. George Kennan, for example, was explicit in his view that the coup was a symbol of *successful* U.S. policy and Soviet desperation. The NSC58 report likewise summarized this sentiment, stating that the countries of East Central Europe were “of secondary importance on the European scene.”³⁹⁸

Ultimately, the blame for Czechoslovakia’s fall to communism lies with the non-communists in Prague. Nonetheless, the decision by the United States to trust Beneš’s leadership, despite Beneš’s long failings on the nationality questions and his naïve belief that he could cut an

³⁹⁸ “Churchill to Truman (No, 24),” April 30, 1945, & “Truman to Churchill (No, 21)” May 1, 1945, in *Defending the West: The Truman-Churchill Correspondence, 1945-1960*, ed. G.W. Sand (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 48, 52. “Grew to Truman, 4 May 1945,” *SF*, HT. Yost, *History*, 95, 97, 107, 225-226. James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 143. “Steinhardt to Jan Masaryk, 13 May 46,” *JS Papers*, B:44, F:2, HIA. Kennan, *Memoirs*, 378-379. “NSC58: United States Policy Toward the Soviet Satellite States in Eastern Europe, 14 Sep 1949,” in *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950*, eds. Thomas H. Etzold & John Lewis Gaddis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 212. Lukes, *Edge*, 162-182. Ullmann, *United States*, 52, 74-86, 137, 168. Wettig, *Stalin*, 45-46. O’Sullivan, *Stalin’s*, 172-174. Lundestad, *Non-Policy*, 159-163. Zeman & Klimek, *Life*, 260-282.

honest deal with the communists, abetted this result. American officials put too much faith in vague perceptions of ‘Czech democracy’ as an assurance that events would turn out amicably in Czechoslovakia, and they were seemingly not willing to sacrifice anything to keep Czechoslovakia out of the Soviet sphere. Once again, Washington missed opportunities available through the Slovaks. Washington expressed little but ambivalence for a people predominantly pro-American, pro-democracy, and pushing for American support. Where Washington considered the Slovaks, it was only to the extent they were falling in line behind Beneš and Czech nationalists. One might overlook this failure had Washington lacked information. Yet there were multiple sources giving ample warning. The diplomats who visited Slovakia and considered Slovak points of view, such as Yost and Pell, reflected a cogent understanding of the events there and their broader significance. The Slovak-Americans likewise continued to provide a source of information and support, but the foreign policy establishment dismissed them as uninformed or tainted. Although the support of congressional officials gave the Slovak-Americans added voice, it did nothing to change policy.

This raises the question as to whether the United States could have encouraged a different outcome. Many scholars have pointed out Western limitations in East Central Europe, as Stalin clearly intended to assure favorable regimes in those countries liberated by him. U.S. officials were certainly justified in wanting to avoid a possible confrontation with the Soviet Union through over-aggression. By the time of the 1948 coup, it was certainly too late for the U.S. to respond forcefully without sparking a major confrontation. There have been numerous observers of the Cold War, however, who felt the United States might have fostered a different result. These views largely center on Washington’s decision not to move deeper into Czech territory in the final stages of liberation. Steinhardt, Czech journalist Jozef Josten, and British journalist

Robert Bruce Lockhart all made this argument shortly after the coup. OWI head Elmer Davis chimed in that while the coup, which he blamed on Beneš and his policies, might have occurred anyway, it would have been at least worth a try. Charles Yost was also clear in his belief that Washington missed an opportunity. He argued, “The war was won, but with more attention to political goals, it might have been better and more durably won.” Yost believe that Stalin probably would have accepted a neutral Central Europe if pressured, but the United States waited too long to negotiate, only after the Red Army had made it deep into the region.³⁹⁹

Several figures though believed that America could have still prevented the communist takeover had it showed more effort. When discussing the Prague Spring in 1968, Undersecretary of State Eugene V. Rostow expressed his belief that firm diplomatic action might have prevented the 1948 coup. Yost claimed that the willingness of the United States to acquiesce Czechoslovakia without a strong backing to the non-Communists led most there to give in to their fate as Soviet victims. “The Communists succeeded so easily not because they were strong but because their opponents were weak... (*Moscow*) would not necessarily have prevailed had the democrats been united and strongly led and had they been firmly supported by the West.” Ullman likewise asserted, “The fact remains that nothing definite had been decided about the ultimate fate of the country...the United States may well be charged with not having even attempted to play an important part in Czechoslovakia’s affairs.” Historians of Soviet strategy in the Cold War likewise note how Stalin viewed Czechoslovakia as much less important compared to countries such as Poland, and would not have risked war over it, but took advantage of the absence of American pressure there. Czech Historian John Lukacs, for example, argued in a letter to Kennan that the United States might have limited Soviet influence in Central Europe,

³⁹⁹ Yost attributed this failure to excessive worry by Washington not to repeat the post-World War I environment. Lockhart, “Czechoslovak,” 632-644. Elmer Davis, *Two Minutes Till Midnight*, 1st ed., (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1955), 116. Yost, *History*, 95, 97, 107, 225-226.

attributing the failure to an “old American tendency to not consider geography seriously enough.” Washington failed to consider, “that Bulgaria or Romania or prewar eastern Poland were one thing, while Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia were another.”⁴⁰⁰

Had the United States followed Churchill’s desire to move in before the Soviets in the closing phases of the war, events might have proceeded much differently. America also certainly could have asserted a much stronger response when communist pressure tested anti-communist limits leading up to the February 1948 coup. Washington would have certainly faced tensions, but it did not avoid tensions anyway and ended up sacrificing Czechoslovakia consequently. While it would certainly be overly optimistic to say that Czechoslovakia, given its location and capabilities, would have been become a staunch U.S. ally, it is probably not too far to speculate that Czechoslovakia, if managed properly, could have become another Austria, a neutral state that voluntarily developed westward. The United States could have deemed such an outcome a success and saved at least one more Central European state from communist tyranny.

Had Washington shown more interest, the Slovaks might have played a key role in realizing such a goal.⁴⁰¹ Based on the election results, communism was clearly not a viable option for most Slovaks. Nevertheless, the DP and its supporters were sitting ducks without outside support. The action against the DP in 1947 was a testing ground to see how anti-communist efforts would respond to communist political action, and the Czech and Slovak communists learned from the experience that they could target a vulnerable group unopposed.

⁴⁰⁰ “Eugene V. Rostow to Dean Rusk,” 10 May 1968, Appendix 3, in *Prague Spring*, eds. Bischof, 447-448. Yost, *History*, 95, 97, 107, 225-226. Josten, *My Country*, 39. Ullmann, *United States*, 164, 168. “John Lukacs to George Kennan, January 25, 1995,” in *George F. Kennan and the Origins of Containment: The Kennan-Lukacs Correspondence*, eds. George F. Kennan and John Lukacs (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 41-45. Wettig, *Stalin*, 2, 252. Kovrig, *Walls*, 7-8. Lundestad, *Non-Policy*, 454-459. Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin’s*, 66.

⁴⁰¹ Past historians looking at post-war American-Czechoslovak relations have not made this consideration, although both Ullmann and Kalvoda recognize the significance of the coup against the DP in terms of communist strategy. Lukes almost entirely ignores the Slovaks. Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia’s Role*, 212-213. Ullmann, *United States*, 110-119. Lukes, *Edge*, 167.

Had the United States recognized this reality earlier, and provided firmer support for the Slovak Democrats, Slovakia could have provided a pro-Western base as a counter point to Czech pessimism. Had Washington not continued to take a one-sided view of the Slovak Question, it might also have provided a mediatory role to foster Czech-Slovak anti-communist unity. This case was particularly true regarding the Tiso trial. Had Washington retained Tiso and tried him under its own jurisdiction, it would have annoyed Prague, but the legitimacy of the trial would have been less in question, the Slovaks, who held positive views of America, would have viewed the trial less critically, and it might have significantly eased Czech-Slovak relations. By leaving Slovakia to the mercy of the Prague, however, Washington effectively sealed Slovakia's fate. As in the past, the Slovaks alone were ultimately at the mercy of stronger influences. As Washington's ignorance of the Slovaks undermined an opportunity to weaken Hitler's influence before World War II, it repeated the mistake with the Soviet Union after the war. Whereas the United States could have used its unique position to stand up for the values of liberty, it instead sat back and voluntarily left the Czechs and Slovaks to the communist wolves.

Chapter 9

The United States and the Slovak Question after the 1948 Coup and Conclusion

Facing the constant frustration of rejection, the Slovak-American nationalists lost much faith in their government in Washington. Philip Hrobak lamented in a letter to President Truman how Washington had “shaken the faith” of the Slovak-Americans, who had “practically lived and breathed America.” Stephen Palickar complained: “For 20 long years, while the ‘champions’ of the rights of small nations sat by indifferently, the sacred rights of the Slovaks were trampled upon. The ‘Great Powers’ were not the least concerned whether Slovakia survived. After all, the country was but a land of ‘ignorant Slovak peasants’ as the Czechs (Bohemians) and other enemies of Slovakia delight in putting it.” An SLA pamphlet then condemned “persons high in Washington councils whose blindness has aided the Communists.” Even Francis Dubosh expressed such sentiment. He chided the State Department as “demagogues and charlatans” who were deliberately trying to mislead and disparage the SLA.⁴⁰²

The Slovak-Americans, nevertheless, did not give up their fight. Hrobak declared how their American experience had made the Slovaks lovers of liberty and justice and had instilled in them a willingness to keep fighting for those values. A National Slovak Society declaration praised how America still stood with the Slovaks: “In this dark and turbulent hour, the people of Slovakia shackled as they are by communist might and terror, can say or do little to bring knowledge to the world of their misery and oppression and of their desires, hopes and aspirations. In this hour of their un-chosen but forced silence, we, their brethren in America, must speak in their behalf.” Peter Jurchak noted their contribution toward broader American anti-

⁴⁰² “Hrobak to Leverich, 9 Oct 1945,” *B: Hrobak*, SI. Palickar, *Slovakia*, 7-33. “Slovaks Fighting Communism,” *B: SLA*, SI. “Dubosh to Prusa, 8 Sep 1945,” *B: Dubosh*, SI. “State Department,” *SR*, 3, 17, Sep 1945, 1, 9. “The Future,” & “Summary of 1936 Results,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. Kurt Glaser, “Our Blundering Czechoslovakia Policy,” *Slovakia*, 3, 12 (July 1953), 17-25.

communism as a clear success that would motivate them in the future. The Slovak-Americans also never lost their faith in American values as a beacon for Slovakia and the world. Dubosh declared, “Perhaps it is we American Slovaks who will yet save Slovakia, just as it is America who may yet save Europe—and the world.” The SLA also called to arms: “It is a historical fact that the ideals of America and Slovakia, the similarity of their struggle for liberty are identical. You and I—all of us who are Americans of Slovak descent—must realize that helping Slovakia, we are really helping our own American, for as long as Slovakia remains under the heavy heel of Czecho-Communist rule, America and the rest of the free world are not safe.”⁴⁰³

The Slovak Question after the Communist Coup

The Slovak-Americans continued to publish material in droves, and the involvement of Slovak exiles entering the Americas enhanced the volume and quality of these publications. American and Canadian Slovak activities also became more synergetic, although they maintained separate organizations. As a result, the period from the late 1940s through the 1960s proved the most prolific period of publishing by Slovaks in America, with material ranging from pamphlets, newspapers, books and journals, and even comic books, on topics ranging from history, politics, culture, and anti-communism. Among these publications were several academic histories of the Slovaks and Slovak-Americans, but also the establishment of the academic journal *Slovakia* in 1951.⁴⁰⁴ Slovak-American public outreach also continued, with numerous conferences and public events, but also the founding of the Slovak Institute in 1953, by Abbot

⁴⁰³ Hrobak, “50 Years,” 10-18. “The Future,” & “Summary of 1936 Results,” *PF: Jurchak*, SI. National Slovak Society, “To Our Kinsmen in Slovakia,” in Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 288. “An Appeal,” B: Dubosh, SI. “SLA General Letter to Members,” *Podkrivacky Papers*, B: 16, IHRC.

⁴⁰⁴ In its earlier years, *Slovakia* was a mix of academic and journalistic styled pieces. Since the 1980s, it has become more of a proper academic journal.

Theodore Kojiš at the St. Andrew's Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio. The Institute serves as a center and repository of Slovak culture and an archive of the experiences of the Slovaks in America.⁴⁰⁵

Slovak exiles maintained a heavy involvement in Slovak-American affairs, although they continued to undermine the unity of Slovaks in America as their numbers and ideological diversity expanded following the 1948 coup. The rivalry between the SAC and the SNCA eventually ended when the two organizations merged in 1960 into the Slovak Liberation Council. Relations among Slovak exiles remained tense, however, due to the influx of new personalities from the non-communist parties of the Third Republic, including the Slovak Democratic Party. Most of the Slovak exiles from the '1948 generation' were moderate nationalists who remained supporters of a Czech-Slovak state, albeit with Slovak autonomy within it. They collaborated with Czech anti-communists in organizations designed to reestablish the Third Republic, most notably the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (CFCS). The CFCS remained internally volatile. This internal tension was due in large part to the Slovak Question, as figures such as Lettrich and Osuský feuded with Czech leaders over Slovak autonomy. These debates even spread into institutions such as Radio Free Europe, after Slovaks complained about the organization not giving them proper access.

The divide between the Slovaks were just as sharp. The moderate nationalists despised the Catholic nationalist exiles for their linkages to the Slovak State and their continued appeals

⁴⁰⁵ "Hletko to Jamriška, Hrušovský, & Mišik, 17 June 1949," PF: *Hletko*, SI. "SLA General Letter," *Podkrivacky Papers*, B:16, IHRC. "Slovak Newsletter," *ŠO Papers*, B:100, F:18, HIA. "Declaration of The National Conference of Americans of Slovak Descent, May 24-25, 1954, Washington D.C.," "Slovak League of America (guidebook)," *Podkrivacky Papers*, B: 17, IHRC. Philip A. Hrobak, *Czecho-Slovakia or Czechoslovakia* (Middletown, PA: Jednota, 1957). "Drive to Free Slovakia from Communist Oppresion," PF: *Lach*, SI. "FCSU Resolution, 31 Aug 1953," *SLA Cab*, F: SLA Presidents, SI. Joseph M. Kirschbaum, "Dr. Paučo's Writings and the History of American Slovaks," *Furdek*, 13 (1974), 75-80. Murin, "In Honor," in *Slovak Politics*, xii-xviii. Paul C. Fallat, *Fearless Fighter for Freedom and Faith* (Middletown, PA: Jednota Press). Paul C. Fallat, *Slovakia's National Martyr* (Middletown, PA: Jednota Press). Joseph M. Kirschbaum, *Slovakia: Nation at the Crossroads of Central Europe*, 1st ed. (New York: R. Speller, 1960). Joseph A. Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Political History: 1918-1950* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963). Lettrich, *History*. Joseph Paučo, "Twenty Years of the Slovak Institute in Cleveland," *Slovakia*, 23, 46 (1973), 16-21. Stolarik, "Slovak League," 31-32.

for independence. The Catholic nationalists in turn condemned the moderate nationalist exiles as having sold out Slovakia to Beneš and the Communists. The two sides remained in a perpetual tit-for-tat to equate each other to the opposing totalitarian systems of the 20th century. Moderate nationalist propaganda, for example, equated anti-Czechoslovak mentalities with anti-democracy, and accused the Catholic nationalist leaders as trying to reestablish a fascist system over the Slovak people. The Catholic nationalist's propaganda in turn accused the moderate nationalists of being communist collaborators who had worked hand-in-hand with Beneš to sell out the Slovaks to communist oppression. The best attempt to unify the Slovaks came with the creation of the Slovak World Congress (SWC) in 1970, led by Canadian Slovak businessman Stephen Roman. The SWC brought together Slovak organizations from across the globe, including the SLA and other Slovak-American organizations, as well figures ranging from Osuský to Ďurčanský. It was somewhat successful in uniting the Slovaks abroad, although the organization did not hold together past Roman's death in 1988.⁴⁰⁶

The raising of the iron curtain cut the Slovak-Americans off from Slovakia almost entirely. Appeals to Washington remained their only recourse to try to effect change in their ethnic homeland. Jurchak, for example, warned Truman how the United States "has paid dearly for not knowing the whole truth about European affairs," and encouraged him to take in a wide

⁴⁰⁶ "Slovenská Líga a Slovenská Národná Rada v Zahraničí," "Emanuel Böhm to Sidor, 27 April 1948," & "Free and Independent," B: SNCA, SI. "Odpoved' New Yorkskému Denníku a New Yorkským Listom," *ŠO Papers*, B: 53, F: 17, HIA. "Unpublished Interview," *ŠO Papers*, B:41, F:4, HIA. Raška, *Fighting*, 107-117. Tomek, "Highs and Lows," in *Anti-Communist*, 109-126. "Memorandum on Political Structure and Activities of Czechoslovakia Exiles," B: Ďurčanský, SI. "Andrew Pier to American Broadcasting Company," B: Karol Sidor – *Diplomat 1901-1958 – Vol 2*, SI. Lettrich, *History*, 1-10 & 281-283. "Hletko to Ernest A. Gross," 7 May 1949, F#: 860F.01/5-749, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "MoC w/ Slovak-American Leaders, Slovak Separatists Representations," 22 November 1949, F#: 860F.00/11-2249, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Who is Dr. Lettrich?," *NSS Records*, B: 168, F: SLA, IHRC. "SAC to Truman," 4 Mar 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-448, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Statement on the Recent Events in Czechoslovakia," 5 March 1948, F#: 860F.00/3-548, *DoS CS 1945-49*. "Eastern European Exile Opposition Movements Part I: Czechoslovakia, 23 Sep 1948," *O.S.S.*, Part V. Joseph M. Kirschbaum, ed., *Slovakia in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, Proceedings of the Conference on Slovakia held during the General Meeting of the Slovak World Congress on June 17-18, 1971 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Toronto: Slovak World Congress, 1973). "The Slovak World Congress and American Slovaks," in *Slovaks in America*, 437-457. Stolarik, "The Slovak League of America," 30-31, 33-34.

range of opinions among the Slovaks in Americans. “We speak on behalf of a nation one-third of which has been assimilated into American life during the last five decades and for which we have always held up the beacon of American liberty as a guide not only to Slovakia’s own political happiness but to the solution of the problems of all of Central Europe.” Slovak-American efforts focused primarily on trying to free Slovakia from communism. One pamphlet, for example, declared how the SLA “has always recognized the Godless philosophy of materialistic Communism for the dread evil and conspiracy against free humanity.”

Although their focus was overseas, the Slovak-Americans also became involved in anti-communist witch-hunts in American in the 1950s. The SLA was happy to be on the other side of Washington’s crusades to root out perceived subversion, after having been a target during World War II, and it even received commendations from Congress for assisting this effort. On the other side, the National Slovak Society came under HUAC scrutiny, even though it remained vocally anti-communist, due to past connections to the American Slav Congress, an organization with historic ties to Moscow. The NSS barely survived the experience. The Slovak-American focus on anti-communism, though, did not limit their fight for Slovak national self-determination. Although their views ranged from support for autonomy within Czechoslovakia to Slovak independence, the campaign to build Washington’s support on the Slovak Question continued.⁴⁰⁷

Although Czechoslovakia returned to Prague centralism after the communist takeover, the Slovak Question did not end in 1948 in Slovakia either. When the movement for democratic reforms arose during the 1968 Prague Spring, Slovak autonomy was, surprisingly, one of the few

⁴⁰⁷ “American Friends of Slovak Freedom to Truman, 3 March 1948,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “In Re: An Appeal to the President of the United States,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. “The Slovak League of America,” PF: *Hletko*, SI. Slovak League of America, *Slováci v Boji s Komunizmom* (Slovak League of America: 1948). “Harold H. Velde to Edward Martin, 2 July 1954,” & “Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities, 2 July 1954,” *NSS Records*, B:5, F: HUAC, IHRC. “Memorandum to Dean Rusk,” in *Slovakia*, 14, 37 (1964), 26-28. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 123-130. Paučo, “Under,” in *Sixty*, 116-146.

components to survive after Moscow crushed the movement, as both President Alexander Dubček and his successor Gustáv Husák were Slovaks, and supportive of Slovak autonomy. From 1968 on, Slovakia remained an autonomous body within Czechoslovakia. When the Czech and Slovak people overthrew communism in the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the Slovak Question arose again. Unable to agree to terms for Slovak autonomy in the new constitution, the two nations split peacefully into the separate Czech and Slovak Republics on January 1, 1993.⁴⁰⁸

Washington continued to remain on the outside looking in during this time. In late 1949, the new American ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Eillis Briggs, reported on his first visit to Slovakia. Briggs noticed how anger over Prague centralism remained prevalent, and also remarked that “The Slovaks appear to have more gumption than their western cousins; their strong sense of local identity (nationalism) may be susceptible of future use. Correspondingly, Communism appears weaker in Slovakia than in Bohemia and Moravia.” He also noted how the showing of American flags during his visit “appeared to evoke much friendly interest on the part of the Bratislava population.” Washington, however, continued to respond to the Slovak Question as it had in the past. Many congressional officials still embraced the Slovak-Americans and helped them spread their voice to the State Department and the White House. Along with several meetings with State Department officials, arranged by congressional officials, the most notable successes were meetings between SLA delegations and Truman in May 1948 and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1956.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ Slavomír Michálek & Stanislav Sikora, “August 1968 as Seen from Bratislava,” *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968: Forty Years Later*, ed. M. Mark Stolarik (Mundelein, Ill.: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2010). Carol Skalník Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics : Nation versus State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998). Toma & Kováč, *Slovakia*, 177-279. Kirschbaum, *History*, 231-271. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 177-324.

⁴⁰⁹ “Ambassador Briggs’ Visit to Bratislava and Calls on the Slovak National Council,” 28 Nov 1949, F#: 860F.00/11-2849, *DoS CS 1945-49*. “Present Status of Slovakia and the Situation of the Catholic Church and Its Bishops Under Communist Rule in Slovakia,” 102 CR A5394 (1956). “Twentieth Anniversary of the Declaration of Slovak National Independence” 105 CR 11388 (1959). “Prayer in House by Rt. Rev. Theodore J. Kojis,” 106 CR

Nothing substantial came from these meetings, however, and the American foreign policy establishment hardly changed its views on the Slovak Question. Washington embraced the CFCS as its main source for policy advice and support for programs such as Radio Free Europe.⁴¹⁰ Washington continued to dismiss Slovak Catholic nationalists, and condemned any Slovak-Americans pushing for an independent state. A detailed intelligence report on Czech and Slovak exiles, for example, labeled the Slovak Catholic nationalists as a group that Washington should be wary of and expressed concern that they were undermining Czech and Slovak unity. Acting Secretary of State Robert Lovett likewise sent out a memo warning American diplomats that there was no basis for an independent Slovakia, other than the “illegitimate wartime state,” and that America wanted to avoid any organization that confused the objectives of the CFCS to maintain the organization of the Third Czechoslovak Republic. Department officials also asserted that the Czech and Slovak people had freely agreed to the creation of Czechoslovakia and had expressed no desire for any other government organization. Charles Yost, who had become head of East European Affairs, stepped toward accommodation in 1950 by explaining that the United States had supported national self-determination since Woodrow Wilson and would support Slovak independence if the Slovak people expressed such a desire. Nevertheless, he added that the Slovaks had never given such indication, and that the State Department believed that the best way to fight communism in Czechoslovakia was through the CFCS. After February 1948, these efforts to gain Washington’s support were nonetheless pointless. Having

5518 (1960). “Jurchak to Kmetz, 12 May 1948,” & “Kmetz to Roberta Barrows, 14 May 1948,” *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317 Misc, HT. Stolarik, “Slovak League,” 32.

⁴¹⁰ Unlike their treatment of the earlier Slovak exiles, Washington expedited entry for those Czech and Slovak exiles from the 1948 generation. Washington continued attempts to capture Ďurčanský into the late 1940s, but eventually gave up interest. Ďurčanský eventually settled in Munich, and Washington eventually opened up to allowing former Slovak state officials such as Sidor and Ďurčanský into the U.S. on temporary visas. “The Acting SoS to the Embassy in Peru,” in *FRUS*, 1948, V4 (Washington, D.: U.S. Government Printing, 1974), 434. “MoC,” in *FRUS*, 1950, V4, 344-347. “Edward Page, Jr. to Charles A. Vanik,” *PF: Ferdinand Ďurčanský, 1906-1974*, SI.

acquiesced Czechoslovakia to the communist sphere, any American influence was limited without the threat of armed confrontation with the Soviet Union.⁴¹¹

With freedom of movement between the United States and Slovakia once again in play after 1989, the Slovak League of America joined with the Slovak League of Canada to send delegations to Slovakia. They encouraged Slovak leaders to continue to fight for Slovak self-determination, either within Czechoslovakia or as an independent state. For those figures that had long fought for Slovak autonomy, Slovak independence was a joyous occasion, although most of the figures addressed in this story did not live to see its realization. The United States accepted the new Slovak Republic, and its fledgling embassy staff participated in the celebrations. Nevertheless, America's first ambassador to Slovakia, Paul Hacker, advocated that the embassy avoid involvement in celebrations with Slovak Catholic nationalists from abroad, condemning them for their past support for the wartime Slovak State.⁴¹²

Conclusion

The contribution of this dissertation is to show the different layers of U.S.-Slovak ties. By looking at the Slovak Question from a transatlantic perspective, this dissertation advances the literature explaining how migration influences national identity and nationalism and the influence of European immigrants on transatlantic foreign and domestic affairs. Moreover, it also contributes to our understanding of larger themes, such as the working of democracy, the effectiveness of transatlantic ties, and ideology.

⁴¹¹ "Zenkel & Lettrich to Truman, 22 Oct 1952," *OF*, B: 1138, F: 317, HT. "Exile Opposition Movements, 23 Sep 1948," *O.S.S.*, Part V. "Acting SoS to Embassy," in *FRUS*, 1948, V4, 434. "MoC: Slovak-Americans," F#: 860F.00/11-2249. "MoC," in *FRUS*, 1950, 344-347. Raška, *Fighting*, 5-13.

⁴¹² Stolarik, "Slovak League," 34-35. Paul Hacker, *Slovakia: On the Road to Independence: An American Diplomat's Eyewitness Account* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 1-10.

This dissertation advances historical understanding of international relations by showing that a transatlantic component was essential to the development of Slovak nationalism and the Slovak Question. The United States offered an outlet for a repressed Slovak national identity formation and a location where Slovak nationalist leaders could foster Slovak national consciousness. Transatlantic national activism and organization regarding the Slovak Question lasted from the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918 through the February 1948 communist coup. It helped embed among the Slovaks a sense of independent identity and national political assertion, and provided a disruptive influence that played a key role of sabotaging Magyarization before World War I and then Czechoslovakization afterwards. The Slovak-Americans helped spur the breakup of Austria-Hungary, and produced the Pittsburgh Agreement, the most important symbol of Slovak nationalism in the interwar period. They then contributed to the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Likewise, as Slovakia came under the sway of totalitarianism in the 1940s, political exiles continually turned to the Slovak-Americans for support in reestablishing a democratic Slovakia, whether Milan Hodža during World War II, Catholic nationalists such as Karol Sidor and Ferdinand Ďurčanský after the war, or those Slovak leaders exiled in 1948 such as Jozef Lettrich. In these various roles, the Slovak-Americans continued to influence the Slovak homeland, in spite of their permanent foundation on the other side of the Atlantic.

The marginalization of the Slovak-Americans, though, also marks a lost opportunity. The emphasis on denationalization and centralization by the Czechs in their approach toward the Slovaks ultimately proved counterproductive, as their efforts to absorb the Slovaks only made Slovak nationalism more explicit.⁴¹³ The Slovaks in America proved such an effective example

⁴¹³ Several scholars of nationalism have shown how this reaction is common among small nations, for which nationalism serves as a defense mechanism against the threat of cultural hegemony of larger nations. It also

for the Slovaks because they were in an environment where loyalty to the state was expected, but one that still left room for cultural and political autonomy for the nation, manifested through the embrace of the hyphenate Slovak-American identity and active participation in American civil society. This mentality contrasted with Slovak nationalists in Slovakia, who instead felt that the Czechoslovak state was in conflict with the Slovak nation and ultimately felt willing to abandon the former for the latter. A federalized system in Czechoslovakia had potential to mitigate this sentiment, mollifying Slovak nationalism through the accommodation of political and cultural self-determination, while also maintaining a functioning state organization. The Slovak-Americans had experience living in a democratic federalist system and offered it as a positive direction for Czechoslovakia. Although Slovak-American nationalists were generally more democratic-minded than their counterparts in Slovakia, the embrace and promotion of an American-styled federalism for Czechoslovakia, and even for Central Europe as a whole, among many Slovak leaders is a sign that they would have found such an organization acceptable and that it might have eased Czech-Slovak tensions. The marginalization of the Slovak-Americans on behalf of centralism in Czechoslovakia thus abetted a lost opportunity for greater Czech-Slovak national stability to the detriment of the Czechoslovak state.⁴¹⁴

The transatlantic debate over the Slovak Question also provides a microcosm of American foreign affairs from 1914 to 1948, even as the Slovak-American's beliefs, goals, and approaches generally remained the same throughout this period. The American diplomatic

spurs what Robert Wiebe labels the "onion effect," a vicious cycle where the small nations then lash out at their own national minorities in part as a reaction to this insecurity. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1987). Robert Wiebe, *Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002). Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴¹⁴ For an excellent consideration of such an approach in a general context, see: Aviel Roshwald, "Between Balkanization and Banalization: Dilemmas of Ethno-Cultural Diversity," *Cultural Autonomy in Contemporary Europe*, eds. David J. Smith and Karl Cordell (London: Routledge, 2008), 29-42. The Slovaks should also keep their own history in mind when considering treatment of national minorities in Slovakia, of whom the Slovak government has not always been as accommodating as Slovak nationalists expected the Czechs to be of them.

response to the Slovak Question sheds light on issues of broader importance, from Wilsonian national self-determination during World War I, to the American response to nationalism as it entwined with the ideologies of National Socialism during World War II and Communism during the Cold War. It is particularly notable how Czech nationalists exploited Woodrow Wilson's exclusive, modernist vision of national self-determination to convince Washington to embrace Czechoslovakism as the ideal construction for the Czechs and Slovaks during World War I. American officials were very slow to abandon this view even when events and people challenged it quite sharply in the 1940s. These prejudices led American officials to ignore how positive conceptions of America and American democracy transmitted by the Slovak-Americans to Slovakia led Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic to perceive the United States and Slovakia as natural allies and to welcome greater American diplomatic influence in Slovakia.

This divergence shows how Washington's fixation on large powers discouraged consideration of how more nuanced views and interest in smaller states might have expanded their options. The dichotomy of reportage from diplomats who visited Slovakia versus those who remained in Prague provided a simple, common sense lesson that the State Department nonetheless overlooked repeatedly: that a failure to account for the local circumstances of Slovakia left Washington ill positioned to respond when Slovakia suddenly became important. Slovaks on both sides of the Atlantic continually reached out to Washington for recognition and support under the threat of Nazi Germany and later the Soviet Union, but the United States nevertheless ignored these overtures. This dissertation implicitly argues that the United States might have used the Slovaks to make inroads toward limiting the totalitarian impulse in Central Europe, but never even considered the possibility because American officials overlooked the Slovaks as unimportant. By considering the Slovaks more acutely, Washington would have

broadened its perspective on Czechoslovakia, facilitating more efficacious responses to watershed events there than those that it ultimately pursued. This case is reflective of America's broader treatment of East Central Europe. By regularly overlooking conditions in the smaller states of East Central Europe, obscured by the region's larger neighbors in Russia and Germany, U.S. policymakers left themselves in a reactive position with fewer options in altering the shape and direction of the major European conflicts of the twentieth century that began there.

This dissertation also expands upon our understating of how ethnic groups influenced foreign policy. It is notable how most scholars who examine the topic of popular influences on foreign policy determine that immigrants groups have had an influence, and usually a negative one. Oftentimes this hostility toward immigrant influences among scholars and policymakers, both past and present, is rooted in a sense of elitism and a desire to have so-called experts serve as gatekeepers to the formulation of foreign policy. This mentality left, and leaves, policymakers open to manipulation by those who appealed to this sense of elitism, as Czech nationalists did by appealing to images of modernism when describing their view on the Slovak Question. In the early 20th century, Prague ran a successful propaganda campaign to control the narrative on the Slovak Question, funding a mix of Czech and Slovak centralist politicians, diplomats, and scholars, as well as western scholars and journalists sympathetic to their cause. This campaign presented the Czechoslovakist image as one of didactic 'elite' knowledge. It in turn discredited Slovak nationalists as a cranky, parochial minority of uncultured demagogues. By using these paradigms, Czech nationalist leaders appealed to the biases of American foreign policy elites to convince the Americans to accept the Czech nationalist paradigms as conventional wisdom.

American officials largely embraced this viewpoint, although not due to a lack of countervailing viewpoints. Slovak nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic constantly attempted

to make contact with American officials, from presidents of the United States, to senators and congressional officials, to State Department officials, in order to counter Prague's propaganda and change American views on the Slovaks. They also produced ample propaganda geared to the general American population as a means of trying to spur interest in their perceived plight. The Slovaks lacked the financing, claims to status, and connections to American officials held by Prague, but these realities did not dissuade them. Given their relatively small population and the regular infighting among them, the volume and quality of Slovak-American publications, organization, and lobbying on both sides of the Atlantic is astounding, and it is jarring that this effort had such a minimal impact. With the exception of a few members of Congress, American policymakers rarely gave the Slovak autonomists much consideration. Ultimately, the Slovak-Americans lack of elite status proved decisive. Without it, they could not break Prague's hold on Washington. The Slovak-Americans made their case, but they contradicted the perceived conventional wisdom that American elites had absorbed from Czech nationalists. American officials, thus, dismissed them as an ignorant or misguided minority among a backward people.

Washington's embrace of a one-sided view of the Slovak Question shows how a narrowing of viewpoints and sources of information left policy options off the table, created missed opportunities, and limited American possibilities to influence outcomes in its interests. Too often, American officials seemed to base policy towards Czechoslovakia only after considering one or two viewpoints, usually those appealing to their preconceived notions. As a result, Czech nationalists colored Washington's view to favor Prague's domestic and international interests, which did not always align with the best interests of the United States.

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