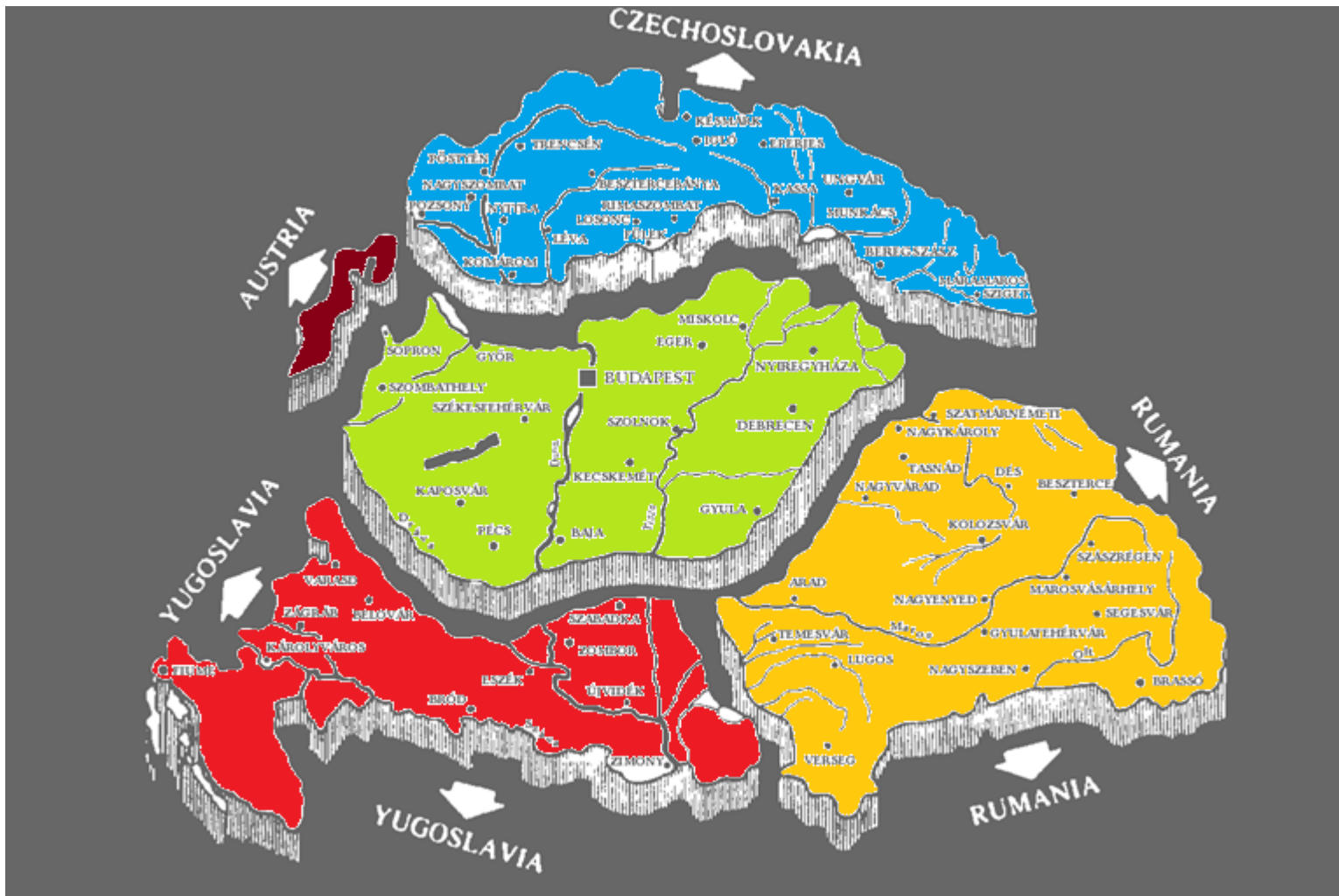


# **Slovak politics before 1989**

Peter Spáč

26.2.2018

# Before 1918



# Hungarian rule (since 10th century)

- 1867 – dualisation of Austria-Hungary → negative stance against minorities
- National oppression:
  - Press legislation
  - Abolishment of Slovak high schools
  - 1875 - dissolution of **Slovak Motherland** („Matica Slovenská“)
- Aim – creation of one (Hungarian) nation without ethnic fragmentation



# Slovak party „system“

- Political conditions:
  - No universal suffrage – only 7 % of people in 1918
  - Manipulations of elections
  - High barriers for achieving mandates
  - Low citizen participation and activity
- The result –for nearly the whole period until 1914 there was only one party representing the Slovaks

# Slovak party „system“

- Slovak National Party (SNS, 1871):
  - Elite protestant party
  - Limited resources
  - Internal plurality – Agrarians, the catholic **Slovak People's Party** (SLS, gained independence in 1913)
- Less than **10 MPs** in Parliament (out of 435) → minimal impact on the country's politics

# 1. Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938)

- Two nations in different situation
- Higher development of the Czech part:
  - Economy and standard of living
  - Level of education
  - Character of political parties
- Czechoslovakism - the idea of one **Czechoslovak nation**

# Population of Czechoslovakia (1921)

Nationality	Amount	Share (in %)
Czech	6 780 000	50,2
Slovak	1 990 000	14,7
German	3 123 000	23,1
Hungarian	745 000	5,5
Other	880 000	6,5
Sum	13 510 000	100



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# 1. Czechoslovak Republic (CSR)

- The political system:
  - Parliamentary democracy (PR electoral system)
  - Universal suffrage
  - Citizen freedoms
- Oligarchic bodies
- Changes in international situation in the 30s → degeneration of Czechoslovak democracy

# Political parties in Slovakia

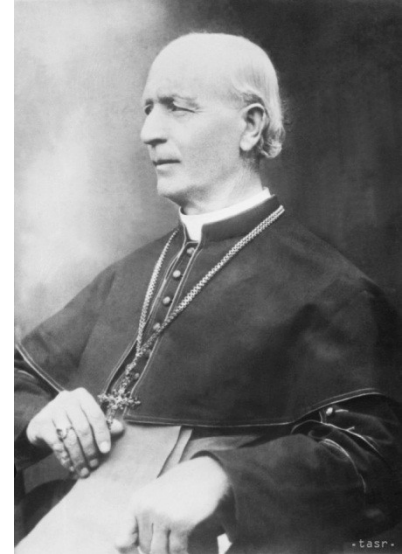
- System of one party changed to plurality
- **Czech parties:**
  - Changed names from „Czech“ to „Czechoslovak“
  - Only limited success in Slovakia
- **Parties of ethnic minorities:**
  - Hungarian and German
  - Oriented towards „their“ minorities
  - Mostly opposed to the idea of Czechoslovakia

# „True“ Slovak parties in CSR

- Parties from the previous time period and new parties
- Gained votes mostly in Slovakia
- Parties divided into two groups:
  - Autonomists – seeking Slovak autonomy
  - Centralists – accepting CSR
- The strongest actor – SLS – renamed to **HSLS** (Hlinka Slovak People's Party)

# Hlinka Slovak People's Party

- Leader – Andrej Hlinka (Catholic priest)
- Ideology:
  - Catholic values
  - Never fully accepted liberal democratic ideas
- Highest electoral support in Slovakia
- Radicalization in the 30s



# Elections

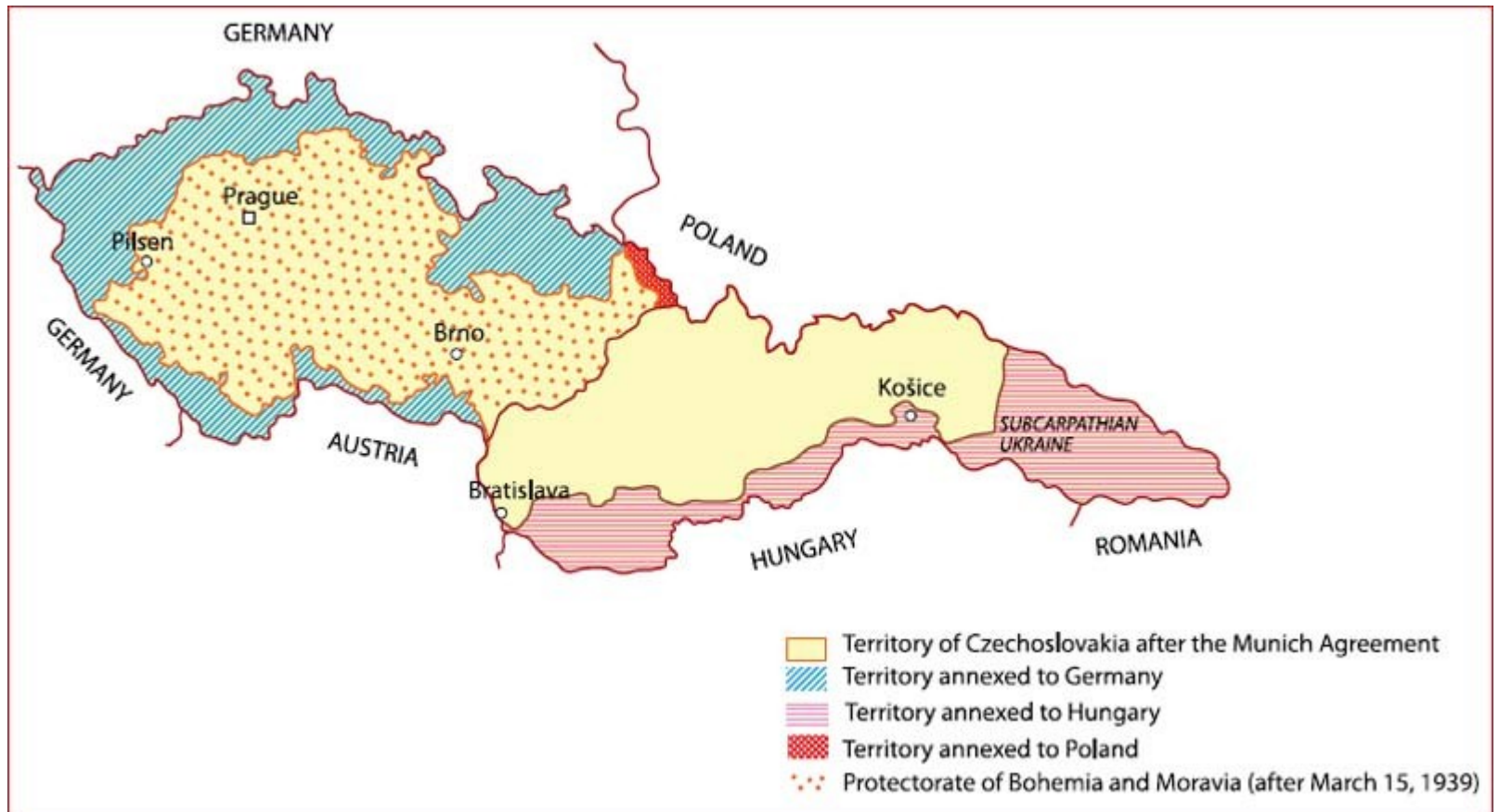
Political Party	1920	1925	1929	1935
HSLs	18,1	34,3	28,2	30,1
Agrarians	18,7	17,4	19,5	17,6
Communists	-	13,9	10,7	13
Social Democrats	39,4	4,3	9,5	11,4
Hungarian parties (Sum)	10,7	14,6	15,9	14,2
Czech parties (Sum)	2,3	6,4	11,6	9,7

# Munich Agreement (1938)

- Beginning of the 2. CS Republic
- Degeneration of democracy in CSR
- Czech lands:
  - Two party system
  - No real competition
- Slovakia:
  - More straightforward decline of democracy
  - Hegemony of HSLS



# Munich Agreement (1938)





# Autonomy of Slovakia

- **October 1938** – an official request by HSLS:
  - Signed by most Slovak parties
  - Refused by Social democrats and Communists
- **November 1938** – Constitutional law granting autonomy to Slovakia:
  - Slovak Assembly
  - Slovak Government

# Autonomy of Slovakia

- Hegemony of HSLS
- Other parties:
  - Forced to merge with HSLS
  - Social democrats and Communists were abolished
- Authoritarian tendencies of HSLS
- Democracy refused as „*complicated*“

# Elections to Slovak Assembly (1938)

- „*The one and only*“
- A clear sign of **non-democratic** tendencies:
  - Single candidate list
  - Separate electoral rooms for different ethnic groups
  - Manipulative techniques
  - Violation of secret vote
  - Planned sanctions on people casting blank lists
- Result – **97,3 %** for HSLS

# The wartime Slovak State

- 1939-1945
- Satellite of the Third Reich
- Non-democratic regime
- President – „doctor“ Jozef Tiso



# The wartime Slovak State

- Clear dominance of executive power
- Overlap of state and the party – Tiso as president and leader of HSLS
- Parliament (Assembly) without any real power
- Para-military forces – the Hlinka guard

# The wartime Slovak State

- Two wings of HSLS:
  - 1. **Conservative and more moderate (Tiso):**
    - Catholic and corporatist ideas
  - 2. **Radical (Tuka, Mach):**
    - Inspiration in Nazi Germany
    - Connection with Hlinka Guard



# 1939 - 1940



- Authoritarian regime
- Catholic, conservative, corporatist values
- Weaker position of HSLS's radicals
- „*The smiling Slovakia*“
- **Reaction** → Hitler's request for a change

# 1940 - 1942

- Radical wing of HSLS gained power
- Conservative wing led by Tiso overpowered them but only by applying their techniques
- Tiso gained the title „**Leader**“ (Vodca; equivalent to German „Führer“ used by Hitler)
- Antisemitic laws, deportation of Jews (58 thousand in 1942) – 2/3 of Jews living in Slovakia



# The erosion after 1942

- Main reasons:
  - Turnover in the Second World War
  - Lower trust of population
- 1944 – Slovak National Uprising – suppressed by German forces
- 1944-1945:
  - Slovakia under total control of Germany
  - Terror, revenge on partisans, restoration of deportation of Jews



# After the World War II

- Third Czechoslovak Republic (1945-1948)
- Only a fiction of a democratic system
- Problematic features:
  - Dominance of the executive power (decrees)
  - Retribution justice
  - Limited plurality of the party system - only a few parties were **allowed** to exist (no German or Hungarian party)
  - Limited political competition among parties

# Party system in 1945-1948

- **National front:**
  - Umbrella organization with parties as members
  - Decided which parties may exist
  - All parties had to follow the same political program (nationalization of property, foreign policy oriented to USSR)
- Slovak parties:
  - Communist party of Slovakia (KSS)
  - Democratic Party (DS)
  - Two other marginal parties

# Democratic party (DS)

- Created by members of several former parties (SNS, Agrarians etc.)
- Civic and non-socialist party
- Protestant party vs. Catholic nation → Catholics added on candidate lists (two thirds)
- Ideas about the position of Slovakia → Czech parties including Slovak communists diminished the influence of Slovak political institutions

# Elections 1946

- Democratic and free elections?

Czech lands			Slovakia		
Party	Votes (%)	Seats	Party	Votes (%)	Seats
KSC	40,17	93	DS	62	43
CSNS	23,66	55	KSS	30,37	21
CSL	20,24	46	SS	3,73	3
CSSD	15,58	37	SP	3,11	2

# After elections 1946

- Rising power of communists
- Infiltration of the state's power components – army, police, secret service, trade unions
- These trends were more straightforward in the Czech part of the state
- February 1948 – end of this time period

# Communist rule (1948-1989)



- Totalitarian regime – terror, planned economy, sharp restrictions on human rights and freedoms
- Country and society fully under control of KSC
- Formal existence of „opposition“ parties
- Elections as a demonstration of the regime’s power
- Formal liquidation of Slovak political institutions (1948, 1960)

# „Election“ results



Year	Votes (in %)	Blank lists
1948	86,60	994 419
1954	97,89	182 928
1960	99,86	12 775
1964	99,94	6 040
1971	99,81	-
1976	99,97	-
1981	99,96	-
1986	99,97	-



# 1960s and the Prague Spring

- Alexander Dubček as the first Slovak selected for the chairman of KSC
- „*Socialism with a human face*“
- Two nations with different aims:
  - Czechs – political reforms
  - Slovaks – federalization of the country



# 1968 – end of Prague Spring

- Czechoslovakia invaded by armies of the Warsaw Pact
- Stop to any liberalization for the next 20 years



# After 1968

- **Federalization (1970):**

- Creation of national governments and parliaments (Slovak National Council continued in its existence)
- Ban of majoritarianism

→ Only formal changes – real politics remained unchanged

- **Normalization (1969-1989):**

- Restoration of the regime „before 1968“
- Sanctions against large groups of society
- Higher intensity in Czech part of the federation

# Legacy for the period after 1989

- **Specifics of the communist regime in Slovakia:**
  - „Milder“ version of the regime when compared to Czech lands
  - Achievement of federalization (despite its formal character)
  - Economic modernization – industrialization, urbanization
- **Effects:**
  - Weaker dissent movement
  - Higher acceptance of several principles of the communist period
  - More sympathy towards the „*middle way*“ → support of less radical economic reforms after 1989