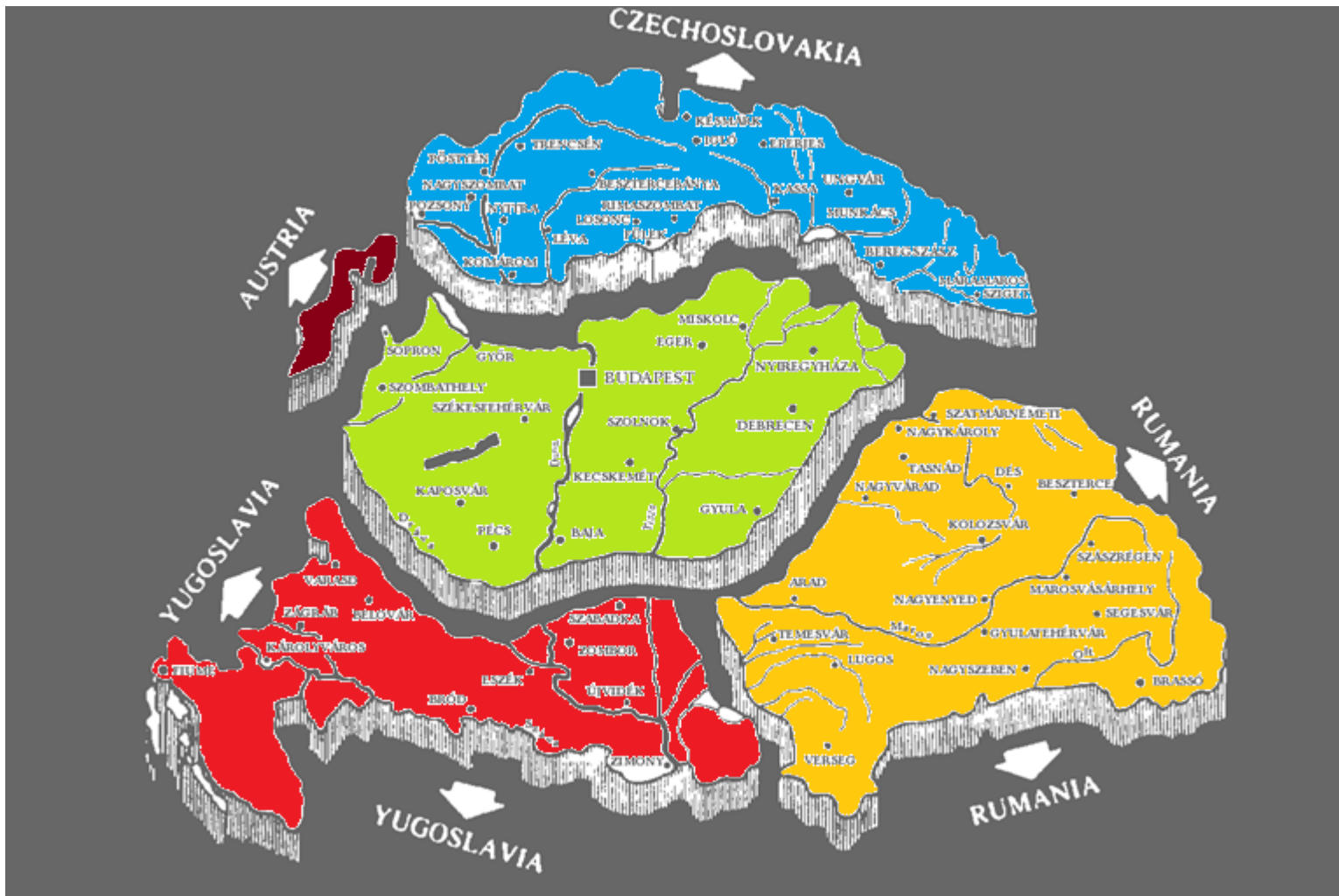


Slovak politics before 1989

Peter Spáč

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 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 – nearly for 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

Population of Czechoslovakia (1921)

Nationality	Amount	Share (in %)
Czechoslovak	8,770,000	64.9
German	3,123,000	23.1
Hungarian	745,000	5.5
Other	880,000	6.5
Sum	13,510,000	100

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

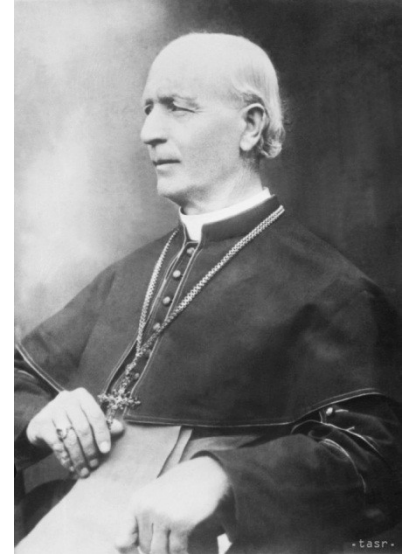
- System of one party changed to plurality
- **Czech parties:**
 - Changed names from „Czech“ to „Czechoslovak“
 - Only limited success in Slovakia
- **Parties of ethnic minorities:**
 - Hungarian and German
 - Oriented towards „their“ minorities
 - Mostly opposed to the idea of Czechoslovakia

„Authentic“ Slovak parties in CSR

- Parties from the past as well as 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

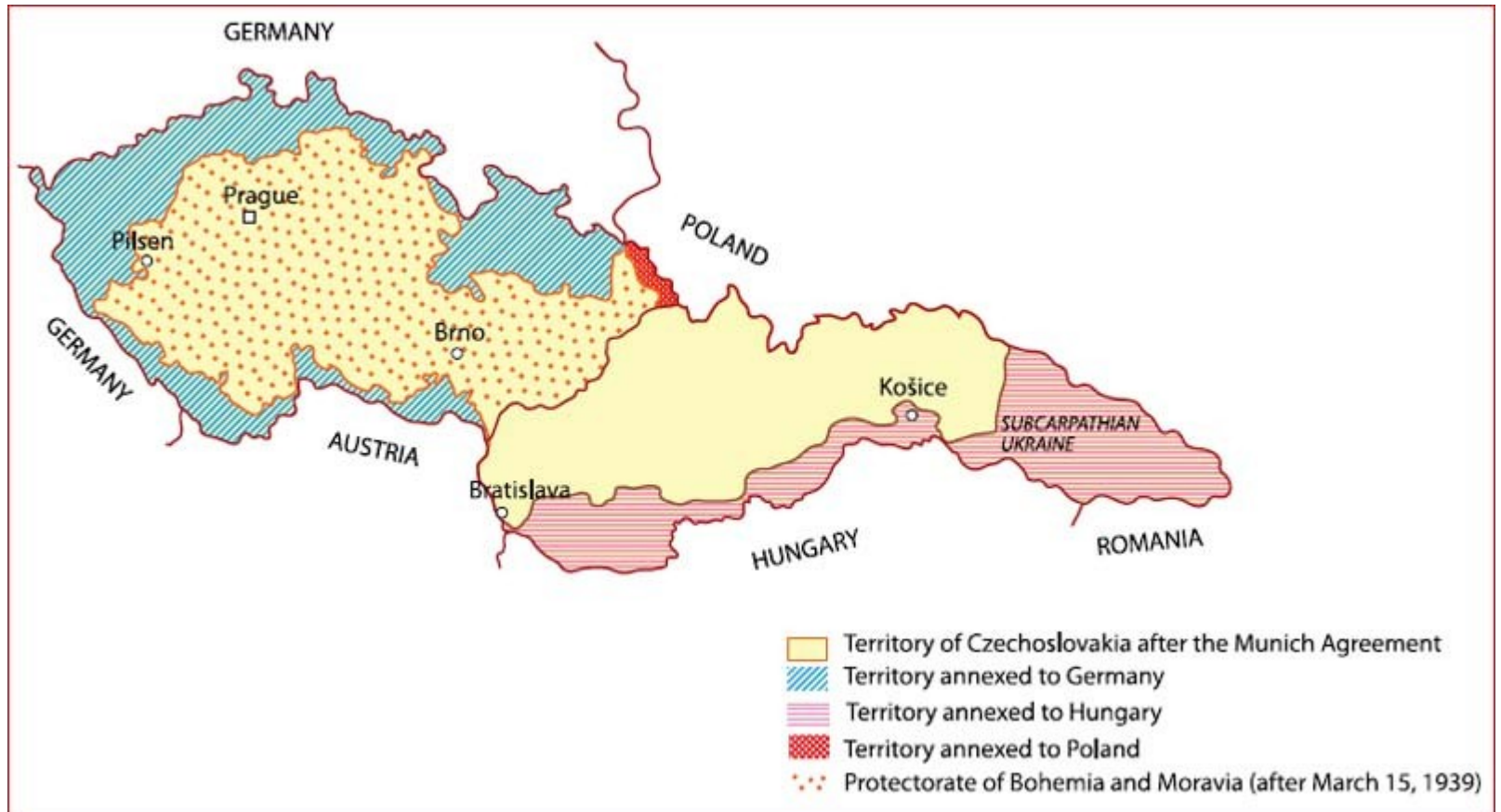
Political Party	1920	1925	1929	1935
HSLs	18,1	34,3	28,2	30,1
Agrarians	18,7	17,4	19,5	17,6
Communists	-	13,9	10,7	13
Social Democrats	39,4	4,3	9,5	11,4
Hungarian parties (Sum)	10,7	14,6	15,9	14,2
Czech parties (Sum)	2,3	6,4	11,6	9,7

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 HSLŠ's radicals
- Depicted (even now by some parties) as „*The smiling Slovakia*“ despite the nature of the regime
- **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, pro-USSR foreign policy)
- **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	40,2	93	DS	62,0	43
CSNS	23,7	55	KSS	30,4	21
CSL	20,2	46	SS	3,7	3
CSSD	15,6	37	SP	3,1	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:**
 - „Moderate“ 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