

Krzysztof Żarna*

Selected aspects of historical policy towards the Slovak National Uprising in the Slovak Republic

Wybrane aspekty polityki historycznej wobec Słowackiego Powstania Narodowego w Republice Słowackiej

Abstract: The Slovak Republic is a state that was formed as a result of the disintegration of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in 1993. Slovaks do not have rich traditions of their own statehood. For nearly a thousand years, the Slovak lands were within the sphere of influence of Hungary and they formed a common state with the Czechs, although the latter had a dominant position. The only period of owning one's own statehood was during 1939-1945, i.e. the functioning of the Slovak State / Slovak Republic. However, it was a country under the influence of the Third Reich. The article concerns selected aspects of the historical policy towards the Second World War appearing in the political discourse in the Slovak Republic. Issues that evoke extreme emotions have been analyzed: the Slovak National Uprising and the Slovak State / Slovak Republic. The activities of the People's Party – Our Slovakia, which was the only one that refers to the tradition of the Slovak state in 1939-1945 and attacks the Slovak National Uprising were also analyzed. Transcripts were analyzed from meetings of the Slovak National Council, press articles and programs of individual political parties as well as statements of politicians with particular emphasis on the People's Party – Our Slovakia. The article uses a comparative method and a case study.

Keywords: nationalism, Marian Kotleba, Slovak National Uprising, Slovak Republic

Streszczenie: Republika Słowacka jest państwem, które powstało w wyniku rozpadu Czeskiej i Słowackiej Republiki Federacyjnej w dniu 1 stycznia 1993 r. Słowacy nie mają bogatych tradycji własnej państwowości. Przez blisko tysiąc lat ziemie słowackie znajdowały się w orbicie wpływów węgierskich, tworzyli też wspólne państwo z Czechami, jednak to ci drudzy mieli domi-

* Krzysztof Żarna – PhD, University of Rzeszów, Poland, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6965-8682>, e-mail: zrnk75@wp.pl.

nującą pozycję. Jedyny okres posiadania własnej państwowości to lata 1939-1945, czyli funkcjonowanie Państwa Słowackiego / Republiki Słowackiej. Było to jednak państwo satelickie III Rzeszy. Artykuł dotyczy wybranych aspektów polityki historycznej wobec II wojny światowej pojawiających się w dyskursie politycznym w Republice Słowackiej. Analizie zostały poddane kwestie budzące skrajne emocje: słowackie powstanie narodowe oraz Państwo Słowackie / Republika Słowacka. Przeanalizowano również działalność Partii Ludowej – Nasza Słowacja, która jako jedyna odwołuje się do tradycji państwa słowackiego w latach 1939-1945 oraz atakuje Słowackie Powstanie Narodowe. Studium poddano stenogramy z posiedzeń Słowackiej Rady Narodowej, artykuły prasowe oraz programy poszczególnych partii politycznych, a także wypowiedzi polityków, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Partii Ludowej – Nasza Słowacja. W artykule zastosowano metodę komparatystyczną i studium przypadku.

Słowa kluczowe: nacjonalizm, Marian Kotleba, Słowackie Powstanie Narodowe, Republika Słowacka

Introduction

The use of history in Slovak politics has a long tradition and dates back to the period of dependence on Hungary. At that time, it served in shaping the national identity of the Slovaks and fighting against Magyarization, while in the interwar period, it served in emphasizing equal rights with the Czechs.

The establishment of the Slovak State (*Slovenský štát*, SŠ) in March 1939, from July of the Slovak Republic (*Slovenská republika*, SR)¹, took place under the pressure of the Third Reich on Jozef Tiso and the representatives of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSLŠ)². Historical politics served Slovakia as a confirmation of state traditions dating back to the 9th century.

In the beginning, the state was developing successfully both economically and culturally. Employment in industrial plants has in-

- 1 The activities of the People's Party – Our Slovakia, which was the only one to refer to the tradition of the Slovak state in 1939-1945: Ústavný zákon č. 185/1939 Sl. z. zo dňa 21. júla 1939 o ústave Slovenskej republiky.
- 2 Politicians of this party advocated autonomy in a common state with the Czech Republic. Only the radical wing of HSLŠ sought independence. About the Slovak State / Slovak Republic: M. S. Ďurica, *Slovenská republika 1939-1945: vznik a trvanie prvého slovenského štátu 20. Storočia*, Bratislava 1999; V. Hlôška et al., *Zamlčovaná pravda o Tisovi a Slovenskom štáte*, Bratislava 2007; J. Hajko, *Nezrelá republika. Slovensko v rokoch 1939-1945*, Bratislava 2009; K. Hradská, I. Kamenec, *Slovenská republika (1939-1945)*, Bratislava 2015; M. Lacko, *Dwuramienny krzyż w cieniu swastyki. Republika Słowacka 1939-1945*, Lublin 2012; idem, *Slovenská republika (1939-1945)*, Bratislava 2008; R. Michelko, *Slovenská republika v rokoch 1939-1945*, Martin 2015; *Slovenská republika (1939-1945)*, ed. J. Bobák, Martin 2000; Z. Tokárová, *Slovenský štát. Režim medzi teóriou a politickou praxou*, Košice 2016; *Život v Slovenskej republiky. Slovenská republika 1939-1945 očami mladých historikov IX*, ed. P. Sokolovič, Bratislava 2010.

creased, the Slovak crown had a very stable course, new schools were built, the university was expanded, and the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts was founded. The authoritarian regime was relatively mild compared to the countries occupied by the Third Reich and even to the governments in Croatia and Romania (not counting anti-Semitic speeches and deportations of Jews to mass extermination camps). There is no doubt that the establishment of the Slovak State in 1939 strengthened the national consciousness of the Slovaks, which even the harshest opponents of the Slovak state admit³.

The Slovak National Uprising (*Slovenské národné povstanie*, SNP) is in the historical memory at the opposite pole⁴. It was to explode when the Red Army began to cross the Carpathian Straits. It was intended to prepare its quick march towards the Third Reich. The Slovak National Council (*Slovenská národná rada*, SNR) was to take power in Slovakia, bringing together both the democratic opposition and the Slovak communists. Soldiers of the Slovak Army took part in the uprising while guerrilla organizations that operated all over the country constituted a serious problem since being controlled by the Soviet Union, they did not submit to the Slovak National Council. Later, communist propaganda exaggerated the role of partisans. At the end of August 1944, the German army, fearing for the outbreak of the uprising, occupied the territory of Slovakia. The uprising broke out on August 29, 1944, and lasted for two months. Its range covered the central part of Slovakia, with the main seat of the insurgent authorities being Banská Bystrica. The uprising gained international recognition and it enjoyed widespread public support. About 60,000 soldiers fought in the insurgent army, and about 18,000 in partisan units⁵.

Czechs, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Frenchmen, Yugoslavs, Hungarians and Germans also fought in the insurgent army. Polish,

- 3 R. Zenderowski, *Słowacka tożsamość narodowa. Geneza. Proces kształtowania. Kluczowe dylematy*, [in:] *Współczesna Słowacja. Sytuacja wewnętrzna i pozycja międzynarodowa*, ed. E. Pałka, Wrocław 2010, p. 51.
- 4 P. Bosák, *Z bojových operácií na fronte SNP*, Bratislava 1979; Ch. Kliment, B. Nakládal, *Slovenská armáda 1939-1945*, Praha 2003; M. Lacko, *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944*, Bratislava 2008; J. Marušák, *Słowackie Powstanie Narodowe 1944 roku i jego konsekwencje dla powojennego rozwoju Słowacji*, [in:] *Stosunki polsko-słowackie w I połowie XX wieku (materiały pokonferencyjne)*, ed. J. Głowińska, Wrocław 2006, p. 93-104; S. Mičev et al., *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944*, Banská Bystrica 2010; *Partizáni a Slovensko*, eds. A. Hruboň, J. Krištofik, Krakov 2013.
- 5 D. Čaplovič et al., *Dejiny Slovenska*, Bratislava 2000, p. 256-259.

Romanian, Yugoslav, Greek, English and American anti-fascists were less numerous. After this act of resistance against Nazism and native fascism, it was also not possible to accuse the entire nation of pro-fascist sympathies.

During the Czechoslovak Republic (1948-1960) and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1960-1989), the Slovak National Uprising was surrounded by a special cult. Gustáv Husák, the secretary general of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the last president was promoted to one of the leading heroes of the SNP. Official state propaganda presented this independence uprising as the sole merit of the communists. August 29th was celebrated as a national holiday.

The situation changed after the Velvet Revolution, the collapse of the common Czech state and Slovaks and the formation of the Slovak Republic. Some politicians gathered around the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*, SNS) and attacked the SNP accusing it of communism and for its contribution to the Sovietization of the state following the Second World War. This allegation could only be partly true, the communists took power in Czechoslovakia only in February 1948.

The most controversial state holidays in the early days of the Slovak statehood include August 29 as the holiday of the Slovak National Uprising, which was preceded by a stormy debate. Supporters of the Slovak State could only unofficially celebrate March 14 as the day of the establishment of the Slovak State. On the one hand, the SNP is presented in terms of liberation from fascism and a return to democratic Europe; on the other, it is viewed in terms of civil war, fratricidal struggle, and a tragic event, which resulted in challenging Slovak sovereignty.

The article presents selected aspects of historical policy towards the Second World War in the modern Slovak Republic. The discourse surrounding the establishment of the anniversary of the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising is a public holiday, the position of the People's Party – Our Slovakia towards SŠ / SR and SNP, and the importance of celebrating the anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising in shaping the myth of Slovak statehood. The purpose of the article is mainly to address the following questions: what was the discourse around the Slovak National Uprising? What was the historical policy of the People's Party – Our Slovakia (*Ludová strana – Naše Slovensko*,

LS-NS)? What has been the meaning of the anniversary of the SNP explosion in the context of historical policy? The research hypothesis narrows down to the assumption that the Slovak National Uprising, which is one of the myths shaping national identity, occupies the most important place in historical policy in the Slovak Republic.

In order to address these issues, the comparative method of difference was used, which allowed for the comparison of the views of politicians, historians and political scientists on the perception of the Slovak Uprising / Slovak Republic and the Slovak National Uprising. For this purpose, the analysis included transcripts from the Slovak National Council's meetings, press articles and programs of individual political parties, and statements by politicians with particular emphasis on the People's Party – Our Slovakia. The case study allowed us to analyze the activities of LS-NS.

1. Discourse around the Slovak National Uprising at the threshold of Slovak statehood

From the beginning of Slovak state's operation, there has been a debate around the Second World War and above all the Slovak National Uprising among politicians, researchers and publicists. Radosław Zenderowski noticed that two main trends could be seen in the discourse surrounding SNP. On the one hand, these are statements in which the uprising is presented in terms of liberation from fascism and a return to democratic Europe; on the other, it is seen in terms of civil war and as a tragic event, the effect of which has been the questioning of Slovak sovereignty. Existing attempts to reconcile both traditions are few and difficult to consider in the "third-way" category⁶. In analyzing the statements of politicians in the 1990s, it can be concluded that the SNP was mythologized mainly by activists of the Democratic Left Party (*Strana demokratickej ľavice*, SDL), while at the opposite extreme were activists of the Slovak National Party, although opinions within this party were divided.

6 R. Zenderowski, *Nad Tatrami błyska się... Słowacka tożsamość narodowa w dyskursie politycznym w Republice Słowackiej (1989-2004)*, Warszawa 2007, p. 470.

SNP is a landmark event in the history of the Slovak nation. The controversy related to this event was discussed at the meeting of the Slovak National Council on September 3, 1990⁷ and at the VI meeting of the SNR on September 29 – October 1, 1992. The decision to make August 29 a public holiday was discussed⁸.

German historian Wolfgang Venohr presented an interesting view of the uprising. In his opinion, the Slovak National Uprising escapes the context of the European resistance movement, because Slovakia was not an occupied state in 1944 and the standard of living in Slovakia was quite high, definitely higher than, for example, in the Third Reich. There was no lack of food supply, and there were no destructive raids. According to W. Venohr, from the events of September and October 1944, young Slovaks realised that the fight is never hopeless. Thanks to the legendary Slovak insurgent army, which killed about five thousand soldiers during the fights, today, the Slovaks stand with their heads raised high⁹.

Ľubomír Lipták emphasized the military significance of the Slovak National Uprising. According to this Slovak historian, 80,000 people, mostly youth, had, for a long time, resisted the more experienced, better armed, and better-commanded units of the German army. He adds that the central core of the insurgents were soldiers of the regular army while in turn the communists deformed the image of the uprising by promoting its image as partisan. He emphasized that the uprising was not a local event but a part of the war, the price of which was the survival of European civilization, and the significant contribution of the Slovaks to the anti-Hitler coalition. Ľ Lipták adds that there are two interpretations of the political significance of the uprising: as the beginning of the communist dictatorship, and as a road to a democratic Europe, although in his opinion, political goals were more complex. The uprising met Czechoslovak conservatives and Slovak nationalists, supporters of parliamentary democracy and communist authorities, Catholics, evangelicals, Jews, and atheists, former collaborators, and

7 Slovenská národná rada (SNR), Stenografická správa o 4. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 3. septembra 1990.

8 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

9 W. Venohr, *Aufstand der Slowaken. Der Freiheitskampf von 1944*, Frankfurt am Main – Berlin 1992.

political prisoners. Each of them had their own vision of the future and did not intend to get rid of it¹⁰.

The nationwide nature of the uprising was never questioned. In turn, the politicians of the Democratic Left Party and the Communist Party of Slovakia (*Komunistická strana Slovenska*, KSS) attached great importance to class rather than national issues. Peter Weiss and Ladislav Ballek (SDL) spoke in this spirit¹¹ while Samuel Kodaj (KSS) claimed that the uprising was a fight for a new socialist republic¹².

The answer to the question concerning the Slovak National Uprising and, more specifically, who was meant to be its target, is interesting. For some, it was the Third Reich, as considered by the Slovak publicist Roman Kaliský, politician and diplomat Rudolf Chmel, and Ivan Šimko from the Christian Democratic Movement (*Krestansko demokraticke hnutie*, KDH)¹³. The journalist Vilem Prečan and the politician SDL Ladislav Kanis also pointed to the Germans, but also the Slovak Republic. In their view, the SNP was the sovereign appearance of part of the Slovak army to make Slovakia part of the Allied camp. Was aimed directly against the German occupier and against the Slovak State to the extent that its government identified itself with German totalitarian policy¹⁴. In turn, some participants in the debate, like the Slovak historian Ivan Kamenec¹⁵, questioned whether MP Pavel Kanis (SDL) pointed out fascism?¹⁶. The Slovak Republic has been characterized by historian Milan Hamad, philosopher Theodore Münz and political scientist Milan Zemko as a state based on terror, a caricature of state independence.

The SNP was opposed to the moral downfall of the SŠ, which resulted from the internal necessity to reject fascism and overcome the

10 L. Lipták, *Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov. O dejinách a historiografii*, Bratislava 1999, p. 188-189.

11 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

12 SNR, Stenografická správa o 17. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 30. novembra 1990.

13 R. Kaliský, *Národ so zaštepovým antisemitizmom*, "Literárny týždenník", 06.09.2001, p. 4; R. Chmel, *Moje slovenské pochybnosti. Texty z rokov 1991-2002*, Bratislava 2004, p. 55-56; I. Šimko, *Slovensko v strednej Európe – ambície a možnosti*, "Bratislavské listy" 1991, č. 11, p. 13.

14 V. Prečan, *Dejiny ukradnuté alebo nežiaduce?*, "Kultúrny život", 26.08.1990, p. 8; SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

15 I. Kamenec, *Kto vlastne poškodzuje dobré meno Slovenska?*, "Kultúrny život", 25.02-3.03.1993, p. 7.

16 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

deep moral decline of Slovak society that occurred during the existence of the SR¹⁷.

In the opinion of some historians and journalists, the Slovak National Uprising led to a situation in which Slovakia did not find itself in the camp of defeated countries after the Second World War¹⁸. Historian Ján Korček noticed that the uprising, despite its defeat, was not only a symbolic victory over fascism, but also over the exile of the Czechoslovak government to London. The collapse of the SR without the Slovak uprising of independence could give the Czechs an excuse to centralize and limit Slovaks' autonomy in a common state¹⁹. There is no doubt that President Edvard Beneš would have the tools to consolidate the position of the Czechs just as it did in the interwar period. Therefore, the uprising was proof of the existence of a separate nation, which at the time of the restoration of Czechoslovakia, would place the President on an equal footing. Vladimír Mináč has already pointed out the skeptical approach towards the uprising of Edvard Beneš and the exile government in London²⁰.

It is worth noting that those opposing the recognition of August 29 as a public holiday often cited the societal divisions caused by the discourse discussed²¹. MP Peter Brňák and Anton Hrnko (SNS) believed that recognizing the uprising as a public holiday would contribute to the consolidation of divisions within Slovak society²². KDH MP Ján Masarik was against the idealization of the uprising and its place in the formula of the oath taken by parliamentarians. He believed that the previous regime falsified the history of the uprising while glorifying the activity of communists²³. HZDS MPs emphasized that by rejecting the SNP as an action against their own state, the Slovaks would expose themselves to other states who believe in fighting fascism as part

17 T. Münz, *Svet o nás vedel*, "Kultúrny život", 26.08.1991, p. 1; M. Zemko, *Slovensko – krajina v medzičase. Výber zo štúdií a článkov*, Bratislava 2002, p. 15-16; M. Hamada, *Tatarkova Farská republika a súčasnosť*, "Kultúrny život", 27.10.1994, p. 3.

18 V. Prečan, *Dejiny ukradnuté...*, p. 8; Š. M. Sokol, *Povstanie a Slovensko*, "Literárny týždenník", 31.08.2000, p. 5.

19 J. Korček, *(Ne)Slovenské, (ne)národné, (ne)povstanie*, "Literárny týždenník", 19.08.1994, p. 20.

20 V. Mináč, *Povstanie*, [in:] *Kwestia słowacka w XX wieku*, ed. R. Chmel, Gliwice 2002, p. 492-494.

21 R. Zenderowski, *Nad Tatrami...*, p. 482.

22 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

23 SNR, Stenografická správa o 22. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 1. marca 1990.

of their identity. On the other hand, they emphasize that mass graves are still being discovered in Slovakia, which shows that the insurgents did not fully comply with the international law of armed conflict, often murdering civilians, both Germans and Slovaks²⁴.

Radosław Zenderowski believes that the Slovak National Uprising, if not in its assumptions, certainly in consequences, was anti-Slovak. As a result, the Slovak people were forced to submit to the Czechs, who after the Second World War, did not respect Slovak subjectivity. Individual authors cite several detailed arguments proving the anti-national nature of the SNP²⁵. SNS politicians were of the opinion that although the goal of some insurgents was to rebuild Czechoslovakia, in which the equal rights of Czechs and Slovaks would be respected, this goal was not achieved. The uprising served the interests of Czech politicians, including both Edvard Beneš and the communist of Klement Gottwald. Ivan Kamenec quotes the émigré historian František Vnuk, who does not hide aversion to the uprising, and who believes that as a result, the Slovak nation was humiliated, 40,000 soldiers died and the only winner was Germany²⁶. The SNS chairman Ján Slota believed that many insurgents were deceived by assurances claiming that the uprising was to defend Slovak statehood against German occupation. Certainly, soldiers of the Slovak army did not fight in support of the future communist regime, while many of them were persecuted after the war²⁷.

An argument against celebrating the anniversary of the uprising has been the conviction of many authors that the Slovak National Uprising contributed to the development of a communist dictatorship in Slovakia²⁸. KDH MP Anton Neuwirth proposed the recognition of the SNP as a symbol of national tragedy. He believed that the Slovaks participating in the battles, against one another, fought with the intention of ensuring their country would have a prosperous future. Declaring

24 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

25 R. Zenderowski, *Nad Tatrami...*, p. 482.

26 *Ibidem*, p. 484; I. Kamenec, *Dvoječnosť mýtov o Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, [in:] *Mýty naše slovenské*, eds. E. Krekovič, E. Mannová, E. Krekovičová, Bratislava 2005, p. 203.

27 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

28 V. Jankovič, *Slovensko 1944 na trasovisku sveta*, "Bratislavské listy" 1994, č. 7-8, p. 9.

August 29th a public holiday, would produce a harmful myth. Communists used this myth of uprising for forty years, to legitimize the oppressing system. A. Neuwirth proposed to call August 29th a “Day of national and universal reconciliation” and he also sought analogies to the civil war in Spain²⁹.

Pursuant to the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of October 20, 1993, the anniversary of the SNP outbreak was recognized as a public holiday³⁰.

2. Controversy around the People’s Party – Our Slovakia

In the 1990s, nationalist tendencies emerged within parts of the Slovak society. The Slovak States / Slovak Republic and Józef Tiso were praised and the merits of the Slovak National Uprising were questioned. Initially, nationalist views were promoted by some politicians of the Slovak National Party and emigrant historians.

The most radical views in this area were represented by the Slovak Community Movement (*Slovenská pospolitost’, SP*), which began its activities in 1995. In 2005 it transformed into the Slovak Community – National Party (*Slovenská pospolitost’ – Národná strana, SP-NS*)³¹. The leading figure of this group was Marian Kotleba, an IT teacher at one of the schools in Banská Bystrica. Supporters of this party walked dressed in uniforms stylized as Hlinka Guard (Hlinkova Garda, HG), which was a paramilitary organization and then auxiliary police in the Slovak State. They ended their speeches with the shout “On guard!” also referring to that period, used by members of the Hlinka Slovak People’s Party³². The party was banned on March 1, 2006, by the Supreme Court³³.

29 SNR, Stenografická správa o 6. schôdzi Slovenskej národnej rady konanej 29. a 30. septembra a 1. októbra 1992.

30 Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 20. októbra 1993 o štátnych sviatkoch, dňoch pracovného pokoja a pamätných dňoch, Z.z. 1993, č. 241.

31 Volebný program Slovenskej pospolitosti – Národnej strany 2006, Docdroid.net, <https://www.docdroid.net/jdUKC34/050908-program-spns.pdf> [10.05.2020].

32 J. Smolík, *Slovenská neparlamentná krajná pravica. Politické organizácie a stratégie*, “Politologická revue” 2010, č. 1, p. 29-52; idem, *Krajne pravicové politické strany v krajinách V4: história a súčasnosť*, “Sociológia” 2013, č. 4, p. 385-410.

33 Najvyšší súd Slovenskej republiky, 3 SŽ 79/2005-54, 01.03.2006.

After being de-legalized, it operated as the Slovak Community association. Its members maintained regular contact with other extremist groups in Europe. On December 1, 2008, Michal Laššák was present during a ceremony organized in Romania by Noua Dreaptă with Tudor Ionesco. Apart from M. Laššák, the following were present from abroad: Felipe Perez (Falanga, Spain), Christophe Lespagnon (Renouveau Français, France), Jens Pühnse (Nationalemokratische Partei Deutschlands, Germany)³⁴.

In connection with the Supreme Court's SP-NS delegation, Marian Kotleba founded the People's Party – Our Slovakia³⁵ and in 2009, during the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak State, M. Kotleba raised the aforementioned shout "On guard!"³⁶. This greeting was decided by the Supreme Court to be associated with the totalitarian regime. Kotleba has repeatedly emphasized the fact that LS-NS is a continuator of HSLS. Michal Laššák was accused of attacking a dark-skinned man on a tram, and he was also found with photos of one of the Nazi leaders Rudolf Hess. He was one of the candidates for the National Council of the Slovak Republic. In the first two parliamentary elections in which LS-NS ran, it failed to cross the electoral threshold. In the 2010 NRSR election, LS-NS won the support of 33,724 voters (1.33%)³⁷ and in 2012, 40,460 votes (1.58%)³⁸.

The first spectacular success took place in 2013; following the local elections in 2013, Marian Kotleba, ruled the Banská Bystrica region, defeating Vladimír Maňka, a candidate in the second round, supported by other political forces in the ratio 55.53% to 44.46% of

34 A. Maegerle, *Die Internationale der Nationalisten. Verbindungen bundesdeutscher Rechtsextremisten – am Beispiel von NPD/JN – zu Gleichgesinnten in ausgewählten osteuropäischen Staaten*, [in:] *Strategien der extremen Rechten. Hintergründe – Analysen – Antworten*, eds. S. Braun, A. Geisler, M. Gerster, Wiesbaden 2009, p. 468.

35 K. Wojtas, *Partia Ludowa Nasza Słowacja – kontynuacja czy nowość w systemie partyjnym Słowacji?*, "Studia Politologiczne" 2018, vol. 47, p. 102-103. The author incorrectly gives Kotleba's name: Martin.

36 Ł. Lewkowicz, *Ekstremizm prawicowy Partii Ludowej Nasza Słowacja: wyzwanie dla systemu politycznego Słowacji*, "Komentarze Instytutu Europy Środkowej" 2019, no. 25, <https://ies.lublin.pl/pub/publikacje/komentarze/ies-komentarze-25-25-2019.pdf> [14.05.2020].

37 Štatistický úrad SR (ŠÚSR), *Number and Share of Valid Votes Cast for Political Parties*, <http://volby.statistics.sk/nrsr/nrsr2010/sr/tab3.jsp@lang=en.htm> [15.05.2020].

38 ŠÚSR, *Number and Share of Valid Votes Cast for Political Parties*, <http://volby.statistics.sk/nrsr/nrsr2012/sr/tab3.jsp@lang=en.htm> [15.05.2020].

votes³⁹. M. Kotleba described the Slovak National Uprising as national treason, and on his anniversary, he hung a funeral flag at the headquarters of the town hall in Banská Bystrica. In addition, he published the monthly “Náš kraj”, in which he praised Józef Tiso.

In 2006, M. Kotleba, along with some politicians of the SNS, disrupted the celebration of the uprising. When speaking of the extermination of Jews, he used the phrase “so-called Holocaust” and he called the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising a putsch characterizing its fighters as bandits⁴⁰.

For the first time, the People’s Party – Our Slovakia entered parliament in the 2016 election, the Slovaks cast 209 779 votes for this party, which constituted 8.04%. Compared to previous elections, the number of L’S-NS voters increased by around 160,000. There were 14 members on the National Council of the Slovak Republic⁴¹.

On March 14, 2017, on the anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak state, M. Kotleba issued a check for the amount of EUR 1,488 and handed it over to a large family. This is one of the donations with which he supports various people and organizations. Such donations are one of the methods used to support various people and organizations. Ice hockey club activist HC Veľký Krtíš asked the marshal for support of 1500 euros, and received 1488.88 – it is short for “Heil Hitler” (“h” is the eighth letter of the alphabet). At least seven times, he donated the amount of EUR 2028, which in Nazi symbolism the number 28 means “Blood and Honor”. This is the motto of Hitlerjugend, which is the NSDAP youth organization. M. Kotleba donated EUR 777 three times, which as Daniel Vražda writes, it doesn’t take much imagination to make a swastika out of them. Three “7s” are a type of triskelion used by the Afrikaans Resistance – a neo-Nazi political and paramilitary group from South Africa⁴².

39 ŠÚSR, *Number and share of valid votes given to candidates for presidents by self-governing regions*, http://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2013/VUC/Tabulka7_en.html [10.05.2020].

40 D. Mikušovič, *Nový župan ešte ako líder Pospolitosti chválil vyhnanie Židov z krajiny*, “SME”, 15.05.2020, <https://domov.sme.sk/c/7017134/novy-zupan-este-ako-lider-pospolitosti-chvalil-vyhnanie-zidov-z-krajiny.html> [10.05.2020].

41 ŠÚSR, *Number and Share of Valid Votes Cast for Political Parties*, <http://volby.statistics.sk/nrsr/nrsr2016/sk/data02.html> [15.05.2020].

42 D. Vražda, *Kotleba. Odkiaľ prišiel a ako je možné, že sedí v parlamente*, Bratislava 2017.

In the party's program⁴³ there is no mention of the Slovak State, although this often appeared in the statements of party members. Anti-Semitic statements also appear in the party's rhetoric.

Such rhetoric reprimands, among others, the Jewish roots of former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and financier George Soros⁴⁴. Milan Mazurek, MP of L'S-NS, was sentenced with a fine of EUR 5,000 by the court's final judgment. The fine concerned one of his statements in a radio station in which he praised Jozef Tiso, the leader of the Slovak state during the Second World War, while further stating that he was "the first and only true Slovak president"⁴⁵.

In the 2017 municipal elections, Marian Kotleba failed. An independent candidate, Banská Bystrica entrepreneur Ján Lunter obtained 48.5 percent votes (99,169), and the current zupan 23.2 percent (47,502)⁴⁶. A new electoral law was in force in these elections, which envisioned one round. Dennik N. compared the defeat of M. Kotleba to the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising of 1944. There are many people behind M. Kotleba's defeat who were not afraid to say no to fascism. The heroine of social media was the manager of the Hotel Bratislava from Bratislava, Alžbeta Abrahová, who refused to host a pre-election meeting of the People's Party – Our Slovakia with the participation of Marian Kotleba in one of the conference rooms. "We prefer hipster style, not Hitler style," was the justification that appeared on the hotel's official Facebook page⁴⁷.

On April 29, 2019, the Supreme Court issued a refusal against the Prosecutor-General's application regarding the outlawing of L'S-NS. In one of the points, the Prosecutor-General brought charges against the idea of the Slovak State, describing Jozef Tiso as the only true pres-

43 10 bodov za naše Slovensko! Volebný program politickej strany Kotleba – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko, <http://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Volebn%C3%BD-program-2016.pdf> [10.05.2020].

44 Ł. Lewkowicz, *Ekstremizm prawicowy...*; M. Budayová, *Programatika a ideológia Ľudovej strany Naše Slovensko a Slovenskej pospolitosti – národnej strany*, "Politologická revue" 2018, č. 1, p. 89-106.

45 M. Kokot, *Marian Kotleba, przywódca słowackich faszystów z zarzutem propagowania ekstremizmu*, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/demokracja/news/marian-kotleba-przywodca-slowackich-faszystow-z-zarzutem-propagowania-ekstremizmu/> [11.05.2020].

46 ŠÚSR, *Valid Votes Cast for Candidates for President by Territorial Division*, <http://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2017/en/data02.html> [10.05.2020].

47 J. Benčík, *Deň, keď sa šťastie ku Kotlebovcom obrátilo chrbtom*, "Dennik N", 14.10.2017, <https://dennik.sk/blog/919889/den-ked-sa-stastie-ku-kotlebovcom-obratilo-chrbtom/> [06.05.2020].

ident, and referring to the hymn from the second century and against the use of Nazi symbolism. In response, L'S-NS representatives claimed that they did not sympathize with the totalitarian regime. Referring to "Hey Slovaks," they said that this is the second, unofficial anthem of Slovakia and one of the symbols of "Slovak Motherland" and the Slovak National Party. In turn, the shout "On guard!" comes from the gymnastic society "Sokol" from 1921, which from 1934 was used by a Christian scout organization to defend Christian values, national culture, and language. The use of this greeting is, therefore, not from HG. The defendants also distanced themselves from the accusations against using the slogan "For God and the Nation," emphasizing that this was the creed of Andriy Hlinka and it is used out of respect for the father of the nation. The allegations regarding the propagation of neo-Nazi symbolism were considered absurd, and the amounts of donations were said to be completely random⁴⁸.

In the 2020 elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the People's Party - Our Slovakia won 7.97% of the votes. There are 17 members of L'S-NS in parliament⁴⁹. The pre-election forecasts gave this party a much higher result.

3. The anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising as an element of historical policy

Reflecting on historical policy, the solemn anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising outbreak deserves special attention. An important institution that cares about the SNP heritage and co-organizes the annual celebrations in Banská Bystrica is the SNP Museum that has been operating since 1955. In 2006, when Robert Fico, the head of the SMER party, became the prime minister, he initiated a change in the course of historical politics. The memory of the Slovak National State as a gathering nationwide was restored. Festive celebrations and historical reconstructions were organized more and more often.

48 Najvyšší súd Slovenskej republiky, 4Volpp/1/2017, 29.04.2019.

49 ŠÚSR, *Valid Votes Cast for Political Parties by Territorial Division*, <https://volbysr.sk/en/data02.html> [10.05.2020].

For the celebration of the 70th anniversary (August 29, 2014) of the uprising outbreak, the Director of the SNP Museum Stanislav Mičev did not invite Marian Kotleba, explaining that “he will not invite fascists to celebrate the anti-fascist uprising” because it would be unfair. M. Kotleba maintained his reluctance towards the uprising, believing that it contributed to the collapse of the Slovak state. Some of the councilors from Banská Bystrica spoke against M. Kotleba and praised the uprising as an anti-fascist⁵⁰.

On August 29, 2017, another celebration of the anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising outbreak took place. As already mentioned, representatives of other nationalities, such as Czechs, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, and Russians, took part in the uprising. Representatives of these nations thanked the President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska during central ceremonies in Banská Bystrica. President A. Kiska also criticized the revival of neo-fascist movements and extreme nationalist ideologies in the country and the region. At the same time, he noted that these groups’ ideas in solving contemporary problems are based on deeply anti-Christian and anti-human attitudes of hatred and aggression. Moreover, according to the President, these groups are trying to build on the poor historical knowledge of generations not experienced by atrocities the Second World War and totalitarian systems⁵¹. The significance of these ceremonies is evidenced by the fact that they were attended by representatives of 40 countries, including the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Sergey Szojgu and the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman⁵².

During the celebrations of the 74th anniversary of the uprising, President A. Kiska emphasized that the uprising should be remembered, pointing out that pretended calmness, comfort, and reluctance to face the unpleasant truth or a false unity, cannot excuse justifying

50 Tlačová agentúra Slovenskej republiky (TASR), *Riaditeľ Múzea SNP: Nebudem pozývať fašistu na oslavy*, “My Bystrica”, 16.05.2020, <https://mybystrica.sme.sk/c/7328686/riaditel-muzea-snp-nebudem-pozyvafasistu-na-oslavy.html> [10.05.2020].

51 TASR, *Kiska: We Must Oppose Evil and Oust Fascist from Banska Bystrica Office*, 29.08.2017, <https://newsnow.tasr.sk/policy/kiska-we-must-oppose-evil-and-oust-fascist-from-banska-bystrica-office/> [07.05.2020].

52 *Fico na oslavách SNP kritizoval sankcie, Paška neonacistov*, <https://www.webnoviny.sk/fico-na-oslavach-snp-kritizoval-sankcie-paska-neonacistov/> [15.05.2020].

the injustice and arbitrariness of power against one's own citizens, minorities, or individuals. He emphasized that the Slovaks joined the fight against the regime, which did not hesitate to send its own citizens to death in concentration camps, referring to the participation of the Slovak Republic in the extermination of the Roma and Jewish population. He emphasized that they opposed the official power, which had a puppet character, to save the future of their own state and its inhabitants. He pointed out that the uprising was a symbol of the unification of representatives of various political currents who rejected the illusion that Slovakia would survive thanks to the collaboration with the Third Reich⁵³.

At the ceremony in Banská Bystrica the chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the leader of the Slovak National Party Andrej Danko also pointed out that in relation to the 1944 uprising an indifference to these events can sometimes be felt, and Slovaks should not be let to lose their historical memory. A. Danko also referred to the current international situation, expressed that since the international community accepted the meeting of Mikhail Gorbachev with Ronald Reagan, why can't the meeting of Donald Trump with Vladimir Putin also be enjoyed? In his opinion, when world powers engage in dialogue, countries like Slovakia also benefit. Paying tribute to the participants of the uprising, in the first place, he mentioned Gustav Husák, associated with the liquidation of the Prague Spring, which caused controversy⁵⁴. Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini referred to the Kotleba party – the People's Party of Our Slovakia, whose representatives want to change history by insulting the participants of this national uprising. He thanked the inhabitants of the Banská Bystrica Region that they did not support this grouping in the 2016 local elections⁵⁵.

53 Slovenská tlačová agentúra (SITA), 74. výročie SNP: Prečítajte si celý prejav prezidenta Andreja Kisku, Noviny.sk, 29.08.2018, <https://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/365258-74-vyrocie-snp-precitajte-si-cely-prejav-prezidenta-andreja-kisku> [15.05.2020].

54 F. Roháček, *Oslavy SNP pripomenuli 74. Výročie mimoriadnej odvahy Slovákov*, BOnline.sk, 29.08.2018, <https://bbonline.sk/foto-oslavy-snp-pripomenuli-74-vyrocie-mimoriadnej-odvahy-slovakov/> [15.08.2020].

55 S. Chrtán, *Na Kisku pro oslavách SNP piskali, Pellegrini nazval LSNS fašistami*, "Trend", 29.08.2018, <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/kisku-pri-oslavach-snp-piskali-pellegrini-nazval-lsns-fasistami> [15.05.2020].

The 75th anniversary of the SNP was to have a special dimension due to the announced participation of the presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation, which eventually did not occur. This anniversary showed internal political divisions regarding the role of the Slovak State during the Second World War. The celebrations themselves were to become a spectacular international success of the Slovak Republic alongside the Russian and US presidents accompanied by leaders of the European Union countries with Chancellor Angela Merkel at the helm. Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini hoped that he would repeat the diplomatic success of the second cabinet of Mikuláš Dzurinda in 2005, when the summit with George W. Bush and W. Putin was held in Bratislava. G. W. Bush also promised to prepare a plan aimed at lifting visas for the citizens of the Slovak Republic, which took place in 2008. In Banská Bystrica, Donald Trump, Wladimir Putin, Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron and Boris Johnson did not appear. Even politicians with the rank of foreign ministers did not appear. Alexander Lukashenka did not come personally at the invitation of the chairman of the National Council and the leader of the SNS, A. Danko, Alexander Lukashenka, while the Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš did. Lower level delegations from Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Russia took part in the celebrations⁵⁶.

These celebrations showed the weakness of Slovak diplomacy. One can venture to say that this is the result of erratic foreign policy. On the other hand, some politicians have been promoting the concept of Slovakia's role as an intermediary between East and West since the 1990s. At present, Andrej Danko, the chairman of the parliament, is considered the most pro-Russian politician in Slovakia⁵⁷.

President Zuzana Čaputová stressed that without the SNP, Slovakia would not be a democratic state today. She reminded that supporters of the common Czechoslovak state, Slovak nationalists, communists, and supporters of democracy, Catholics, Protestants, Roma, and Jews

56 D. Vražda, *Danko spojil fašizmus a liberalizmus, príhovor k SNP ukazali hodnotové svety našich lídrov*, "Denník N", 29.08.2019, <https://dennikn.sk/1567493/danko-spojil-fasizmus-a-liberalizmus-prihovory-k-snp-ukazali-hodnotove-svety-nasich-lidrov/?ref=titi?ref=mwat> [15.05.2020].

57 Ł. Lewkowicz, *Niewykorzystana szansa słowackiej dyplomacji: obchody 75 rocznicy wybuchu Słowackiego Powstania Narodowego*, "Komentarze Instytutu Europy Środkowej" 2019, no. 63, <https://ies.lublin.pl/pub/publikacje/komentarze/ies-komentarze-63-63-2019.pdf> [15.05.2020].

fought in the uprising. In her opinion, Slovaks should have the strength and courage to defend the values of a democratic state of the law in line with the legacy of the uprising. The mass armed intervention has allowed us to regain our almost lost honor⁵⁸.

Prime Minister P. Pellegrini appealed to young people to learn tolerance and to understand what fascism can lead to. He added that extremists today have a particularly large impact on young people. In his speech, A. Danko emphasized the role played by the representatives of the Communist Party in the SNP, including the later Secretary General of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, President Gustáv Husák⁵⁹.

Closing remarks

The Slovak Republic is a relatively young country on the political map of Europe. In their history, Slovaks were greatly dependent upon Hungarians, and although they also formed a common state with the Czechs, the latter held a dominant position. Slovaks are a nation that began to shape only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Second World War plays a special role in historical memory. A year before its outbreak, the Slovaks gained autonomy within Czechoslovakia, and apart from the radical wing of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, they were not interested in the idea of independence. The international situation forced them to do so, under pressure from the Third Reich, the Slovak parliament announced the creation of the Slovak State.

In the initial period, the standard of living was relatively high, and the prevailing regime was relatively mild compared to Croatia or Romania. The problem that still causes widespread discussions is the extermination of Slovak Jews. As the Red Army approached Slovakia's borders, the Slovak National Uprising, organized by the Slovak army and directed against the rule of Jozef Tiso and the Third Reich, broke out.

58 A. Niewiadowski, *Słowacja*, [in:] *W parlamentach Europy. Kraje Grupy Wyszehradzkiej*, <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/media8.nsf/files/KKOIBGKFZP/%24File/Kronika%20Sejmowa%2084%20Visegrad.pdf> [09.05.2020].

59 D. Vražda, *Danko spojil fašizmus a liberalizmus, príhovor k SNP ukazali hodnotové svety našich lidrov*, "Denník N", 29.08.2019, <https://dennikn.sk/1567493/danko-spojil-fasizmus-a-liberalizmus-prihovory-k-snp-ukazali-hodnotove-svety-nasich-lidrov/?ref=tit1?ref=mwat> [15.05.2020].

The Slovak National Uprising was an event that, on the threshold of Slovak statehood, was the subject of extensive debates in parliament and among scientists and columnists. An important element of historical policy is the celebration of the anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising, which has become the creation of one of the myths of Slovak statehood in recent years.

Analyzing the Slovak political scene in the context of historical policy towards the Second World War, it can be concluded that the Slovak State / Slovak Republic and the Slovak National Uprising are at two opposite poles. The only party that refers to the Slovak State, even considering itself as the heir of the HSLS and attacking the SNP, is the People's Party – Our Slovakia, whose support is particularly high among young voters.

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