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Status and Prospects for Research on Slovak Propaganda and Information Policy with Regard to the Crisis in Polish-German Relations and Invasion of Poland (October 1938–December 1939)

Stan i perspektywy badań nad słowacką propagandą i polityką informacyjną wobec kryzysu w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich oraz agresji na Polskę (październik 1938–grudzień 1939 r.)

ABSTRACT

The paper explores several thematic areas. The first focuses on the political and diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia (also known as Czecho-Slovakia), Germany, and Poland. After March 14, 1939, the discussion shifts to the relationships between the Slovak State (Slovenský štát), Germany, and the Second Polish Republic. This section will

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cover the development of Slovak-German relations, starting from the period of Slovak autonomy (Slovenská krajina). It will also examine the negotiations and implementation of the Third Reich's demands in various aspects of political and social life in Slovakia, including German-Slovak actions against Poland.

The second area will focus on a historical analysis of the decrees, laws, decisions, organizational activities, and other factors that shaped the information policy of the Slovak State. The evaluation will include considerations of information policy, especially propaganda, discussing its content and mechanisms. This will be contextualized within a broader, though specific, analysis of the political regime in Slovakia.

Keywords: Information policy, Slovakia, Poland, aggression against Poland, German Third Reich, propaganda

STRESZCZENIE

Rozważania w prezentowanym tekście obejmą kilka obszarów tematycznych. Obszar pierwszy zawiera stosunki polityczne i dyplomatyczne między Czechosłowacją (względnie Czecho-Słowacją), Niemcami i Polską, po 14 marca 1939 zaś relacje między Państwem Słowackim (Slovenský štát), Niemcami oraz II RP. Rozważania będą dotyczyły genezy stosunków słowacko-niemieckich od okresu autonomii Słowacji (Slovenská krajina), negocjacje i realizację żądań III Rzeszy w wybranych dziedzinach życia politycznego i społecznego na Słowacji (m.in. w zakresie niemiecko-słowackich działań skierowanych przeciwko Polsce). W obszarze drugim będzie mieścić się historyczna analiza rozporządzeń, ustaw, decyzji, działań organizacyjnych itp., które kształtowały strukturę polityki informacyjnej Państwa Słowackiego. Refleksje dotyczące polityki informacyjnej, w tym propagandy, jej zawartości i mechanizmów funkcjonowania będą mieściły się w kontekście szerszej, aczkolwiek sprecyzowanej na konkretne czynniki analizy reżimu politycznego na Słowacji.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka informacyjna, Słowacja, II RP, agresja na Polskę, Niemcy, propaganda

Slovakia presents an interesting and rather unique case in the study of political transition and the formulation of information policy, as these developments occurred during the establishment of the institutions and frameworks of a new, independent state. Slovak autonomy emerged as a consequence of the Munich Conference and the acceptance of the final demands put forth by the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSLS) on October 6, 1938, in Žilina. This marked the beginning of a new political era in the region.

The evolution of the internal situation in Slovakia at the turn of 1938 and 1939, especially rapid political and social changes and the internal dynamics of the Slovak regime drifting towards authoritarianism, has quite an extensive subject literature. On this basis, it is possible to assume that political developments in Slovakia after the declaration of independence on March 14, 1939, were just the direct continuation of processes that had started in November and December 1938.

At the end of the 1930s, HSLS was the most important and strongest political party in Slovakia. Its representatives were convinced that they

had the only right to represent the interests of the Slovak society. Their initiatives and efforts to find new solutions for Slovakia (including the project of Polish–Slovak union¹), for example in the form of a union or any other format of political co-existence with neighboring countries if the Czecho-Slovak Republic would be destroyed by external forces, proved that they had not envisaged or planned any restoration of a Czecho-Slovak format after the disintegration of the Republic.

The actions of the HSLS leadership during the Munich crisis revealed its preferences for the principal political systems – parliamentary democracy and authoritarianism. Following the establishment of autonomy, HSLS activists sought to create a one-party system in Slovakia. Censorship was implemented, affecting both press outlets associated with political parties and those run by independent editors. By the end of October 1938, the media in Slovakia was placed under stringent oversight by the Autonomy Government, which involved appointing Government Commissioners to editorial teams and printing facilities.

During the autumn of 1938, the main topic in the Slovakian press had been Hungarian territorial demands and the results of the First Vienna Arbitration. Governmental and party propaganda linked such information with demands to remove from Slovak territory any hostile and foreign elements. Decisions taken by the autonomous Government allowed the deportations of Slovak Jews to areas that had been ceded to Hungary². The most recent publications present such elements as an initial phase of the Holocaust in Slovakia³. Such actions were supported by the propaganda campaign with intensive and virulent attacks on Slovak Jewish communities⁴.

¹ *Slovensko a slovenská otázka v poľských a maďarských diplomatických dokumentoch v rokoch 1938–1939*, eds. D. Segeš, M. Hertel, V. Bystrický, Bratislava 2012, pp. 242–243.

² See: I. Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, Bratislava 1991, pp. 19–82; E. Nižňanský, *Deportation der Juden in der Zeit der autonomen Slowakei im November 1938*, “Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung” 1998, 7, pp. 20–45; E. Nižňanský, V. Slneková, *Deportácie Židov za autonómie Slovenska 4.–5. 11. 1938*, “Studia Historica Nitriensia” 1996, 5, pp. 66–184; E. Nižňanský, *Deportácie Židov v novembri 1938 zo Slovenska v hláseniach styčných dôstojníkov*, “Studia Historica Nitriensia” 1998, 7, pp. 259–286; *Holokaust na Slovensku. Obdobie autonómie (6. 10. 1938–14. 3. 1939)*, ed. E. Nižňanský, Bratislava, 2001; *Propaganda antisemitizmu na Slovensku 1938–1945. Judaica et Holocaustica*, vol. 9, ed. E. Nižňanský, Bratislava–Banská Bystrica–Zvolen 2019; M. Frankl, *Země nikoho 1938. Deportace za hranice občanství*, “Forum Historiae” 2019, 13, 1, pp. 92–115.

³ M. Fiamová, M. Lónčíková, *Autonómia Slovenska 1938–1939: Počiatková fáza holokaustu a perzekúcií*, “Forum Historiae” 2019, 13, 1, pp. 1–6.

⁴ There had been many ethnic, racial, and ideological threads with regard to the Jewish populations. Jews were traditionally presented as supporters of Hungary and its revisionist

At that time, information and comments on policies of the Second Polish Republic Government were not on the very first pages of the Slovak press, with one exception. These had been information on giving out to Poland some areas in Orava, Spiš and Čadca District as a result of an ultimatum submitted by the Polish Government to Czecho-Slovakia after the Munich Conference.

Political forces in autonomous Slovakia sought, as indicated by the propaganda slogans of the era, to rectify the 'historical harm'. Another significant motif in the Slovak press was the perceived threat posed by the combined Polish and Hungarian interests in establishing a common border at the expense of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The change of pro-Polish positions by HSLŠ leaders and activists to a pro-German attitude, a result of border 'corrections' enforced by Poland, was rapidly reflected in the media. Karol Murgaš published anti-Polish articles in the "Slovák" journal, as a reaction to allegations presented by the Polish Telegraph Agency⁵.

Murgaš launched the propaganda campaign and toured the areas at the Polish-Slovak border. He visited the Čadca District, Hladovka, Suchá Hora and Javorina. It resulted in tensions in bilateral relations that impacted the work of the Polish-Slovak Delimitation Commission⁶.

In conjunction with the implementation of the initial anti-Jewish legal acts, the Government of autonomous Slovakia, dominated by the HSLŠ, began to prohibit political parties and sought to eradicate political pluralism⁷. This process was completed with the ban of the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana) on November 23, 1938, although it had also been, as HSLŠ, in favour of the Slovak autonomy.

The one-party system in Slovakia had already become a reality during the elections for the Parliament of the autonomous region (Slov. Snem Slovenskej krajiny) in December 1938. Election results were rigged, and, in addition, the reorganization of the Government and further political

policies, which could threaten the very existence of independent Slovakia, as well as an ally of Communists. I. Kamenec, *Po stopách*, p. 72.

⁵ K. Murgaš, *Čierna zástava nad Lysou Poľanou*, "Slovák" 1938, no. 264, p. 1; idem, *Kto poburuje ľud na slovenskom pohraničí?*, "Slovák" 1938, no. 271, p. 3.

⁶ M. Michela, *Miesto a úloha Karola Murgaša v radikálnom prúde slovenskej politiky v období rokov 1939–1941*, in: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov 1*, ed. M. Lacko, Trnava 2002, pp. 86–89.

⁷ The Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia, Czecho-Slovak Social-Democratic Workers Party, German Social-Democratic Labour Party, Jewish party, and United Socialistic-Zionist Workers Party were dissolved by the Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs No. 25/1939.

restrictions reinforced the position of the main political force⁸. The ‘witch-hunt’ for ‘foreign elements’ continued, with Czech officials, teachers and military stationed in Slovakia becoming the main target⁹.

Persecution of ideological HSEs opponents was more and more intensive and took much more repressive forms. The press supporting HSEs called even to establish concentration camps in Slovakia. Already during the period of Slovak autonomy, there had been cases of internment of political opponents in the camp in Ilava without a trial, although its formal status was accepted only after the formal establishment of the Slovak State¹⁰. In such a situation, the more significant role was played by the HSEs paramilitary organization, the Hlinka Guard (Slov. Hlinkova garda, abbrev. HG)¹¹.

As for the available subject literature, we should emphasize the value of an in-depth analysis of the political system and Slovak regime prepared by I. Baka¹², with many elements referring to Poland. It would be especially important to draw the attention of readers to the comparison of political changes in Slovakia, by E. Nižňanský, with German National Socialists’ efforts to reach for power¹³.

SLOVAKIA IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE, OCTOBER 1939–MARCH 1939

To understand the political relations between Slovakia and Poland, as well as between Slovakia and Germany, and how these relations are reflected in Slovak media, it is essential to analyze the evolution of the HSEs elites and the changing perceptions of Slovakia by other countries, particularly Poland and Germany.

⁸ E. Nižňanský, *Volby do snemu Slovenskej krajiny v roku 1938*, “*Studia Historica Nitriensia*” 1998, 7, pp. 163–203.

⁹ V. Bystrický, *Od autonómie k vzniku Slovenského štátu*, Bratislava 2008, p. 190; M. Fiamová, *Formovanie a činnosť ústredných orgánov štátnej správy na autonómnom Slovensku (október 1938–marec 1939)*, Bratislava 2020, pp. 93–110.

¹⁰ M. Zavacká, *Ludácka prevýchova. Mária Janšáková v Ilave roku 1939 a jej Cela číslo 20*, Bratislava 2018, pp. 37–38.

¹¹ P. Sokolovič, *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945*, Bratislava 2009; A. Hruboň, “*Za Slovenský štát, za novú Európu!*”: *Hlinkova garda v období nemeckej okupácie*, Banská Bystrica 2015.

¹² I. Baka, *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939–1940*, Bratislava 2010.

¹³ E. Nižňanský, *Dvojnásobné zmocnenie sa vlády na Slovensku v rokoch 1938/39 v porovnaní s “Machtergreifung” v rokoch 1933/34 v Nemecku*, in: *Nacionálno-socialistický systém vlády: Ríšska župa Sudety, Protektorát Čechy a Morava, Slovensko*, eds. M. Glettler, L. Lupták, A. Míšková, Bratislava 2002, pp. 185–211.

For this purpose, it is important to reference the works of V. Bystrický, who has authored two monographs and numerous scientific articles on the international policy developments that influenced the region at the end of the 1930s., the political, security and military situation in Central and Eastern Europe, the Czecho-Slovak foreign policy, German political and military plans, and attitude of HSLŠ leadership on the legal and political status of Slovakia – until March 1939¹⁴.

M. Gniazdowski made significant efforts to reconstruct the Slovak military and political strategy concerning Poland. He raised an important question for evaluating Slovak information policies regarding Polish-German relations: why did top HSLŠ politicians, after two decades of pro-Polish orientation, accept German hegemony?¹⁵ This problem should be extended as Poland, which was perceived as a ‘Guarantor’ and ‘Guardian’ of the independent Slovak State *in spe* on the international policy arena, had become a target for the Slovak attack in September 1939. We should also evaluate the issue of how this course of events was assessed, valued, and communicated in Slovak media.

To answer the first question, we should use the newest source editions, i.e. *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1938* (PDD), edited by M. Kornat¹⁶ and the volume on the year of 1939, edited by S. Żerko¹⁷. The latter author also prepared the text on Polish-Slovak relations during 1938/1939¹⁸. It could be complemented by source editions of the Polish Institute of International Affairs and other prints, which introduced the scientific circulation of diplomatic documents of Polish and Hungarian provenance¹⁹.

¹⁴ V. Bystrický, *Od autonómie; idem, Zahraničnopolitické súvislosti vzniku Slovenského štátu 14. marca 1939*, Bratislava 2014.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

¹⁶ *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1938*, ed. M. Kornat, Warszawa 2007. This source edition includes report of the Polish Ambassador in Prague, K. Papée, from December 1938 on the situation in Czecho-Slovakia after the Munich Conference, pp. 816–821. It was published earlier in: J. Tomaszewski, “Na południe od Karpat”. *Projekt zasad polityki Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej wobec Czecho-Słowacji*, “Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny” 2002, 2, 6 (10), pp. 159–170.

¹⁷ *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939, styczeń–sierpień*, ed. S. Żerko, Warszawa 2005. For example: Note from the meeting of J. Szembek with Ambassador L. Szathmáry 19 August 1939 on anti-Polish speech of A. Mach, *Ibidem*, pp. 773–774; *Notatka z rozmowy J. Szembeka z L. Szathmáry 24 VIII 1939 r. na temat antypolskich wystąpień A. Macha*, K. Murgaš, F. Karmasin, *ibidem*, p. 795.

¹⁸ S. Żerko, *Polska wobec autonomicznej Słowacji (październik 1938–marzec 1939)*, “Colloquium” 2014, 2, pp. 73–96.

¹⁹ *Slovensko a slovenská*.

Earlier source editions, although published a long time ago, remain valuable resources, particularly regarding German foreign policy documents and archives²⁰, the collection of Polish diplomatic and government records from the period after the Munich Conference²¹, the diary of the Polish Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jan Szembek²², or the study prepared by the German historian J. Hoensch on policies of the Slovak Hlinka People's Party²³.

Focus should also be placed on source editions created by Slovak historians. These editions contain documents related to political, economic, and military issues, which are crucial for understanding German strategies concerning Slovakia²⁴.

Since 1938, the policies of the Second Polish Republic have shown a clear tendency to engage more with Slovak issues. According to the general provisions of the so-called 'Third Europe' concept, Foreign Minister Józef Beck wanted to support the independence tendencies of Slovak political parties and aimed at the disintegration of the Czecho-Slovak Republic²⁵.

Polish territorial claims had not been the only cause for the vassalization of Slovakia by Germany. Polish policies towards Slovakia. Including 'Revendication' of areas in Orava, Spiš and Čadca District brought only negative results. Polish ruling establishment was quite convinced that

²⁰ *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1939–1945* [hereinafter: ADAP], *Serie D (1937–1945)*, vol. 4, *Die Nachwirkungen von München, Oktober 1938–März 1939*, Baden Baden 1951; ADAP, *Serie D (1937–1945)*, vol. 6, *Die letzten Monate vor Kriegsausbruch*, Baden Baden 1956.

²¹ *Monachium 1938. Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne*, eds. Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, Warszawa 1985.

²² *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka (1935–1945)*, vol. 4, ed. J. Zaráński, Londyn 1972.

²³ J.K. Hoensch, *Dokumente zur Autonomiepolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas*. München 1984; idem, *Slovensko a Hitlerova východná politika: Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana medzi autonómiou a separatizmom*, Bratislava 2001.

²⁴ "Tretia ríša" a vznik Slovenského štátu. *Dokumenty 1./Das "Dritte Reich" und die Entstehung des Slowakischen Staates. Dokumente 1*, eds. M. Schvarc, M. Holák, D. Schriffel, Bratislava 2008; "Tretia ríša" a vznik Slovenského štátu. *Dokumenty 2./Das "Dritte Reich" und die Entstehung des Slowakischen Staates. Dokumente 2*, eds. M. Schvarc, M. Holák, D. Schriffel, Bratislava 2010; *Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1938–1941 v dokumentoch 1, Od Mnúchova k vojne proti ZSSR/Slowakisch-deutsche Beziehungen 1938–1941 in Dokumenten 1, Von München bis zum Krieg gegen die UdSSR*, ed. E. Nižňanský, Prešov 2009; *Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1941–1945 v dokumentoch 2. Od vojny proti ZSSR po zánik Slovenskej republiky v roku 1945/Slowakisch-deutsche Beziehungen 1941–1945 in Dokumenten 2. Vom Krieg gegen die UdSSR bis zum Untergang der Slowakischen Republik im Jahr 1945*, ed. E. Nižňanský, Prešov 2011.

²⁵ See: T.V. Gromada, *The Slovaks and the failure of Becks "Third Europe" scheme*, "The Polish Revue" 1969, 14, 4, pp. 55–64; M. Gniazdowski, *Slovenský autonomizmus v polskej politike v 30. rokoch*, "Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2010" 2012, pp. 243–264.

Slovaks would consider these 'corrections' as proof of Polish self-restraint. Such an approach had been very naïve and was a kind of wishful thinking. In addition, as Polish efforts to establish a common border with Hungary had been a priority during the period of Slovak autonomy, this also did not help to improve bilateral relations. It can be argued that Poland was not able to offer Slovakia credible guarantees or a reasonable alternative to German 'proposals'²⁶. Establishing the common Polish-Hungarian border in March 1939, in the situation, when on the rubble of the Czecho-Slovak Republic a new Slovak State emerged, which signed agreements with Germany and became almost completely dependent on Berlin, was not absolutely in line with the concept of Slovakia as a country friendly to Poland and a subject of 'Third Europe' policies.

According to J. Němeček, the establishment of the Slovak State under the patronage of Germany meant, in practical terms, the failure of Polish policies in Slovakia²⁷. A new country, dependent on Germany, was a kind of surprise for Polish diplomacy²⁸. When the "Slovák" journal referenced the positive responses of the Polish press, the prevailing sentiment in Poland had shifted, becoming less friendly and supportive than previously²⁹. The arrival of German troops in Slovakia generated significant interest and considerable apprehension. Press propaganda efforts³⁰ and assurances by Slovak politicians aimed to convince foreign public opinion that such development was only a temporary solution, have not generated any substantial results³¹.

J. Beck's opinion that Slovak independence created new opportunities for relations with Germany proved to be an illusion after Slovakia signed an agreement with Germany. This agreement, known as the Treaty of Protection, was concluded between the German Reich and the State of Slovakia on March 18/23, 1939. It is important to note, from the perspective of information policy, that the text of this agreement was published only a year after the document was signed³².

Despite entering into such an agreement, Germany continued to leverage Slovakia in its dealings with Poland. During the March Crisis, the

²⁶ M.P. Deszczyński, *Ostatni egzamin. Wojsko Polskie wobec kryzysu czechosłowackiego 1938–1939*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 347–348.

²⁷ J. Němeček, *Slovensko-polské vztahy v předvečer druhé světové války*, "Historický časopis" 1997, 45, 3, p. 440.

²⁸ M. Kornat, M. Wołos. *Józef Beck. Biografia*, Kraków 2020, p. 666.

²⁹ *Slovenský štát v zrkadle zahraničných slovanských novín*, "Slovák" 18 March 1939, p. 3.

³⁰ *Čo je pravda o pobyte nemeckého vojska na Slovensku*, "Slovák" 18 March 1939, p. 1.

³¹ *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1938*, p. 93.

³² K. Zavacká, *Tlač, cenzúra a propaganda na Slovensku od 6. októbra 1938 do konca vojny*, "Česko-slovenská historická ročenka" 2007, p. 248.

Germans were acutely aware of Polish goals and political priorities regarding the Czechoslovak Republic. One alternative under consideration involved using Slovakia as a tactic with Poland to secure concessions on Danzig/Gdansk and transit through the so-called 'Polish Corridor'³³.

'Corrections' of the Polish-Czecho-Slovak border on the Polish-Slovak section in 1938 had negative repercussions after the establishment of official diplomatic relations by Poland and Slovakia. Slovak chargé d'affaires in Warsaw, K. Klinovský and his successor Ambassador L. Szathmáry reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bratislava that the Polish Government considered Slovakia as a client state of the Third Reich.

Slovak diplomats frequently noted Polish assertions that the 1938 'corrections' were largely insignificant, particularly when contrasted with the Wehrmacht's annexation of Slovak ethnic regions west of the River Váh (pol. Wag)³⁴. The main topics of their meetings in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been the presentation by the Polish side of diplomatic notes with protests against the anti-Polish campaign in the Slovak press and anti-Polish speeches of Slovak politicians, such as Alexander Mach³⁵. One of the few exceptions was the conclusion of the bilateral agreement on economic and cultural relations in May 1939³⁶. In this specific case, the Slovak Government was reprimanded by its German 'protector'.

Regarding Polish-Slovak and Slovak-German diplomatic relations, the attitude of L. Szathmáry is noteworthy. During his discussions and meetings with the Undersecretary of State in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, J. Szembek, Szathmáry often expressed negative opinions about the Third Reich³⁷. In reaction to the Slovak Armed Forces being a part of the

³³ ADAP, *Serie D (1937–1945)*, vol. 6, pp. 59, 72. Note from the meeting of J. von Ribbentrop with J. Lipski, 21 March 1939; Draft Ribbentrop message to H. von Moltke, 23 March 1939.

³⁴ J. Němeček, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

³⁵ Slovenský národný archív, z. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí, Box No. 112, no pagination. *Raport No. 327/39*, L. Szathmáry's Note on the Visit to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 June 1939; *Ibidem*, Intervention of chargé d'affaires M. Chalupczynski directed to Minister F. Ďurčanski, 31 July 1939, in response to speeches of the Prime Minister, J. Tiso, and ministers J. Stan and A. Mach.

³⁶ E. Orlof, A. Pasternak, *Stosunki polsko-czesko-słowackie w latach 1918–1939*, Rzeszów 1994, pp. 140–144.

³⁷ For example, during his meeting with J. Szembek on 19 August 1939, Ambassador referred to anti-Polish propaganda in Slovakia and stated: 'with Germans we have to be cautious and a distrustful, as we have to deal with criminals and gangsters', *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939*, p. 773.

German invasion of Poland, he renounced allegiance to the Government in Bratislava and joined the Czechoslovak resistance movement³⁸.

Additional sources of information are ego-documents: diaries, memoirs, reports of Slovak politicians, diplomats and military commanders, and other participants of important events of 1938–1939, including the leader of the pro-Polish faction in HSLŠ, Karol Sidor³⁹.

Reflections on Slovak media during that period should include recollections from Polish diplomats, social activists, and military personnel, all of whom were directly or indirectly involved in shaping Polish-Slovak relations, as well as the organization of Polish-Czechoslovak contacts at the end of the 1930s.

One of the best examples of such documents is the response of Kazimierz Papée, the former Polish Ambassador to Prague (December 1936–March 1939), to a questionnaire distributed to diplomats by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This exercise was related to the project to prepare a study on Polish-Czecho-Slovak relations at the order of the Prime Minister and Minister of Military Affairs, General Władysław E. Sikorski⁴⁰. This could be complemented by the report of the former Polish Consul in Bratislava Zbigniew Jakubski⁴¹, a short note of the Secretary in the Polish Embassy in Bratislava, Wojciech Krzyżanowski⁴², report of Waław Łaciński, the Polish Consul in Bratislava (1932–1939), referring to Polish policies concerning Slovakia in the second half of 1930s⁴³ and other documents⁴⁴.

³⁸ See: D. Segeš, *Ladislav Szathmáry: Vyslanec, ktorý sa nebál povedať "nie"*, in: *Muži diplomacie: Slováci na významných postoch československej zahraničnej služby*, Liptovský Mikuláš 2020, pp. 200–202.

³⁹ *Vznik Slovenského štátu. 14. marec 1939. Spomienky aktérov historických udalostí*, part 1, eds. V. Bystrický, R. Letz, O. Podolec, Bratislava 2007; *Vznik Slovenského štátu. 14. marec 1939. Spomienky aktérov historických udalostí*, part 2, eds. V. Bystrický, R. Letz, O. Podolec, Bratislava 2008; K. Sidor, *Takto vznikol Slovenský štát*, Bratislava 1991; idem, *Denníky 1930–1939*, Bratislava 2010.

⁴⁰ M.K. Kamiński, E. Orlof, *Odpowiedź Kazimierza Papée na ankietę rządu polskiego na uchodźstwie dotyczącą polskiej polityki wobec Czechosłowacji w 1938 r.*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1998, 30, 4, pp. 145–158.

⁴¹ *Slovensko a slovenská*, pp. 416–420.

⁴² W. Krzyżanowski, *Lata bukaresztańskie (1)*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 1976, 38, pp. 192–199.

⁴³ *Slovensko a slovenská*, pp. 426–427.

⁴⁴ W. Stachiewicz, *Pisma*, vol. 1, *Przygotowania wojenne w Polsce 1935–1939*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 1977, 40.

WAR PREPARATIONS AND PARTICIPATION OF SLOVAK ARMED FORCES
IN THE INVASION OF POLAND – STATUS OF RESEARCH

The Polish research results on the participation of Slovak troops in the German invasion of Poland were presented by M. Gniazdowski⁴⁵. If this were supplemented by works published after 2007, the whole set constitutes the extensive set of subject literature⁴⁶. The Slovak subject literature on that topic was reviewed by the author of this text⁴⁷.

It should be noted that Slovak researchers have been so far more interested in the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939, in the so-called Hungarian-Slovak 'small war' or the process of inclusion of Slovakia to the German sphere of influence in 1939 than in military operations of Slovak Armed Forces during the German aggression against Poland. The question of the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939 is also not present and does not play a significant role in current Polish-Slovak relations and is not present in the collective consciousness of Slovaks as a Nation⁴⁸. Such issues did not draw too much attention from Slovak historians. I. Baka was the first to launch comprehensive and systematic research on this specific topic⁴⁹. M. Lacko published a collection of documents, with excerpts from War Diaries and other reports from Slovak military units that participated in the invasion of Poland⁵⁰.

J. Berghauzen stated that during the interwar period, 'Polish official structures paid a lot of attention to Polish propaganda activities in Slovakia'⁵¹. However, there is one issue: the author interpreted the term 'pro-

⁴⁵ M. Gniazdowski, *Účast Slovenska na agresii proti Poľsku v roku 1939 v poľskej historiografii*, in: *Slovensko medzi 14. marcom 1939 a salzburskými rokovaniami*, eds. M. Pekár, R. Pavlovič, Prešov 2007, pp. 293–313.

⁴⁶ See: M. Korkuc, *Słowacki udział w wojnie. Okupacja polskiego Spiszu i Orawy*, "Biuletyn IPN" 2010, 1–2 (108–109), pp. 24–30; D. Golik, *Wrzesień 1939 w dolinie Dunajca. Bój graniczny i walki nad górnym Dunajcem między 1 a 6 września 1939 roku*, Kraków–Warszawa 2020; *Slovensko-poľské vzťahy 1918–1945 očami diplomatov*, eds. L. Kázmerová, E. Orlof, Bratislava 2008.

⁴⁷ D. Segeš, *Wrzesień w cieniu marca: rok 1939 w słowackiej historiografii po 1989 roku*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 2009, 41, 3, pp. 141–153.

⁴⁸ D. Segeš, *Trzeci agresor*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2014, no. 38, Annex: *Czwarty rozbiór Polski – 75 lat później*, pp. 68–69.

⁴⁹ I. Baka, *Slovenská republika a nacistická agresia proti Poľsku*, Bratislava 2006. Translated to Polish: I. Baka, *Udział Słowacji w agresji na Polskę w 1939 roku*, Warszawa 2011.

⁵⁰ M. Lacko, *Proti Poľsku. Odráž ľáženia roku 1939 v denníkoch a kronikách slovenskej armády*, Bratislava 2007.

⁵¹ J. Berghauzen, *Stosunki polsko-słowackie w latach 1938–1947*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1975, 66, 3, p. 412.

paganda' primarily in the context of Polish-Slovak cultural interactions, including scholarships for Slovak youth in Poland.

The historiography, with a few exceptions, did not prepare too many reflections on the role of propaganda in Polish-Slovak relations in the 1930s. The study of E. Nižňanský should be mentioned here, as it focused on Slovak Government propaganda activities related to the preparation for the invasion of Poland⁵².

P. Matula described and evaluated anti-Polish articles from the Slovak press published during the summer of 1939. He included his assessments in the monograph on the Polish-Slovak dispute in the Čadca District⁵³. For the same book, I. Baka prepared a sub-chapter titled *Anti-Polish Propaganda in Slovakia in 1939*⁵⁴. He illustrated his part with some examples of press articles from August–September 1939 with clear anti-Polish statements and anti-Polish accents.

INFORMATION POLICY IN SLOVAKIA 1938–1939: METHODS, TOOLS, AND STRUCTURE

After political, social, and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, a vivid and extensive discussion started on the character and type of the Slovak political system in 1938/1939–1945. It would be quite difficult to quote even the main elements of it⁵⁵. To make the conclusion straightforward, it is necessary to point out that the one-party system built by the HSLS, with Christian socialism, German national socialism, and fascist corporatism, had all the distinctive elements of authoritarianism. In all authoritarian regimes, propaganda played a role. According to the assumptions of the Third Reich ideologists, propaganda was a key to creating a totalitarian state⁵⁶.

⁵² E. Nižňanský, *Slovenská účasť vo vojne Proti Poľsku 1939. Občan Slovenska v zajatí propagandy vtedajších vládnych predstaviteľov. Úvahy a dokumenty*, "Studia Historica Nitrensia" 1997, 7, pp. 169–216.

⁵³ P. Matula, *Rozdelené Kysuce. Zabratie severných Kysúc Poľskom v rokoch 1938–1939*, Kraków 2012.

⁵⁴ I. Baka, *Slovenská*, pp. 55–63; idem, *Udzial*, pp. 82–94. Also I. Baka referred to this in: I. Baka, *Návrat odtrhnutých bratov. Protipoľská propaganda roku 1939*, in: *Storočia propagandy. Slovensko v osídľach ideológií*, eds. V. Bystrický, J. Roguľová, Bratislava 2005, pp. 131–140.

⁵⁵ M. Zavacká endeavored to encapsulate it in: eadem, *Słowacka historiografia dziejów najnowszych od 1990 roku*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2000, 2/2 (4), pp. 351–360.

⁵⁶ E. Schockel, *Das politische Plakat: Eine psychologische Betrachtung*, München 1938, p. 240.

The Government of the Slovak autonomy, dominated by HSLŠ, had not limited its information policy just to censorship. The State and Party apparatus was also engaged in propaganda. Such activities were coordinated by the Office for Propaganda (Slov. Úrad propagandy), led by A. Mach. This element was established in October 1938. According to regulations issued at that time, the Office was responsible for operation of the Slovak Press Office (Slov. Slovenská tlačová kancelária, STK), for films, visual arts, music industry and Slovak Radio (Slov. Slovenský rozhlas).

The press censorship remained within the structures and competencies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At first, such an office was not so active and had not taken any operational actions. In February 1939, the first statute of the Office was prepared but it had not entered into force⁵⁷. In the summer of 1939, the General Secretariat of HSLŠ organized the Propagation Department, which was responsible for the organization of party meetings and rallies, which had become a routine party activity after March 14, 1939⁵⁸. Only after German–Slovak negotiations, conducted in Salzburg in 1940, German advisers were introduced to Slovak ministries, mass national organizations and state offices (including the Office for Propaganda)⁵⁹.

After HSLŠ took over power in Slovakia, it started actions that were to re-educate the society ‘according to national and Christian standards’⁶⁰. Schools, cultural institutions, and media were to play the main role in the process. After the introduction of the ban on political parties and the introduction of censorship (including the ban on the procurement and import of foreign press), members of the Slovak People’s Party (Slov. Slovenská ľudová strana), so-called ‘Ludáks’, acquired the information monopoly. After declaring Slovak independence, new restrictions were introduced, including an obligation to use STK information when presenting news on developments abroad⁶¹.

Topics related to information policy in the context of building, strengthening, and functioning of the ‘ludácky’ regime are present, sometimes as a low-priority thread, in most of the works on the Slovak State.

⁵⁷ K. Zavacká, *Tlač*, pp. 214–242.

⁵⁸ I. Baka, *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939–1940*, Bratislava 2010, pp. 43–44.

⁵⁹ R. Michelko, *Úrad propagandy (1938–1945)*, “Historický zborník” 2004, 14, 1, pp. 149–166; T. Tönsmeier, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939–1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn*, Paderborn 2003.

⁶⁰ I. Baka, *Mechanizmus, ciele a metódy pôsobenia ľudáckej propagandy v rokoch 1938–1939*, “Historický časopis” 2003, 51, 2, p. 277.

⁶¹ Instruction for the press: 31 March 1939. See: I. Baka, *Politický*, p. 86.

We can use papers prepared by J. Darmo⁶², I. Baka⁶³, and K. Zavacká⁶⁴. As for research on the impact of press propaganda on international relations, it is possible to use a study on Slovak-Hungarian relations in 1938–1945 by M. Hetényi⁶⁵.

The common feature of all the above-mentioned publications is the mapping of a specific period. In most cases, they are short and focus on just one aspect of propaganda, i.e. the press. This approach highlights the one-dimensional nature of Slovak propaganda, which did not produce the desired results, even though periodicals were the main media in Slovakia and beyond. It should be noted that there is no comprehensive scientific monograph on these topics.

Only a few publications cover information policy dimensions other than the press. V. Draxler analyzed the situation, and activities of Slovak Radio, its staff, and relations with STK⁶⁶. He also tried to examine the content of radio programs broadcasted from Vienna and directed to the population of Slovakia in 1938–1939. It allowed us to explore the character of Nazi propaganda and its impact on Slovaks⁶⁷.

Films and the film industry also became an important element of HSLC propaganda and part of their ideological activities. The Prime Minister of the Autonomy Government, J. Tiso, with his regulation of November 1938, introduced the ban on showing so-called ‘harmful’ movies⁶⁸. In November 1938, Tatrabanka in Bratislava established a dedicated film division – the Central Film Department (Slov. Ústredná správa spojených kín) which began producing a new weekly newsreel – “Nástup”⁶⁹. This was shown before films in cinemas and became a significant instrument

⁶² J. Darmo, *Propaganda Slovenského štátu (I. časť, formovanie jej mechanizmu)*, in: *Otázky žurnalistiky: štúdie, články k problémom dejín, teórie tlače, rozhlasu a televízie 1965*, Martin 1966, pp. 320–367; idem, *Propaganda Slovenského štátu II. časť (1939–1944)*, in: *Otázky žurnalistiky 1967*, Martin 1967, pp. 51–74.

⁶³ I. Baka, *Mechanizmus*; idem, *Politický*, pp. 85–94.

⁶⁴ K. Zavacká, *Tlač*.

⁶⁵ M. Hetényi, *Propaganda v slovensko-maďarských vzťahoch v rokoch 1938–1945*, “Forum Historiae” 2012, 6, 2, pp. 101–113.

⁶⁶ V. Draxler, *Der Slowakische Rundfunk 1938–1945*, “Bohemia” 2011, 51, 1, pp. 130–163.

⁶⁷ H. Delfiner, *Vienna Broadcast to Slovakia 1938–1939: A Case Study in Subversion*, Brandenton 1974.

⁶⁸ M. Ďurkovská, *Kultúra ako jedna z dimenzií spoločenského života v Slovenskej republike 1939–1945*, in: *Život v Slovenskej republike. Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov 9*, ed. P. Sokolovič, Bratislava 2010, p. 253; M. Fiamová, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶⁹ P. Hanáková, *Prvý slovenský zvukový týždenník NÁSTUP*, “Vojnová kronika” 2017, 6, 2, pp. 19–28.

of government propaganda⁷⁰. Another tool that was used was photographic stylized material, as we can see in collections of official photographs from the period of the Slovak State prepared by B. Koklesová in her critical source edition⁷¹.

The dependence of the Slovak State on the Third Reich was not only limited to political, military, and economic dimensions. According to the directive of the German High Command of the Armed Forces (Ger. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW), signed by its Chief – Colonel General W. Keitel on May 4, 1939, activities of the German Military Commission in Slovakia (Ger. Deutsche Militärkommission in der Slowakei, DMK) were to concentrate on issues related to status and situation in the security zone⁷², Slovak armament industry, Slovak Armed Forces, transfer of post-Czecho-Slovak Army weaponry and military equipment to Germany, and distribution of weaponry and military equipment to meet the needs of the Slovak Armed Forces.

Slovak historians tried to explore, in their works and scientific projects, important elements that shaped the dependence of Slovakia on Germany⁷³. Its role and activities were not limited to the dimensions mentioned above, but they also played a role in directing Slovak propaganda activities before the outbreak of WWII. For example, we could refer to German-Slovak arrangements on anti-Polish propaganda operations and German OKW requirements, discussed during the meeting of the DMK with the Slovak Prime Minister J. Tiso and other ministers of the Slovak Government on July 17, 1939.

The Slovak Government agreed to all German demands, i.e. breaking any relationships with Poland, strict monitoring, and providing security on the Polish-Slovak border, preventing Slovak citizens from joining the Legion in Poland, suppressing any anti-German Polish propaganda activities in Slovakia, and countering Polish Intelligence operations in the country⁷⁴.

At the demand of the German Military Commission, some personnel changes were also introduced in Slovak media to exercise tighter control over radio broadcasting and the press. On August 29, 1939, the Chief of the Office for Propaganda, A. Mach, following the German demands, appointed

⁷⁰ P. Mihálik, *Vznik slovenskej národnej kinematografie 1896–1948*, Bratislava 1994, p. 82.

⁷¹ B. Koklesová, *V tieni Tretej ríše: Oficiálne fotografie Slovenského štátu*, Bratislava 2009.

⁷² See: L. Hubenák, *Politika nemeckej ochrannej zóny na Slovensku roku 1939*, "Sborník archívnych prác" 1967, 17, 2, pp. 318–409.

⁷³ E. Nižňanský, J. Tulkisová, *Pôsobenie Nemeckej vojenskej komisie na Slovensku v roku 1939*, "Vojenská história" 2007, 9, 4, pp. 36–60; *Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1938*; "Tretia ríša" a vznik Slovenského štátu. Dokumenty 2.

⁷⁴ *Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1938*, p. 515.

officials to coordinate propaganda activities: Tido J. Gašpar for the press and K. Körper for Radio broadcasting⁷⁵. After the outbreak of WWII, the Slovak Radio aired the statement that the Slovak Armed Forces ‘serve and fight’ as the ‘main and first military element of the Slovak State’, according to military traditions and ideas of the Hlinka Guard⁷⁶.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

To complete a research project and related tasks, including concluding efforts aimed at the conceptualization of issues and problems to be explored and evaluated, it is necessary to define basic terms and definitions, such as propaganda, strategic communication, public diplomacy, and psychological warfare. All are relatively new concepts and subject to research by many scientific disciplines since the 1950s. All have common features as they use similar means, also from the technical domain (press, print, radio, film).

It was propaganda that, along with the political, economic, and military force, created specific policies of Nazi Germany⁷⁷. The Slovak State, a ‘classic example [...], how we see the protection of the Southern East European Slovak State’⁷⁸, had become a part of a hegemonic variant of German foreign policy, which created and used a system of pseudo-alliances.

Such an approach could be placed somewhere in between two extremes of the German hegemonic policies: the strategy of enslavement and extermination, as in the case of occupied Poland; and the use of collaboration regimes, as in the cases of Northern and Western Europe. The Slovak State had been a side effect of the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia and a kind of experiment, which was not directly linked to efforts to build a new European order with the long-term ideological perspective. What should, however, be noted is the fact that the Third Reich propaganda used and promoted such an interpretation concerning Slovakia⁷⁹.

As for research on the Slovak information policies in 1938–1939, propaganda should be perceived as an effect of some associated communication processes with several actors: the Government, mass media,

⁷⁵ I. Baka, *Slovenská*, p. 60.

⁷⁶ E. Rusko, *Sme na stráži!*, “Nový svet” 9 September 1939, p. 11.

⁷⁷ See: E.C. Król, *Propaganda i indoktrynacja narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech w latach 1919–1945*, Warszawa 1999.

⁷⁸ *ADAP, Serie D (1937–1945)*, vol. 6, p. 96.

⁷⁹ J.K. Hoensch, *Studia Slovaca: Studien zur Geschichte der Slowaken und der Slowakei*, München 2000, pp. 254–255.

and society (public opinion). To analyze the communication activities of the 'Ludáks' regime, this text will use the universal formula developed by H.D. Lasswell: 'Who says What, in Which Channel, to Whom, with What Effects?'⁸⁰. Such an approach to the problem requires seeking answers to some questions, i.e. on the recipients of propaganda operations and the effectiveness of such activities conducted by an authoritarian regime. As for Slovak society and its response to propaganda, we can only submit and try to verify several hypotheses.

This also refers to the reaction of Slovaks to the engagement of their country in World War on the side of Germany⁸¹. I. Kamenec claims that during the first months and years of the Slovak Republic, the level of support and acceptance of the regime had been much higher than later in the war⁸². He also stated that: 'taking into account the current state of historical knowledge, presenting any strong theses, or even conclusions on the situation within the Slovak society, viewpoints, opinions, attitudes and actions taken by Slovak citizens in 1938–1945, would be audacious and irresponsible'⁸³.

On the other hand, regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-Polish propaganda in Slovakia, there are some documents, which allow some summaries. In the note prepared by one of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, dated June 27, 1939 (a document without any signature or name of the author), the drafter separated the unfriendly actions of the Slovak Government from the general perception of Poland by Slovak society: 'As for Slovak Society, after the period of anti-Polish rallies related to the corrections of the Polish-Slovak border at the cost of Slovakia, we can now notice a reverse of the trend and a sharp increase in pro-Polish sentiments'⁸⁴. That was mainly related to the response of the Polish Government to German political and territorial demands.

As for the project *Polish September Military Campaign 1939*, this thread deserves our attention and requires in-depth analysis. There is a good reason to consider the citation from the previous paragraph not only

⁸⁰ H.D. Lasswell, *The structure and function of communication in society*, in: *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. L. Bryson, New York 1948, p. 37.

⁸¹ I. Kamenec stated: 'So far, our knowledge on participation of Slovakia in WWII and how that was perceived and assessed by the society is superficial. The same assessment refers to involvement of Slovaks in anti-German coalition. General statements on spontaneous objection to war and sympathy towards Allies would not do'. I. Kamenec, *Spoločnosť politika historiografía: Pokrivené (?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí*, Bratislava 2009, p. 55.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

⁸⁴ *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939*, p. 637.

as Polish diplomatic wishful thinking. There were rational arguments to assume that Slovak slogans and narratives presenting Poland and its citizens as 'enemies' and 'oppressors' had not been as effective as the Slovak ruling establishment wanted them to be. It most likely happened due to the short but sometimes very difficult experiences with German 'allies' and 'protectors'.

Nazi officials in Germany carefully studied theoretical works on propaganda prepared by American authors (including H.D. Lasswell and L.W. Doob). They learned their lessons and prepared conclusions that were put into practice⁸⁵. Hitler many times emphasized that the main task of propaganda was not to present scientific conclusions to an individual citizen but to draw the attention of the masses to facts, cases, and needs, and build narratives that would shape the general comprehension of the situation and mood of the society⁸⁶. Political and social propaganda is effective if it can rationalize the aspirations, sentiments, and biases of recipients⁸⁷. To elaborate more on that topic, we should refer to H.D. Lasswell characterized propaganda as 'the control of opinion by significant symbols' such as stories, rumours, reports, pictures, and other forms of social communication⁸⁸.

If we accept that the restoration of Slovak territories lost in 1938 was a rationalization of sentiments, collective aspirations, and hopes, we can assume that Slovak propaganda effectively reached and influenced Slovak society. Such an approach could also be referred to areas in southern Slovakia, annexed by Hungary after the Vienna Arbitrage, as well as the northern parts of Orava, Spiš and Čadca District. This was especially true during the period of general societal mobilization during the invasion of Poland.

For example, we can present examples of very expressive propaganda symbols, when Slovakia was compared to 'the bleeding flesh'⁸⁹ and Po-

⁸⁵ L. Finch, *Psychological propaganda: The war of ideas on ideas during the first half the Twentieth Century*, "Armed Forces and Society" 2000, 26, 3, p. 368.

⁸⁶ 'Die Aufgabe der Propaganda liegt nicht in einer wissenschaftlichen Ausbildung des einzelnen, sondern in einem Hinweisen der Masse auf bestimmte Tatsachen, Vorgänge, Notwendigkeiten usw., deren Bedeutung dadurch erst in den Gesichtskreis der Masse gerückt werden soll.' A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, München 1943, p. 197.

⁸⁷ A. Huxley, *Notes on Propaganda*, in: *Voice of the People*, eds. R.M. Christenson, R.O. McWilliams, New York 1962, p. 327.

⁸⁸ H.D. Lasswell, *The theory of political propaganda*, "The American Political Science Review" 1927, 21, 3, p. 627; idem, *The Scope of Research on Propaganda and Dictatorship*, in: *Propaganda and Dictatorship: A Collection of Papers*, New Jersey 1936, pp. 105–121.

⁸⁹ K. Murgaš, *Pol'sko a my*, "Slovák" 27 August 1939, p. 1.

land as a country, which 'already two times tore out parts of ethnically Slovak areas of the body of our Country'⁹⁰.

Therefore, state propaganda presented the Slovak invasion of Poland as making amends for hostile acts of Poland during the interwar period, as 'severe punishment of Polish thieving aspirations, with respect for the principle of Divine Justice'⁹¹. Manipulation of symbols could be easily noticed in public speeches of Prime Minister J. Tiso on the similarities of German National Socialism and Christian Conservatism, as he put this in his text (or rather address) published in the "Slovák" journal on the very day of the invasion of Poland⁹².

J. Ellul characterized propaganda as a set of methods used by an organized group with the objective to not only make a change but also to reinforce already existing trends and encourage individuals to get involved⁹³. Therefore, in the context of Slovak information policies before the invasion of Poland, it would be necessary to point out that they had used methods, techniques, and tools of propaganda of agitation. Such activities were characterized by actions launched both by protagonists of radical political and social revolutions, decisions and operations of governments and their administrations when they mobilized the society to fight for a cause⁹⁴.

Findings of S. Moscovici's research on the structure of communication show that propaganda campaigns differ significantly from other forms of human relations such as diffusion and promotion. It leads or even aims at schematism, simplification, and distortion of the general picture, all to build a dichotomous world and create stereotypes⁹⁵. This was noticeable in press articles about an 'eternal Slovak-German friendship' and on posters and leaflets showing the members of the Hlinka paramilitary shaking hands with a colleague from Sturmabteilung (SA)⁹⁶.

The definition of total propaganda⁹⁷, in relation to the information policy during the period of August–September 1939, raises the question

⁹⁰ See: I. Baka, *Udzial*, p. 92.

⁹¹ *Orava a Poliáci*, "Gardista" 16 September 1939, p. 2.

⁹² Tiso stated that the decisive moment was coming, and new Central Europe was emerging. The most important would be effective exploitation of the "völkisch" principle – 'We go to war because we want to get what we need and what we deserve', *Významný prejav predsedu vlády*, "Slovák" 1 September 1939, p. 1.

⁹³ J. Ellul, *Propaganda. The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, New York 1973, p. 61.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 70–74.

⁹⁵ S. Moscovici, *Psychoanalysis: Its Image and its Public*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 256–259, 311–313. More on organization of propaganda campaigns: L.W. Doob, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique*, New York 1935.

⁹⁶ *Kysuce 1938–1945*, eds. M. Janík et al., Čadca 2019, p. 80.

⁹⁷ J. Ellul, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–32.

of short-term objectives (mobilization of the society during the invasion of Poland) and long-term goals, such as changing the worldview of the Slovak society, or creating a 'New Man'⁹⁸.

Participation in the war against Poland was aimed at the stabilization of the Slovak regime. According to the narratives of the government propaganda, joining forces with Germany during the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939 was also a demonstration of loyalty towards the German 'guardian'. It was to help Slovakia, which was a kind of bargaining tool in a German play with Poland and Hungary, to win a safe and permanent place on a map of 'New Europe'. The military campaign was also intended to build the traditions of the Slovak military⁹⁹.

In comparison to the mythologized defence of Slovakia in the 'Small War' with Hungary in March 1939, the Polish Campaign (named by propaganda after the invasion – 'poľské ťaženie') was a kind of success story. It could also be considered an important achievement of the Slovak revisionism declared at the turn of 1938/1939¹⁰⁰. The propaganda campaign was a success, as it was able to convince Slovaks that soldiers were warmly welcomed not only by Slovak highlanders but also by 'oppressed' Ukrainians. Additionally, it used the argument about very few casualties during the invasion of Poland. 'Ludáks' were quite convinced that annexation of border areas, formalized through the Ribbentrop-Černák agreement of November 21, 1939, also opened the possibility for corrections of Slovak-Hungarian border.

Therefore, any reflections on the functions of propaganda, in the context of border problems in 1938/1939 would comprise comparisons of activities related to the fact of the annexation/recapture of Polish-Slovak disputed areas. This was done in such a way both in the Polish press in 1938, and in Slovak – in 1939¹⁰¹.

There are a few examples of that, such as the statement of A. Mach issued to foreign journalists ('There are no war psychosis in Slovakia'¹⁰²), J. Tiso speech during the party rally in Šaštín on August 26, 1939 – on the day of announcement of mobilization, when he referred to Slovak Armed

⁹⁸ See: Š. Polakovič, *Tvoríme nového človeka*, w: *Kalendár Hlinkovej slovenskej ľudovej strany na rok 1942*, Bratislava 1941, pp. 68–71.

⁹⁹ M. Gniazdowski, *Polska*, p. 246.

¹⁰⁰ J. Kirschbaum, *Začíname boj o revíziu hraníc*, "Nástup" 1939, 7, 1, pp. 2–3; *Čo bude s revíziou?* "Nástup" 1939, 7, 3, p. 34.

¹⁰¹ *Gdy wojska polskie zajmowały Jaworzynę*, "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" 29–30 November 1938, p. 1; "Nový svet" 25 September 1939, pp. 2–3.

¹⁰² See: I. Baka, *Udział*, p. 83.

Forces¹⁰³, the speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs, F. Ďurčanský, during the Harvest Festival in Zvolen on September 3, 1939¹⁰⁴.

Two days after the start of the mobilization of the Slovak Armed Forces and Hlinka Guard, the Slovak Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a decree on commandeering radio receivers from people suspected of disloyalty to the regime¹⁰⁵. Radio programs had also been strictly controlled, and during the war against Poland, one could have had an impression that the invasion of Poland was not a Slovak problem at all¹⁰⁶.

One of the most important elements of any strategic communication effort¹⁰⁷ is the issue of civil-military interactions. Therefore, any considerations should refer to the process of participation of Government administration and civilian organizations in war preparations and supporting fighting troops. In the case of Slovakia, this also included arrangements, at the District level, at the Polish–Slovak border, to evacuate the civilian population¹⁰⁸. What we should be most interested in is the general mood of the population in some regions of Slovakia (mainly in so-called Security Zone and areas close to the border), mainly due to the deployment of Slovak troops and the arrival of German military transports to towns and places out of the Security Zone. The Slovak Government tried to explain this specific development to the Nation in the special address issued by Prime Minister J. Tiso, *Appeal to the People of Slovakia* dated August 28, 1939 (it should be noted that the text of the announcement was prepared and edited by Germans).

The main source of information for research would be reports of representatives of local administration, such as local mayors and notaries, sent to district-level offices (Slov. okresný úrad), for example from Čadca and Trstená. Some of such papers were also forwarded to the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹⁰⁹. Therefore, to collect necessary data and information, research would be launched in local and regional archives

¹⁰³ According to Tiso, Slovak Armed Forces 'are not to invade somebody or take something from others. We need it [Army] to defend our country and not to allow anybody to take something that is ours', *Naše právo a pravda víťazi*, "Slovák – pondelník" 27 August 1939, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Slováci nemôžu byť holubičím národom*, "Slovák – pondelník" 4 September 1939, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ K. Zavacká, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

¹⁰⁶ V. Draxler, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁷ C. Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates*, Santa Barbara 2011; T. Kacała, J. Lipińska, *Komunikacja strategiczna i public affairs*, Warszawa 2014.

¹⁰⁸ See: Draft regulation of the Slovak Ministry of Defence dated 2 September 1939, which was to impose an obligation on the district level administration to evacuate civilians from the 15-km wide zone along the state border. I. Baka, *Udział*, pp. 69–70.

¹⁰⁹ Stored in the Slovenský Národný Archív: fond: *Úrad predsedníctva vlády*.

in Slovakia¹¹⁰. As for German-Slovak relations in 1939, especially in the period of increased tensions between Germany and Poland, research would include issues of strategic communication and cooperation in this specific area between German and Slovak officials.

Slovak authors emphasize that the STK used Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro¹¹¹ as the main source of current information and news. Unfortunately, they have not presented any proof to support these statements. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of this element is required, and the necessary documents must be found, and efforts taken to understand the mechanisms of strategic communication at the time.

As a result, several questions come up: had a 'Slovak-specific' and 'controlled' mechanisms been established to coordinate German-Slovak cooperation with regard to information policies or it had been an *ad hoc* activity? Had any new organizational structures been created, apart from the Office for Propaganda, to control and regulate the flow of information? With answers to such questions available, we would have to identify the information channels, main informational elements, and the guidance and directives distributed to Slovakia from Berlin.

After March 1939, Poland had become a refuge for citizens of the former Czecho-Slovak Republic. The first national military unit was formed in Cracow, the Czechoslovak Military Group¹¹². In the border areas, conspiracy started, mainly to facilitate escape and evacuation from Slovakia to Poland. Most of the refugees were military personnel, including Slovaks. It is to be noted that the Legion of Czechs and Slovaks led by General Lev Prchala, it had almost as many Slovaks as Czechs.

The most known case was the escape of eight Slovak pilots from Piešťany in June 1939¹¹³, the desertion of General Rudolf Viest and Lieutenant Colonel Ján Ambruš. The Slovak Armed Forces, had strong anti-German sentiments. For example, soldiers stationed in the Ružomberok Garrison organized an illegal cell of the resistance movement, established contacts with Slovak military in Poland and planned a group escape to join the Czecho-Slovak Military Group in Poland¹¹⁴. Deployment of troops

¹¹⁰ The research would cover: Štátny archív Bytča, Pracovisko Archív Dolný Kubín, fond Okresný úrad v Trstenej, (See: sheet 39 – *Podporovanie obyvateľstva slovenských obcí na Spiši a Orave pripojených k Poľsku*); fond Okresný úrad Námestovo.

¹¹¹ J. Darmo, *Propaganda Slovenského štátu (1. časť)*, p. 170; I. Baka, *Udzial*, p. 82; V. Draxler, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹¹² See details in: J. Friedl, *Na jedné frontě*, Praha 2005, pp. 39–69.

¹¹³ B. Súdny, *Úlet osemčlennej skupiny slovenských vojenských letcov z Piešťan do Poľska dňa 7. júna 1939*, in: *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov 1.*, pp. 125–139.

¹¹⁴ S.V. Chytka, *Ružomberská vzbura a umlčané povstanie*, in: *Ružomberská vzbura 1939*, ed. S.V. Chytka, Ružomberok 2000, pp. 39–59.

in areas bordering Poland (Žilina, Čadca and its surroundings), resulted in 'great nervousness and concern' of the local population¹¹⁵. This was the main reason for decision of the Slovak Ministry of Defence to prepare evacuation plans for border areas¹¹⁶.

One of the main objectives of the research should then be building a comprehensive and complete picture about the intensity and scale of important developments of the time (including escapes to Poland, distribution of leaflets calling Slovaks to join the Czecho-Slovak Legion in Poland and resistance movement), also items regarding issues of strategic communication. One more thing should be explored, and these are reactions of Slovak media¹¹⁷ to programs broadcasted by the Polish Radio from Katowice¹¹⁸. Additional sources of information could become reports of Slovak diplomats stationed in Poland, on Polish-Slovak press polemics in 1939, as well as the "Přehled" bulletin¹¹⁹ edited and published in Cracow by Rudolf Kopecký¹²⁰, available in Czech Republic archives.

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¹¹⁵ I. Baka, *Udział*, pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

¹¹⁷ See: K. Murgaš, *Pol'sko a my*, "Gardista" 26 August 1939, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ See: A. Konieczny, *Pozor, pozor Katowice: Legion czechosłowacki w Polsce*, Katowice 1989.

¹¹⁹ This refers to Czecho-Slovak Embassy in Warsaw press reports ("Zprávy"), stored in the Central Military Archive in Prague: Vojenský ústřední archiv – Vojenský historický archiv, fond 37, ref. no. 37–201.

¹²⁰ Some issues of "Přehled – Informační věstník pro Českoslováky v Polsku" are available in the Archiv ministerstva zahraničních věcí, Praha, fond ZÚ Polsko, ref. no. 70.

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NOTA O AUTORZE

Dušan Segeš – doktor, pracownik naukowy i kierownik Zakładu Dziejów Najnowszych w Instytucie Historii Słowackiej Akademii Nauk w Bratysławie. Autor monografii *Partnerzy czy petenci? Słowacy i Słowacja w polityce rządu RP na obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej* (Gdańsk 2012). Jest członkiem komitetu redakcyjnego kwartalnika „Dzieje Najnowsze” oraz rady redakcyjnej czasopisma „Polska 1944/45–1989”.