# František Jehlička and his activity in support of the Hungarian revision in Czechoslovakia in 1919–1938

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After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, international political relations in Central Europe had become impenetrable and uncertain. The content of the peace treaty with Hungary remained an open question for a long time, which determined the fate of the territories in Northern Hungary. This provisional period was closed with the Peace of Trianon on 4 June 1920. Up to that moment, the Hungarian government was doing intense diplomatic activity in order to modify the border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia to their favour as much as possible. Even after signing the treaty, the Hungarian administration never gave up the idea of regaining Slovakia or a part of it by diplomatic or military means.[1] For the Hungarian politicians the loss of Upper Hungary was the second most painful experience next only to the loss of Transylvania, for the crucial role the territory had played in the economic system of the Kingdom of Hungary. Hungarian propaganda implied that regaining the lost territories would be the easiest from Czechoslovakia, as this country had no history as a state, and therefore no historical traditions, either. Czechoslovakia, in their argument, was an artificial construction which could thank its existence only to the great powers, which made it easier to defeat in an appropriate moment.[2] Hungarian government circles did not consider the establishment of Czechoslovakia as the unification of the Slavonic peoples of historical Hungary with their mother country; they even denied consistently that the Slovaks and Czechs would belong to one nation. By doing so, they denied, in effect, the Czechoslovak state theory, which regarded Czechs and Slovaks as two branches of the same nation. The Hungarian government endeavoured, through two decades, to hinder the approach of the Slovak and Czech nations. For them the Slovaks were people under Czech occupation, who, together with other national minorities, were struggling to liberate themselves.

1 ANGYAL, Béla, *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar pártpolitika történetéből 1918–1938*, Galánta — Dunaszerdahely 2002, pp. 46–47; ZEIDLER, Miklós, *A revíziós gondola*, Pozsony 2009, p. 97.

2 The necessity of revision was self-evident for Hungarian politicians and the public. They rejected reconciliation with the situation created by the peace of Trianon. See Valóság 2001, Vol. 3, pp. 10–11.

In their view, the Slovaks formed a nation ethnographically, linguistically and historically separate from the Czechs. The Hungarian leaders agreed that Slovakia, or at least its territory with Hungarian majority had to return to Hungary in some way. They believed that if a referendum had been held, the Slovaks and the Ruthenians would vote for reunification with Hungary. They expected the pro-Hungarian faction of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party to be a help in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. They were hoping that the Slovak clergy, having socialised in the Monarchy, would strengthen pro-Hungarian sentiments in the Slovak people, and the Slovaks would eventually choose the Kingdom of Hungary instead of the Czechoslovak Republic. Thus, the Hungarian policy-makers targeted to gain the support of certain Slovak circles.

Revisionist Hungarian politicians found an excellent partner in František Jehlička (1879–1939).[3] His career is a strange example for the quest for the road among contemporary national ideas, between Slovak national identity and former Magyarisation and the official Czechoslovak ideology. Jehlička is a very intricate and contradictory figure of Slovak and Czechoslovak history, who got to crossroads several times in those troublesome days. The objective of this study is to introduce the career of this interesting personality in the short period indicated in the title. Jehlička was born as a son of a teacher in Jókút (Kúty, Senica district) on 24 January 1879. He studied theology in Vienna. A man of exceptional talent, he received doctorate in theology at the age of 26 in 1905. He was rewarded with a ring with jewels by Francis Joseph for his excellent academic results. It was a great honour, for only two people received the ring in that year. There was a promising ecclesiastic career awaiting the young priest. He became professor of religious studies in the teacher training college of Modor (modern Modra), and later served as a priest in Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1904–1907.

Under the impact of Ferdinand Juriga,[4] he became a fervent supporter of the new Slovak national movement. They were co-editors of the conservative Catholic Journal (Katolické noviny). He was a founder of the Slovak People's Party, and he became an MP of Bazin (Pezinok) in the Hungarian parliament. Due to political attacks from the Hungarian government, Jehlička resigned from his membership in 1907 and moved to Budapest. The great hope of Slovak politics thus deserted from political life.[5] He probably made this decision on the pressure of his ecclesiastic supervisors, and also to prevent the destruction of his career as a clergyman. He was appointed professor of

3 The biography of František Jehlička see *Slovenský biografický slovník*, Martin 1987, Vol. II., p. 546. Also: HERTEL, Marián (the first name of the Author is misspelt; the correct form is Maroš), *František Jehlička. Nočná mora politického života,* in: MICHÁLEK, Slavomír — KRAJČOVIČOVÁ, Natália (eds.), Do pamäti národa, Bratislava 2003, pp. 231–241.

4 Ferdinánd Juriga (1874–1950), Slovakian Catholic priest, politician, essayist, the leading figure of the Slovak national movement. He studied theology in Esztergom and received doctorate in Vienna. He was an MP in the Hungarian parliament in 1905–1918. He was imprisoned for two years for his anti-Hungarian activity in 1906. A founding member of the Slovak People's Party in 1918, at the same time a representative in the Czechoslovak National Assembly. He was excluded from the people's party in the trial of Béla Tuka in 1929, which eventually led to his departure from political life in 1930.

5 HOLEC, Roman, *Tragédia v Černovej a slovenská spoločnosť,* Martin 1997, p. 103.

the Faculty of Theology in Budapest with the help of Archbishop János Csernoch[6] (he himself being of Slovak origin) in 1915.[7] Jehlička returned to politics in October 1918. He gave up his new Hungarian orientation and started arguing for the unification of Czechs and Slovaks in one state.[8] Upon the foundation of Czechoslovakia, Jehlička had great hopes in the new state. He was appointed government commissioner of Elizabeth University in Bratislava then he became an MP in the Czechoslovak parliament in March 1919. At the beginning, he was among the closest colleagues of Andrej Hlinka.[9] He participated in the reorganisation of the people's party as well as in the establishment of the *Slovák*, the paper of the party.[10]

Jehlička, among other Slovak intellectuals, soon raised doubts about the ideal of the Czechoslovak state. They saw that the equality between Slovaks and Czechs was far from reality in the new republic. He could not, and he would not accept the conception of a Czechoslovak nation propagated by Eduard Beneš, which said that the two nations were actually one.[11] Jehlička thought that the Czechs did not want to keep the ideas of the Pittsburgh agreement,[12] which promised autonomy for Slovakia with separate government, parliament and jurisdiction. Disappointed about this, he started to change his political views and developed an anti-Czech attitude. Jehlička became the mouthpiece of Slovak autonomy rejecting the idea of a Czechoslovak state. He won over Andrej Hlinka, president of the Slovak People's Party, which had been renewed in December 1918.

6 János Csernoch (1852–1927), Cardinal Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom, MP. He came from a deeply religious Slovak peasant family. Bishop of Csanád from 1908, Archbishop of Kalocsa from 1911. Pope Pius X appointed him Archbishop of Esztergom and Cardinal in 1913.

7 MICHELA, Miroslav, *František Jehlička politikai pálfordulatai 1918–1920-ban*, 2005/tél, p. 33.

8 HERTEL, M., František..., p. 264.

9 Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), Slovak Catholic priest, politician, ecclesiastic writer. He started his political career in the Catholic People's Party of János Zichy. He often published articles about the situation of the Slovaks in Slovakian papers. In 1901, he broke with the Zichy party and joined the Slovak National Party. He sharply defended the interests of the Catholic church; he supported the autonomy of Slovakia. After the political turn, he reorganised the Slovakian People's Party, which adopted the name Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in 1925. From 1918, he was a member of the Czechoslovak National Assembly until his death.

10 HERTEL, M., František..., p. 264.

11 The Czechoslovak state was founded on the doctrine of Czechoslovakism, which stated that Czechs and Slovaks formed one nation, or, in the more extreme version, the Slovaks were in fact Czechs. Czechoslovakism did not recognise Slovak national identity, and therefore the Slovaks rejected it. The founders of the state (Masaryk and Beneš) used the fiction of Czechoslovakism to explain the contradiction that the new country had been born as a nation state while it was multi-national. The constitution made Czechoslovakian official language; its Czech dialect was used in Bohemia and Slovak in Slovakia. The Czech leaders were hoping that the two nations would mix in time and develop a common identity. It is obvious that this idea only wanted to ensure the Slavonic majority of the newly born state.

12 The Pittsburgh agreement was made by the American, Slovak and Czech organisations on 30 May 1918. The agreement, which was signed also by T. G. Masaryk, promised autonomy for the Slovaks.

## THE TRIP OF FRANTIŠEK JEHLIČKA AND ANDREJ HLINKA TO THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

From about the middle of 1919 onwards, Jehlička focussed on the destruction of Czechoslovakia and the separation of Slovakia. This was paralleled by the development of Hungarian irredentism. It is still unknown, due to the lack of trustworthy source material, whether he got into contact with Hungarian irredentist politicians on his own initiative or the Hungarian government established contact with him during the preparation of the secret mission of the Slovak People's Party in Paris. Jehlička persuaded Hlinka to send a Slovak delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, which could submit a memorandum to demonstrate their national independence.[13] Hlinka agreed to it only after long hesitation.

Despite Slovak attempts, however, no significant change was implemented either in the form of government or in the domestic structure of the Czechoslovak state. Evidently the German and Hungarian minorities, who were forced to live in the new country, did not regard the Czechoslovak Republic as their home and failed to become members of the national community. They got under Czech rule against their will, and therefore their main political objective was secession from Czechoslovakia in time. The Prague administration was in constant struggle with its nationalities, but also with the "state forming" Slovaks, as the latter felt they had no sufficient political rights. The autonomy movement was built on this dissatisfaction of the Slovak population, especially the Catholics: disregarding religious traditions, the limitation of ecclesiastic schools, the abuses of the bureaucracy, state centralisation, economic crisis, the uncontrolled mass immigration of Czechs to Slovakia and the spread of the Socialist movement all radicalised the supporters of autonomy.

One manifestation of the discontent was the visit of the Hlinka delegation to Paris Peace Conference between 28 August and 8 October 1919.[14] Members of the delegation, besides Hlinka and Jehlička, were Jozef Rudinský, professor of theology at Zsolna (Žilina), Štefan Mhohel' a Catholic priest, editor of *Slovák* and a merchant Jozef Kubala. The delegation travelled to Warsaw and then, with false passports, to Paris.[15] They arrived in Paris on 19 September and found accommodation in a monastery where they did not need to check in, and therefore their location could remain unknown for the authorities.[16] Jehlička played a key role in the composition of their manifesto in French, which was sent by mail to the American, French, British, Polish and Yugoslav delegations.[17]

13 POPÉLY, Gyula, *Felvidék 1914–1920*, Budapest 2010, p. 264.

14 MICHELA, M, *Pod heslom integrity. Slovenská otázka v politike Maďarska 1918–1921,* Bratislava 2009, p. 48.

15 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (Hungairan National Archive, henceforward MNL OL), 1. csomó, 41. tétel, 4/res/1919.

16 HRONSKÝ, Marián, *Boj o Slovensko a Trianon 1918–1920,* Bratislava 1998, p. 223.

17 Archív Ministerstva Zahraničných Vecí, (hereinafter AMZV Praha) [the Archive of the Foreign Ministry], Politická sekcia, (Politikai osztály) III., 1254. doboz. 100647/III/3/33.

The memorandum could not be formally presented to the peace delegations because their representatives did not officially receive Hlinka and the Slovak politicians. Therefore it was handed out to journalists. The Czechoslovak diplomacy even managed to have the French authorities ban the Slovaks from the country, which could be easily implemented due to the false passports.[18] The quick action of the French can also be explained with the activity of Eduard Beneš, who spoke with George Clemanceau in this matter.[19] The memorandum contained phrases which posed a threat on the existence of Czechoslovakia. Its title was "For peace in Central Europe. The memorandum of the Slovaks to the peace conference." The document emphasised the multi-national character of Czechoslovakia, and they included the whole text of the Pittsburgh agreement, which, as they reproachfully pointed out, had not been implemented. "Instead of Slovak autonomy, we have got under Czech rule. Hungarian hegemony has been replaced with Czech hegemony. Only the yoke has changed. Instead of Hungarian yoke, we have Czech yoke now, which is all the bitterer because we have received it from those who call themselves our brothers."[20] The memorandum continued to list the political, economic, cultural, linguistic, educational and ecclesiastic grievances of the Slovaks. It asked the decision-makers of the peace conference to order Czechoslovakia to grant autonomy for Slovakia. The memorandum pointed out clearly that the two ethnic groups formed two different nations, and they also underlined that the Slovaks did not consider themselves either Czechs or Czechoslovaks. Finally they urged to hold a referendum about the status of Slovakia.[21]

Although Jehlička and Hlinka could not achieve what they wanted in Paris, they managed to draw international attention to the existence of the Slovak nation and to the fact that not everyone was pleased with the Czechoslovak solution.[22] The memorandum was eventually presented to the peace delegation, attached by the Hungarian delegation to their own peace proposal (to Chapter 14 on the 'Slovak question') on 25 January 1920.

## THE QUESTS OF JEHLIČKA

Upon his return to Czechoslovakia Hlinka was imprisoned for a while. Jehlička, however, knew that he could expect investigation and punishment, so, after

18 For the trip of Jehlička and Hlinka to France see: PEROUTKA, Ferdinánd, *Budaovaní štátu*, Vol. 2, Praha 1991, pp. 795–805; HRONSKÝ, M. op. cit., pp. 220–227; SZARKA, László, *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés-magyar nemzetiségi politika 1867–1918*, Pozsony 1999, pp. 152–154; DEÁK, Ladislav, *Cesta Andrej Hlinku do Paríža roku 1919*, in: BIELIK, František — BOROVSKÝ, Štefan (eds.), Andrej Hlinka a jeho miesto v slovenských dejinách. Zborník prednášok z vedeckého sympózia, Bratislava 1991, pp. 68–84.

19 DEÁK, L., op. cit., p. 74.

20 JÖRG, K. Hoensch, *Dokumente zur Autonomiepolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas*, München — Wien 1984, pp. 120–127.

21 Ibid.

22 SZARKA, L., op. cit., p. 154.

a short stopover in Vienna, he travelled to Budapest in late September 1919.[23] He was significantly superior to Hlinka in terms of education, talent and command of foreign languages. He could certainly have been an influential politician not only in the People's Party but also in the political life of Czechoslovakia. From the Hungarian government, he could expect bishopric or some other high-rank political office in the regained Slovak territories. Jehlička thought that the Czechs would facilitate the expansion of Hussite ideas and paganism, which turned him away from the Czechoslovak ideology. For him, Czechoslovakia was a state which could even help the spread of Bolshevism in Central Europe, and he thought that Hungary had the power to prevent this.

In Budapest, Jehlička got into contact with Jakab Bleyer,[24] minister of national minorities, and they started to talk on the autonomy of Slovakia within Hungary. Jehlička summarised his demands in two points:

"1. The Slovaks are to be called 'Slovak nation' in Upper Hungary and in the whole country. 2. The Slovak nation must receive autonomy, and Slovak will be official language in every county with Slovak majority in the unified Hungarian state."[25] Jehlička was appointed head of the Slovak department in the Ministry of National Minorities, and he was commissioned with the composition of the official plan of Slovak autonomy in the renewing historical Hungary.

In December 1919, Jehlička established the Pro-Hungarian Slovak People's Party and he started publishing the journal *Zahraničný Slovák*. He wrote numerous articles on the Slovakian question in Hungarian and foreign newspapers. His party tried, on the one hand, to get territorial autonomy from the Hungarian government, and, on the other hand, to gain the support of the Slovak population in the occupied territories to the idea of belonging to Hungary. He got close to Viktor Dvorčák[26] and other pro-Hungarian Slovak politicians.

After 1920, two organisations in Hungary: the Upper Hungarian League and the Slovak Central Office imagined the regain of Slovakia or a part of it through military activities. The Slovak Department of the Ministry of Nationalities in Hungary

23 KRAMER, Juraj, *Iredenta a separatizmus v slovenskej politike*, Bratislava 1957, p. 25.

24 Jakab Bleyer (1874–1933), literary historian, politician. Hungarian MP after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Minister of Nationalities from August 1919 to December 1920. He issued a decree on the emancipation of national minorities on 21 August 1919.

25 *Jehličkov zápisnik*, New York 1925, pp. 5–6.

26 Viktor Dvorčák (1878–1943), archivist, newspaper editor. He was the chief archivist of Sáros county and edited several papers in the Eastern Slovakian dialect. One of them was the *Naša zastava*. He established the Eastern-Slovakian National Council in Eperjes (Prešov) in November 1918, and later proclaimed the establishment of the Eastern-Slovakian Republic in Kassa (Košice) on 11 December 1918, but his movement remained isolated. After the Czech military occupation, he escaped to Budapest and Warsaw and continued to do propaganda activity for the annexation of Slovakia by Hungary. He became the MP for the Nyíregyháza constituency on the first parliamentary elections in 1920. It was him who read out the protest of the Slovaks in Upper Hungary against the Trianon treaty in the Hungarian parliament.

wanted to achieve its objectives, that is, territorial revision, through peaceful means: through supporting Slovakian autonomy.[27] On 9 January 1920, Jehlička submitted a Slovakian autonomy proposal to the Hungarian government.[28] The plan included extended self-government and autonomy to Slovakia in public education, religion, welfare, administration and other questions.[29] The Hungarian delegation left for the Paris Peace Conference in early January 1920.[30] Jehlička endeavoured to support the Hungarian standpoint as the representative of the Slovaks, and therefore he visited Count Albert Apponyi, the leader of the Hungarian delegation with Dvorčák. He handed over the plan of an autonomous Slovakia in Hungary to the Count, and the latter promised to further it to the highest circles in Paris.[31]

Jehlička, then, travelled to Poland, where he participated in the preparation of a joint Polish-Hungarian military action to regain Upper Hungary.[32] He negotiated with the Hungarian government on Slovak autonomy from Poland via Csernoch: "We demand it to all intents and purposes that a Slovak parliament decide on the future of the Slovaks after the ousting of the Czechs. (We do not want a referendum because, as it has been shown, it is the most terrible strike for the territory where it happens.) We have recently sent this message to Budapest as well. If the Hungarians ensure and sign the autonomy whose proposal I am sending to Budapest simultaneously with these lines, we assure that Hlinka and the whole Slovak parliament will support the idea of autonomy within Hungary. Therefore Regent Horthy and the Hungarian government should be inclined to accepting our terms and send to us signed and sealed documents of it. This will probably make all Polish parties approve of the Hungarian-Slovak solution; without this, it will certainly be impossible to get any help from Poland."[33]

Csernoch forwarded the letter to foreign minister Pál Teleki. He also added his own opinion that every possible means must be taken to regain the territories in "Upper Hungary", and his hopes that "We must ensure the support of every element we can win over. Jehlička and Hlinka have great influence on the Slovaks. If the Slovak people themselves are willing to return to Hungary at a low price, the influence of

27 MNL OL, K-64. 1. csomó. 7 tétel, 505/res/1920.

28 BOROS, Ferenc, *Magyar-csehszlovák kapcsolatok 1918–1921–ben*, Budapest 1970, pp. 156–157.

29 See details about this in: KRAMER, J., op. cit., pp. 34–37.

30 See ROMSICS, Ignác, *A trianoni békeszerződés*, Budapest 2007, pp. 120–130. From the Czech point of view see: TÓTH, Andrej, *Otázka mírová na maďarské ministerské radě po odjezdu Apponyiho mírové delegace na pařízskou mírovou konferenci do předání definitivního znění mírové smlouvy Maďarsku (leden–květen 1920)*, in: Slovanský Přehled, 2006/3, pp. 353–387. Also: IRMANOVÁ, Eva, *Maďarsko a trianonská mírová smlouva,* in: BORHI, László (ed.), Európa, nemzet, külpolitika. Tanulmányok Ádám Magda 85. születésnapjára, Budapest 2010, pp. 95–118.

31 BOROS, F., op. cit., p. 158.

32 On the activity of Jehlička in Poland see: HERTEL, M., *Slovenská emigrácia v Poľsku a Maďarsku v rokoch 1919–1921*, in: HVIŠČ, Jozef (ed.), Kontinuita romantizmu, Bratislava 2001, pp. 238–240.

33 Jehlička's letter to Cardinal Csernoch. MOL [Hungarian National Archive], K-64, 1. csomó, 7. tétel, 4057/res/1920. 1920. június 12.

the leaders must not be underestimated and the success of the case with a brave decision threatened. There are a great many Slovaks who are unwilling to accept the Hungarian solution without real Slovak autonomy. Emphasising autonomy is the most effective weapon against the Czechs. This weapon is really effective if they can show the Hungarian promise to grant the autonomy. The autonomy of the Slovaks is the slogan that can show the impossibility of the Czech-Slovak solution for the Poles and the allied powers as well. In my view, it does not jeopardize the interests of Hungary if we promise the widest autonomy for the territories with real Slovak majority as long as it fits the unity of the state".[34] Csernoch's letter provides a comprehensive view on contemporary Hungarian opinions about Slovakia. He was hoping that Jehlička would be able to establish contact and negotiations with Hlinka and his party.

Jehlička was disappointed by the tactical playing and ambiguous standpoint of the Hungarian government, and therefore he took a job at the department of theology of the university of Warsaw. He organised his movement from there for a while and had talks with Polish politicians on a Polish-Slovak union. The Teschen region had been a subject of debate between Czechoslovakia and Poland since the establishment of the sovereign state, and there were Polish demands in Árva and the Szepesség. The support of the Ukrainian emigration was also strong in Czechoslovakia, which was reproached by the Polish government. Territorial demands for Czechoslovakia provided common grounds for Hungarian and Polish foreign policy. For Poland, Slovakia was rather subject of political calculations, which reflected her relationship with Hungary. Jehlička, together with František Unger,[35] launched the *Slovák*, a journal edited by the two in Zakopane. At that time, the idea of a military operation to regain Slovakia turned up again on the parts of the Hungarian and Polish governments.[36] In the case of a Hungarian attack, Slovak-Hungarian legions, which had been organised in secret since 1919, would arrive in Slovakia from Poland with nearly 500 members.[37]

Jehlička made a memorandum for the political takeover in Slovakia and the duties of the Slovak National Council, should the Hungarian troops have decisive victory. He also had a courier carry these plans for Hlinka on 17 July 1920. The main points of the plan were as follows: "1. When the Hungarian army has occupied Slovakia, the Slovak National Council assumes power. 2. Elections for the national assembly are to be declared within a month. 3. The elected assembly will determine the future of the Slovak nation: which nation it wants to join Hungary or Poland or whether it wants to remain a sovereign nation. 4. Hungary must be assured to regain the territories with

34 Csernoch's letter to Foreign Minister Pál Teleki. MOL, K-64, 2. csomó, 41. tétel, 179/res/1920. 1920. július 23.

35 František Unger (1886–1949), Slovak politician, writer, public official. In 1920, he emigrated to Poland, where he worked together with Jehlička; they wrote their newspapers and pamphlets against the Czechs together. He lived in Budapest from 1929 and withdrew from politics in 1938.

36 On the common military plans see: GODÓ, Ágnes, *A Horthy-rendszer kalandor háborús tervei 1919–1921*, in: Hadtörténeti Közlemények, 1961/1, pp. 112–144.

37 KRAMER, J., op. cit., p. 52.

Hungarian population. 5. The Slovak National Council upholds the right to appoint officials. 6. The Slovak National Council is the highest body in political, military and administrative questions. 7. If the assembly decides to join Hungary, autonomy, based on the enclosed plan, must be guaranteed."[38]

After the defeat of the Red Army at Warsaw on 25 August 1920, Jehlička, having realised that the Poles regarded Slovakia as a Hungarian sphere of interest, initiated talks with the Hungarians again. He tried to convince the Hungarian leaders that overt pro-Hungarian propaganda would not bring success, and he suggested longer-lasting propaganda against Czechoslovakia.

On 25 May 1921, František Unger, on behalf of the Slovak National Council, proclaimed the independent Slovak Republic in Poland. They wanted to facilitate this progress by having the neighbouring countries recognize the sovereignty of Slovakia. Unger, as PM, appointed Jehlička president and himself foreign minister. He summarised his objectives in four points: 1. Slovakia declares its independence and secession from the Czechs. 2. Czech administration must be regarded as foreign and illegal. 3. Until the Slovak parliament summons temporarily, the Slovak National Council exercises power. 4. The government will be appointed by the Slovak National Council.[39]

Hungary was willing to give financial aid to the Slovak propaganda but they did not recognize the Unger government. The representatives of the Slovakian government, Unger and Jehlička, travelled to Italy, where they submitted a memorandum, dated 5 April, to the Genoa conference in 1922. The memorandum said that the Slovaks were forced to join Czechoslovakia against their will. It also explained that the real will of the Slovak people was manifested by Dvorčák's Slovak People's Republic established in Kassa (Kosice) on 11 December 1918 as well as the independent Slovak Republic proclaimed on 25 May 1921.[40] The memorandum asked for the annulment of the "unsuccessful political union of the two nations" and the assurance and acknowledgement of Slovakian sovereignty in the interest of the European peace. Jehlička and Unger visited the foreign ministry, the Vatican and the secretariats of the most important political parties in Rome. The memorandum was also given to Benito Mussolini and the pope.[41]

Upon his return from Rome to Warsaw, Jehlička remained a supporter of Hungarian orientation. He was willing to give up his position at Warsaw university in return for regular Hungarian aid, and he did his best in order for "Upper Hungary to join Hungary again with appropriate autonomy".[42] He set on an agitating tour in the USA in 1923, which was helped financially by the Hungarian foreign ministry. He wanted to win over primarily the Slovak Catholic clergy in America as well as the American newspapers and journals read by Slovaks. He tried to sow the seeds of distrust towards Czechoslovakia in the Slovak community and to propagate the idea of Slovakian independence. Jehlička returned to Europe and established his

38 Jehličkov zápisnik..., pp. 97–99.
39 KRAMER, J., op. cit., p. 99.
40 Ibid, p. 83.
41 Ibid, pp. 100–101.
42 Ibid, pp. 102–103.

centre of activity in Vienna in 1926. He formed the Slovak National Council with Győző Dvorcsák in Geneva in July 1933.[43] They immediately handed a memorandum over to the general secretariat of the League of Nations, in which they demanded the reunion of Slovakia and Hungary due to geographical, economic and historical reasons. The memorandum and Jehlička's work: "Revision and the Slovaks" listed the same arguments as earlier documents. He denied the identity of Czechs and Slovaks. He acknowledged linguistic relation but he was of the opinion that the Slovaks, thanks to the thousand-year coexistence, developed cultural links and kinship with the Hungarians, and therefore they are more closely related to them. He considered that the linguistic link with the Czechs was disadvantageous for the Slovaks because closely related languages tend to unite, which would lead to the disappearance of Slovak national consciousness in the long run.

At the end of 1933, Jehlička travelled to Great Britain with Isván Bethlen. During their talks, Jehlička wanted to get assurance from the former Prime Minister that the Hungarian government would not continue the policy of assimilation in the case of the annexation of Upper Hungary. Bethlen, who did not have enough influence during the years of the Gömbös government to make such an assurance, only responded that in his view, Hungary would respect the language and culture of the Slovaks. Jehlička gave lectures on behalf of the emigrant Slovak National Council all over Europe in the 1930s. Due to his travels he spent less time in Vienna, so he left the coordination of propaganda work to his confidentials, who the Czechoslovak authorities tried to win over. One of them, a certain Vince Mihalus gave in and revealed the identity of Jehlička and several agents of the Hungarian government in Slovakia and who sent reports regularly. Jehlička visited Berlin several times, where he endeavoured to establish closer contact with German irredentist circles after 1934. In the 1930s, he felt considerable demand for anti-Soviet agitation, so he started to deal with the dangers of the Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance in detail in the memoranda sent to the League of Nations. During 1937–38, Jehlička urged the revision of borders in Italy, as he still regarded Rome as the main supporter of the Hungarian revisionist ideas. We can see him in London in early October 1938, where he tried to get the English to support the idea of Slovakia's union with Hungary. Later this turned to be wishful thinking.

## THE EVALUATION OF JEHLIČKA'S ACTIVITY

During 1918–1919, after a 9-month stay in Czechoslovakia, Jehlička spent the rest of his life mostly in Vienna, Budapest, Zurich and Poland, but he often travelled to Western Europe and the USA. He kept contact with secret services, diplomats and statesmen. His intellectual abilities, language competence, oration skills and resolution predestined him to a successful career. The Czechoslovak secret service observed his activity all the time and they were worried about the consequences of his propaganda. He was the most dangerous speaker for the Czechoslovak state.

43 Together with Károly Bulissa, Ferenc Unger and Antal Morava.

From 1919 on, Jehlička supported the Hungarian objectives. He took other paths occasionally, he also spoke with the representatives of other nations and even made agreements with them, but finally he always returned to the Hungarian standpoint. He tried to convince the Slovaks that their real home is historical Hungary where they had lived for a thousand years.

Jehlička represented a side branch of the Slovak autonomy movement abroad. Slovak historiography portrays him in a negative context; he is characterised as a turncoat and a puppet figure of Hungarian irredentism. He cannot be charged with corruption and cannot be called the paid agent of the Hungarian government, for he meant the autonomy of the Slovaks seriously and tried his best to get the Hungarian government to grant it. His attempt to establish more regular contact with Hlinka's people's party must be evaluated as a definite fiasco. The only Slovakian politician he met regularly was Vojtech Tuka,[44] who was later arrested for spying by the Czechoslovak authorities.[45]

After his arrest, no-one would support Jehlička's pro-Hungarian orientation in Czechoslovakia. His name received negative connotation among the Slovaks before long. His activity was openly condemned and not only the Czechoslovakists but also his former colleagues in the people's party as well as his friends. Also his relationship with Andrej Hlinka deteriorated, and he attacked him in his pamphlets. Jehlička's attempt to build an irredentist organisation in Slovakia was prevented by the local authorities.

The political activity of Jehlička was exceptionally widespread and prolific. He gave numerous lectures, issued a great deal of publications and wrote many newspaper articles. His dedication to Catholicism strongly inspired him to prefer Christian Hungary to the Czech orientation. He did extended agitation in Slovakia with the help of smuggled newspapers, the aim of which was the destabilisation of political life, the radicalisation of the Slovak People's Party and the ultimate destruction of Czechoslovakia. His agitation propaganda was built on sharp anti-Czech attacks by which he tried to turn the Slovaks against the Czechs. He blamed the Czechs for the Slovaks not having their own parliament, schools, offices, and for the degradation of

44 Vojtech Tuka (1880–1946), lawyer, politician, MP. He received a degree in law in Budapest, then worked at the criminal department of the state police. He was a lecturer at the law academy in Pécs in 1907–1914, then became professor at Erzsébet University in Pozsony (Bratislava). He stayed in the country after the establishment of Czechoslovakia. At first he worked in the National Christian Socialist Party but later joined the Slovak People's Party. He made one of the first autonomy plans of the party. The Czechoslovak authorities arrested him for spying and anti-government activity in 1929; he was imprisoned for 15 years. After his release in 1937, he became member of the autonomous Slovakian government and later the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic in 1939–1944. He was executed as war criminal in 1946.

45 For Tuka's activity see: VERES, Tímea, *A Tuka-per közvetlen előzményei a cseh és szlovák sajtóban*, in: Fórum. Társadalomtudományi Szemle, 6. Vol, 1, 2004, pp. 149–154. HERTEL, M., *Činnosť profesora Vojtecha Tuku jeho vstupom do Slovenskej ľudovej strany roku 1922*, in: Historický časopis, 50, 2002, No. 2, pp. 257–279.

the Slovak language to be merely a dialect of Czechoslovak. Jehlička blamed Masaryk, Beneš and the whole Czech nation for the sins against the Slovak nation.

Jehlička continued his activity until his death in Vienna on 3 January 1939. He died when the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Republic was at hand and he could expect an "appropriate" position from the Hungarian government in return for his service.

**ABSTRACT**

Budapest government established between 1918–1922 their own irredentist organizations and supported movements, which tried to undermine the idea of Czecho-Slovak statehood. Between the two word wars the idea of acquiring Upper Hungary became the objective number one regarding Hungarian revision, engaging the atention of both the political and military circles. Hungarian leadership made every effort all along to cross the rapprochment of the Czech and Slovak nations. Especially the groups of emigrants, who had voluntarily or involuntarily left the territory of the emerging Czechoslovak Republic, became substantially engaged in this direction. For Budapest was the best person highly educated and ambitious priest František Jehlička. In my study, I tried to give an objektive illustration about Jehlička life between (1918–1938) who played a significant but very controversial role in this action. Jehlička was not one of the new faces in Slovak politics. In 1906, he was already elected as member of the Hungarian parlament for the constituency of Pezinok. He belonged to the Slovak Peoples Party and many of his ideological associates saw him as the young hope of Slovak politics. He was accused of betraying the national interest for the sake of a university career. Jehlička again began to engage in politics in the autumn of 1918. By the side of Andrej Hlinka, he began to build up the Slovak Peoples Party. Jehlička was openly criticized the situaton in Czechoslovakia after 1919. He decided to return to the pro-Hungarian platform and openly support them. He left Czechoslovakia, and he became emigrant in Hungary, Poland and Austria.

**KEYWORDS**

Diplomacy, František Jehlička, Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations, Slovak-Hungarian Question, Hungarian revision

**ABSTRAKT**

Budapešťská vláda mezi lety 1918–1922 vytvořila vlastní iredentistickou organizaci podporující hnutí, které se pokoušelo podkopat ideu česko-slovenské státnosti. Mezi dvěma světovými válkami se myšlenka na získání Horních Uher stala předmětem číslo jedna maďarského revizionismu, poutající pozornost politických i vojenských kruhů. Maďarské vedení vyvinulo veškerou možnou snahu, aby narušilo sbližování českého a slovenského národa. Zvláště skupiny emigrantů, kteří ať už dobrovolně nebo nedobrovolně opouštěli území nově se formující Československé republiky, se staly značně angažované na vedení. Pro Budapešť byla nejvýznamnější osoba vzdělaného a ambiciózního kněze Františka Jehličky. V této studii se pokouším poskytnou objektivní popis Jehličkova života mezi lety 1918–1938, kdy v této akci hrál významnou, ale kontroverzní roli. Jehlička nebyl novou tváří na slovenské politické scéně. V roce 1906 byl již zvolen jako člen Maďarského parlamentu ve volebním obvodě Pezinok. Patřil ke Slovenské lidové straně a mnoho z jeho ideologických podporovatelů v něm spatřovalo mladou naději slovenské politiky. Byl obžalován ze zrady národních zájmů kvůli své univerzitní kariéře. Znovu se stal Jehlička politicky činným na podzim 1918. Za stranu Andreje Hlinky začal budovat Slovenskou lidovou stranu. Jehlička otevřeně kritizoval situaci v Československu po roce 1919. Rozhodl se vrátit do promaďarsky orientované platformy a otevřeně ji podpořil. Emigroval postupně do Maďarska, Polska a Rakouska.

**KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**
Diplomacie, František Jehlička, československo-maďarské vztahy, slovensko-maďarská otázka, maďarský revizionismus

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