

ON CZECHOSLOVAKISM IN SLOVAK THINKING

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The artificial construction of the "Czechoslovak nation" was supposed to be the "state-creating" idea of the Czechoslovak state after 1918 but even as its higher integrating principle it had no success in practice. This ideologically biased concept of nation-building based on the idea of a unified or synthetic nation remained an unsuccessful attempt to synthesize two concepts of the nation: as a linguistic-cultural (ethnic) and state-political (territorial) community.

The Czechoslovak Republic arose in the period characterized by Hugh Seton-Watson as "President Wilson's age", when it was assumed that states would embody nations and that the people of every state would form a nation, and that eventually "in the golden age of self-determination which was dawning, every nation would have its state."¹ These postulates and their multiple interpretations were destined to be projected into the foundations of the Czechoslovak state and the justification of its existence. This state too was constituted on the basis of the right of nations to self-determination; however, it was built up as a unitary nation-state. The Czechoslovak Republic as such was favourably accepted by its western allies first of all due to their strategic and political interests and aims.

Czechoslovakia was not a national state even when it acted as such on the international political level. The proclamation of a unitary political and in our case ethnic nation too was, however, inevitable. Otherwise it would have been necessary to admit that a multinational state or state with minorities, had arisen. The justification of the existence of such a state would be very complicated according to international laws (especially the inclusion of more than 3 million Germans). The conception of a unified nation served as a basis for the justification of the new unitary state on the international and internal levels from its origin. Paradoxically, even this

¹ SETON-WATSON, H.: *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. Boulder, Colorado 1977, p. 1.

multinational state should become "a shining manifestation of the triumph of nationalism at the end of the First World War".²

After its establishment in 1918, Czechoslovakia was a nationally heterogeneous state. Czechoslovak nationality was officially proclaimed and a separate Slovak nationality was neglected (in official censuses and statistics they refused to allow a distinction to be drawn between Czechs and Slovaks).³

The right of self-determination of the Slovaks had been accepted only in the case of their liberation from Hungary. Slovakia was incorporated into the new Czechoslovak republic. The Slovaks were not accepted as a specific nationality, or even as a national minority in Czechoslovakia, but they were proclaimed to be a branch of the "Czechoslovak nation". The doctrine of the unitary state-nation should not only have been state-creating, but could not be abandoned *de iure*, or doubt would be cast on the existence of this new state. In addition, to loosen the unitary concept of the state-nation in practice would have meant the loss of Czech hegemony in the Republic.

However, it was stated Czechoslovakia should become "a sort of Switzerland" according to Beneš' memorandum of May 20, 1919, submitted by him to the Paris Peace Conference. Beneš described – "the intention of the Czecho-Slovak Government to create the organization of the State by accepting as a basis of national rights the principles applied in the constitution of the Swiss Republic".⁴ This intention never became a reality and Beneš interpreted later "the creation of a new Switzerland" as meaning liberal treatment and liberal attitudes toward national minorities.⁵

The Czechoslovak constitution of February 29, 1920, provided for a centralized state administration. According to it the centralistic policy of Prague neglected each attempt or proposal of Slovak politicians on autonomy during the whole twenty years of the Czechoslovak republic. Slovak politics (Hlinka's Slovak People's Party) demanded already in 1922 in the so-called "Žilina Memorandum" autonomy for the Slovakia. The situation was aggravated by the centralizing tendencies which prevailed in the Prague government. The administrative reform of 1927 (a provincial President, an Assembly and executive Committee with strictly defined powers) did not satisfy Slovak autonomists. Slovak demands for recognition of the Slovak

² JOHNSON, O.V.: *Slovakia 1918-1938. Education and the Making of a Nation*. New York 1985, p. 53.

³ The Czech nation constituted less than one-half of the population (48% of the total). The fiction of an official Czechoslovak identity mustered an imposing 64,1% of the total population. The Slovak minority estimated at 2,500,000, 16% of the total. Cf. PEARSON, R.: *National Minorities in Eastern Europe. 1848-1945*. London 1983, pp. 151, 153.

⁴ Cited by KALVODA, J.: *National Minorities in Czechoslovakia 1919-1980*. In: *Eastern European National Minorities 1919-1980. A Handbook* by Stephan M. Horak. Littleton, Colorado 1985, p. 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

national identity and administrative dualism was accepted when Slovakia became autonomous in the Second Republic in autumn 1938 in the aftermath of the Munich agreement. But Czecho-Slovakia came to an end on March 14, 1939, when Slovakia, with Germany's support, declared its independence. However, this meant the end of an unequal political and social system which allowed the Czech majority to impose its rule upon Slovakia.

Every state has to build on a constructive state-creating idea of its own in order to possess a deeply motivated justification of its own existence and continuity. Every idea fulfilling such a task becomes a basis of state ideology precisely through this "functionality". However, ideology has a remarkable specific feature that it is not only a set of ideas but also an expression of a certain world view, the expression of concrete interests and aims – at the same time it is their veiling and mystification – a distortion of reality (it is a misleading description of a certain view of the world in "a distorting mirror", and "the sacrifice" of such a mystified view are the authors of ideological constructions). Ideology adds up less to a theory than to a rhetoric.

Such an "ideologization" process also took place in the formation of the Czechoslovak state foundations: its state-forming idea should have issued from a construction of a concept of a unified "Czechoslovak nation".

Although the Czechoslovak idea should have been the creating idea of the new state, it had not been explicitly formulated before the origin of the state. As O.V. Johnson pointed out, the origin of the new state had not been accompanied by a clear delineation of the term "Czechoslovak" even when the idea of the common Czechoslovak nation had been discussed before the First World War (by T.G. Masaryk and his followers). Some interpreted it as a description of the given phenomenon, i.e. Czechoslovakia as a unitary nation-state, other considered it a prescription of the linguistic-national unity under creation.⁶

As a specific ideological phenomenon, Czechoslovakism wanted to build on the old affinity and mutual contacts between the Czechs and Slovaks. The traded feeling of mutual nearness (especially with the Slovak Protestants), awareness of fatal appurtenance (after the break-down of Austria-Hungary as the only way to preserve Slovak national existence), these were all elements Czechoslovakism wanted to build its own justification on. However, Slovak mentality, history and culture had evolved along different lines to those of the Czechs (Slovakia had been an integral part of Hungary since the eleventh century). Neither Czecho-Slovak solidarity nor common statehood (as the result of a purposive decision of both national representations) should and could have really served the Czechoslovak national unifying efforts.

It is necessary to mention that the friendly relations of the Czechs and Slovaks were, in the Slovak grasp, a part of the conception of a higher Slavonic whole, Slavic solidarity. Slovak historian Daniel Rapant too called attention to this impor-

⁶ Cf. JOHNSON, O.V.: *Slovakia 1918-1938*, p. 50 f.

tant circumstance when he wrote: "the principle of the Czecho-Slovak integration programme is not Czechoslovak but Slavic".⁷

The decisive step of the Slovaks on the origin of the common state in 1918 is on the other hand usually not sufficiently appreciated, although the Slovaks voluntarily united their own sovereignty with that of the Czechs. As a nation of their own, distinguished from the Czechs, the Slovaks saw in this step the only real possibility to put across their own political will and to fulfil their strivings for self-determination. As the political union with Hungary appeared impossible the Slovaks rejected its continuation and gave preference to the union in a common state with the Czechs. It was a logical step on the way to Slovak national and political emancipation.

After disappointment with the previous political co-existence with the Magyars, the partnership with the Czechs – but not an ethnic union! – seemed to be the only way. Slovaks saw in the collaboration with the Czechs the right way to national self-preservation. Therefore they proclaimed the Slovaks to be a branch of the uniform "Czechoslovak nation". This was declared by the representatives of the Slovak political parties organized in the Slovak National Council on October 30, 1918, in Turčiansky Sv. Martin. In this resolution known as the Declaration of Martin they asserted the participation of the Slovaks in the struggle of nations for self-determination. But its realization was disabled together with all results issuing from the internationally recognized natural right of nations to self-determination.

However, Slovakia was incorporated into Czecho-Slovakia. The common state should have been a space for the assertion of the Slovak nation in the common life with the Czech nation and other nationalities as a partner with equal rights. Soon after the origin of the Czechoslovak state mutual cooperation became questionable due to the unwillingness of the Czech political establishment to build it on the principle of equal with equal (as supposed by the Cleveland and Pittsburgh agreements, which promised autonomy to the Slovaks). Although most Slovaks rejected the idea of the "Czechoslovak nation" as they felt it was a destruction of the identity of the Slovak people, it still remained the state-creating idea of the Republic. Some Slovak proponents of Czecho-Slovak unity believed in the possibility of dual identity ties – a Slovak cultural and Czechoslovak political identity (or Slovak national identity within a Czechoslovak state /territorial/ identity).

But the possible cooperation on equal terms was shifted aside by the rise of the ambitious Czech politicians and supported by the loyalty of their Slovak seconds. The idea of the common state was deformed by politicians (Slovak politicians too) in their keen endeavour to stabilize the new state in the shape of the ideology of Czechoslovakism.

⁷ RAPANT, D.: *Vývin slovenského národného povedomia*. Historický sborník V, 1947, no. 1, p. 12.

The Slovak "Czechoslovakists" were not only the passive administrators of the Prague centralistic policy and the propagators of the Czechoslovak unity idea apparently just formulated by the Czechs. On the contrary, they apologized for it in various forms, "developed" this conception, and applied it to the existing social situation. They considered it the basis of the self opportune Slovak policy.⁸

This group within the intelligentsia pointed to centuries of shared cultural and political traditions (from Great Moravia to the National Reawakening). According to them the Czechs and Slovaks had belonged to one nation, and, since through different paths of development, their union had been weakened, it became necessary to strengthen it in the interest of returning to the original union (and even, if it did not exist, it had to be created!). The unitary state should have supported the natural trend toward a fusion of both nations into a common cultural unit (in the future it could have led to amalgamation of languages, some said).

If the idea of a Czecho-Slovak relationship had its significance in the nation-preservation movement of the Slovak nation in Hungary, in the conditions of the Czecho-Slovak Republic (especially in the 1930s), when the Slovaks (Slovakia predominantly) – of course, due to substantial Czech help – could develop enormously, this idea hampered further promotion of national life and the weakened stability of the Czecho-Slovak state. The effort to renovate or strengthen the fictive original Czecho-Slovak union even in this period apparently represented a retarding factor.

In the Czech as well as Slovak intellectual tradition, the linguistic and cultural conception of the nation inspired by Herder was dominant. This started in the time of the so-called National Awakening (the concept was shaped by Josef Jungmann on the Czech side and Ján Kollár on the Slovak one).⁹ Issuing from this intellectual tradition the nation was conceived as a linguistic-cultural community, its primary sign being the language, and the national culture its organizing principle. A nation's peculiar character was closely related to its common language, since language was the vehicle of a tradition and preserving and transmitting the culture. The nation was "an organic whole" which should have manifested its own specificity in its own national (popular) culture and language.

This concept of nation tended to be associated with a metaphysical doctrine. As an objectively given entity the nation was considered a logical, inevitable result of the self-consciousness, an expression of "the spirit of nation" (Volksgeist) and made its necessary contribution to the progress of mankind. These ideas penetrated

⁸ For instance the social-democratic politician Ivan Dérer published collection of his speeches and articles defending the Czechoslovak idea in: *Československá otázka*. Praha 1935.

⁹ Bernard Bolzano's ethic concept was postponed to the margin. Cf. PATOČKA, J.: *O smysl dneška*. Praha 1969, pp. 96-98.

here under the influence of German Romanticism. In the period of the Slovak National Awakening the influence of Herder and Hegel played a decisive role.¹⁰

The Czechoslovak nationality concept was not disposed of elements of this traditionalistic conception of nation. The substantial differences between the Czechs and Slovaks were denied on its basis and the partisans of the construction tried to testify to their original linguistic and literary unity by piling up learned arguments.

The language continued to be considered a pronouncedly identifying sign of the nation. It was characteristic that not only the Czechoslovak nation but the Czechoslovak language as state and official language was legislatively anchored. In the introduction as well as in the contents of the Constitutional List of the Introductory Law Nr. 121/1920 of the Collection of Laws and Decrees the fiction of a uniform "Czechoslovak nation" was enforced. The Constitution talked only about a single "Czechoslovak nation" speaking "a Czechoslovak language".¹¹ Thus, the Czechoslovak Constitution did not recognize the Slovaks as an independent national entity. The Slovak nation was *de iure* and *de facto* in an unequal position.

The most engaged proponents of Czechoslovakism were some professors of Comenius University in Bratislava. The historian of literature Albert Pražák published several books aiming to illustrate the idea of Czechoslovak cultural and literary unity.¹² The various works of the historian Václav Chaloupecký were ideologically biased.¹³

Positivistic scholars confronted with the historical fact of the existence of the Slovak literary language existence and writings tried to support Czechoslovak unity in history and literature by scientific argumentations. They pointed to the small linguistic differences of Slovaks and Czechs. The Slovak and Czech literary languages crystallized from a continuum of kindred dialects. Slovaks were a branch of the

¹⁰ See: BARNARD, F. M.: *Zwischen Aufklärung und politischer Romantik. Eine Studie über Herders soziologisch-politisches Denken*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, Heft 17, Erich Schmidt Verlag 1964, p. 75 f.

The influences of Herder and Hegel have been analysed in our literature, however, it should be useful to investigate affiliation to the political thinking of German Romanticism. See more e.g. REISS, H.: *Politisches Denken in der deutschen Romantik*. Francke Verlag Bern und München 1966, p. 24 (Fichte), p. 69 (Schleiermacher).

¹¹ The special Law number 122 of the Collection of Laws and Decrees which was a part of the Constitutional List of 29 February 1920 recognized Czechoslovak language as the only state official language. However, in public life two versions thereof, Czech and Slovak, were allowed.

The Slovak version of the Constitution was published in: *Ústava republiky československé*. Štátní nakladatelství v Praze 1934.

¹² As we can see in his works: *Československý národ*. Bratislava 1925; *Češi a Slováci. Literární dějepisné poznámky k československému poměru*. Praha 1929; *Duchová podstata slovenské slovesnosti*. Praha 1938.

¹³ See CHALOUPECKÝ, V.: *Staré Slovensko* (Spisy FF UK III. Bratislava 1923); *Zápas o Slovensko 1918* (Praha 1930).

unified Czechoslovak nation. Eventually, they spoke of two branches and languages – that is why they also had to accentuate the spiritual tradition and cultural attributes of the single “Czechoslovak nation”. They argued on the basis of a common historical experience – that the Czechs and Slovaks although politically separated had passed together through many common historical events. They had once been a single people and the “Czechoslovak nation” was not “a romantic new creation, but a recreation of an old one”.¹⁴

The “Czechoslovakists” overcame in an only apparent way the narrow language frame within the national conception of the unitary “Czechoslovak nation”. According to them, Slovak rose by a separation from the common literary language. Milan Hodža also saw no essential step in the independent literary Slovak on the way to Slovak national emancipation and national identity formation, but only a “purely linguistic creation”.¹⁵ Considering the rise of the literary Slovak language as a historical fact according to Hodža the Slovak “book language” preserving “national organic continuities” would not mean a disunion but “it would not mean splits and mutual contraposing”.¹⁶ He supported his point of view by the conviction of the nearly unconditional validity of the principle “of our organic coherence with Czech spiritual life”. From this view one of the key points of the Slovak national emancipation movement – the codification of the Slovak literary language – appeared then as a fatal act on the politically motivated way to Czecho-Slovak “separation”.

Hodža saw in the independence of the Slovak language (as an “external” expression of the Slovak national individuality) – “a matter of political purposefulness” and in the Czecho-Slovak “split” not an internal necessity, but a political intention. He argued that the Slovak literary language had been created with regard to the Hungarian state idea. L. Štúr’s Slovak was a “*politicum hungaricum*”, as he stressed it.¹⁷

The Slovak national emancipation movement appeared from the point of view of the Czechoslovak unity concept as an expression of voluntarism inspired by Hegelian idealism and political respects (so-called Hungarism). The decisive step in the developing process of the Slovak national identity – the codification of literary Slovak appeared then as a willful decision “towards the break-up of the Czechoslovak language unity”.¹⁸

The conception of Czechoslovak national unity should have been a synthesis of the linguistic-cultural conception of the nation with a nation concept conceiving it as a self-conscious political (and territorial) community. The nation was considered

¹⁴ JOHNSON, O. V.: *Slovakia 1918-1938*, p. 53.

¹⁵ HODŽA, M.: *Československý rozkol. Príspevky k dejinám slovenčiny*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin 1920, p. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ PRAŽÁK, A.: *Hegel a Slovensko*. Bratislava Vol. V, Bratislava 1931, p. 373.

vak nationalism, i.e. the organic synthesis of all elements of Czech and Slovak national culture".²¹

He was partly aware of the deficiencies "of the new creation of Czechoslovak nationalism". He conceded that it was a "too rational a configuration, practical and utilitarian, having nearly no traditions in its present form", but he was convinced that it already existed and "if it did not exist, we must create it and graft it into the hearts of future generations".²²

Štefánek tried hard to motivate the conception of Czecho-Slovak national unity on the basis of his own interpretation of social development tendencies and thus to contribute to the promotion of the state-forming idea of the Czechoslovak state. In this spirit, he acted too as an active participant in the political events of the pre-Munich Republic.

He was one of the leading opponents of the Slovak autonomistic policy and worked actively not only in his journalistic, specialized issues, but also in the Prague Parliament. Thus, if A. Štefánek stressed that "our state will be based on the natural and national union",²³ it did not state the actual situation, but rather an old-new effort to defend and strengthen the validity of the Czechoslovakist concept in the interest of individual power and political aims. Štefánek stressed: "The idea of Czecho-Slovak national unity became the basis of our new state, its *raison d'être* is only this idea. There is everything contained in it that becomes the basis of the national Czecho-Slovak state. As soon as we get estranged from it, disintegration will follow and all that is connected with the disintegration of a state will result".²⁴

This standpoint not only meant an expression of the conviction of the Czecho-Slovak oriented Slovak politicians, but its unambiguity also limited flexible reaction to opinions which called for the entire recognition of the Slovak sovereignty and consequences in the question of the state arrangement of Slovak and Czech relations. If ignorance towards Slovak demands had been conditioned by the anti-autonomistic political standpoints it could be comprehensible (from the point of view of the natural conditions of political struggle in the pre-Munich Czecho-Slovak Republic). But, the ideology of Czechoslovakism was going hand in hand with the promotion of Prague centralism defending practical power and political ambitions. This might be the reason for A. Štefánek in his speech in the Prague Parliament (November 1932) describing the claim to autonomy as "federalism grounded in nationalistic antipathy, isolation of Slovakia and distaste" (it could not, for him, be corresponding to a federative state arrangement, but it would push the Slovaks,

²¹ ŠTEFÁNEK, A.: *Slovenská a československá otázka*. Průdy VI, 1922, nos. 1-7, p. 86.

²² Ibid., p. 30.

²³ SIDOR, K.: *Slovenská politika na pôde pražského snemu (1918-1938)*. II. Bratislava 1943, p. 28.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

Germans, Hungarians towards atomization, destruction of the common state; federation would not save peace, order and contentment).

Such a standpoint towards the ever stronger national emancipation movement in Slovakia demanding the recognition of specific Slovak nationality on a political level, did not contribute to settling the Slovak problem. Slovak demands for autonomy had been considered as a concession towards Hungarian aspirations to revise the post-war borders. This fear of the Hungarian revisionist menace had been part of the argumentation against Slovak autonomist programme all the time.

But Slovak autonomism had not been destructive towards the Czecho-Slovak Republic, nor the Czech nation. The Slovaks wished to share the common state with the Czechs. But they sharply denied the fiction of the national unity of the Czechs and Slovaks expressed by the ideology of Czechoslovakism and the centralistic policy. The claim for Slovak autonomy was based on the entire recognition of the Slovak national sovereignty and its expression in the administrative-political incorporation of Slovakia in the Republic that would respect and express the national sovereignty within its own territory and in all spheres of life. It should be built as a two-nation state on the principle of legal equality of the Slovaks with the Czechs (in a kind of "national dualism"). This programme should not be looked upon as an expression of the somehow out-of-time and destructive nationalism (however, this motion could also bear such consequential phenomena), that would threaten the existence of the Czecho-Slovak state itself. It was constructive as far as the relation to the common state was concerned that was to be promoted, not weakened by a new, unavoidable constitutional arrangement of Czech and Slovak relations. "Czech insensitivity to Slovak nationalism was the principal cause of the separatist trend which became increasingly well-supported in the course of the 1930s."²⁵

President T. G. Masaryk, although a proponent of the Czechoslovak concept, never gave detailed attention the theory of Czechoslovak nationality because he considered Czech-Slovak unity and cooperation as simply natural. Slovaks were for him sons of a single nation divided only by dialectal differences. In Czechoslovak Republic he saw the fulfilment of Slovak social and cultural demands.²⁶

The strongest adversary of Slovak ambitions for recognition of national sovereignty and political emancipation within the Czechoslovak Republic was Eduard Beneš. He was the leading representative of the Prague centralistic policy, the opponent of the Slovak political autonomism, and a convinced "Czechoslovakist". His standpoints were openly, even in terms of a programme, claimed throughout the whole existence of the Czechoslovak Republic even later after its tragic end.

²⁵ PEARSON, R.: *National Minorities in Eastern Europe. 1848-1945*. London 1983, p. 154.

²⁶ On his attitudes to Slovak identity see: BAKOŠ, V.: *T. G. Masaryk and the Slovak Question. A Contribution to the History of Ideas and Political Concepts*. Human Affairs 4, 1994, 1, pp. 30-45.

as a union of individuals subject to a single political order. A nation's unity and identity derived from political organization. In this conception a nation was a politically conscious, active community of citizens, with organizing principle in political institutions, the integrating factor being political ideas and first of all the awareness of appurtenance. The most essential element was considered to be an active, corporate will to create a nationality. Each nation should form by will a sovereign nation-state. State was thus logically prior to the nation. Such a conception expressed the element of an active co-creation of nation as a national and political community surpassing the borders of ethnic wholes delimited by language and culture. But such a conception of nation did not have a sufficiently strong basis in our tradition. However, the Czechoslovak state was supposed to be a framework for a unitary political nation.

The attempt at the above-mentioned synthesis of the ethno-cultural and state-political concept of the nation can be found in the writings of the sociologist Anton Štefánek who devoted an extraordinary attention to these questions. From the beginning of the twenties he expressed his opinion on the Czech-Slovak question in several articles: discussing these problems from the scientific sociological point of view he also called "homoethnology".

Štefánek endorsed a multidimensional concept of nation. He considered it a historically shaped phenomenon. In his conception, a nation is an organic whole or "collective organism", with a dynamic but not static character, it is a permanently developing "organism". According to him, the development of nations take place "in a concentrating or dissolving direction". From the sociological point of view he paid special attention to the problems of "association and isolation in national sense", to the historical process of "national integration, disintegration and reintegration". Social development takes place "in the so-called differentiation and integration which are conditioned by the tendency of ideal harmony, socialization and individualization".¹⁹

He stressed the negativism of isolation and pointed out that unifying, "acculturating, assimilating" forces acted against individualizing efforts. He saw the basic development tendency of human society in a successive accumulation of social units into larger wholes. The process of social integration which has a natural and spontaneous not rationally model character, is valid for nations too. He stressed will aspects in social structures, that is why he endorsed "the voluntaristic" conception of the nation (mainly from the aspect of the will to national unity). The nation-building process as an integrating one is initiated by the will and sense of group appurtenance (the term of "consciousness of appurtenance" represents one of the central concepts of Štefánek's sociological conception). Cooperation, acculturation, congeniality or syngenesis and consciousness of appurtenance should help to overcome isolation, particularity, tribe-feeling just as romantic emotional nationalism stressing the diversity of languages.

¹⁹ ŠTEFÁNEK, A.: *Slovenská a československá otázka*. Průdy VI, 1922, nos. 1-7, p. 24.

Štefánek recognized the stressing of language as an objective sign of a nation, but he assumed that the overcoming of the language difference would bring solution for difficulties or separation of related wholes (for him Czechoslovak bilingualism was a way to overcome isolation, a contribution to a spontaneous approach).

He constructed the formulation proper of the Czechoslovak national unity idea on the conviction that development aimed at greater social wholes (while an associating universalistic "instinct" is at work and nationalism is an expression of individualizing instinct), but also on an internal articulation and certain "gradation of national wholes", further on the feeling of appurtenance and presupposition that the process of coming closer was spontaneous. Like other followers of this idea, he stressed that he was founding it on rational, scientific knowledge (the thesis of integration of smaller social units into the larger ones belonged among the fundamental theses of his social theory). He would not found it on sentimentality, regionalism and particularism, without scientific explanations by rational knowledge, what he ascribed to the preachers of Slovak national distinctiveness. In his own nearly systematic effort to justify this idea "in a scientific way" although with the effort to demythologize the concept of nation, he, however, got into conflict with his own criticism of tendentious science. Thus he contributed in an essential extent to the construction of the concept of a fictitious Czechoslovak nationality.

He advocated an active "evolutionist view" according to which the "Czechoslovak nation" was an organism being formed. He examined the possibilities of this "aggregate" and justified the legitimacy of this artificial construction in a whole series of papers. Štefánek wanted to approach the problems of nation and nationalism from a scientific sociological view and simultaneously to find a solution for the "Czechoslovak problem" as social and political one. For him these were the topics for the studies of L. Štúr's philosophy, Slovak autonomism and conservatism as well as of the problem "of isolation and association in national sense", etc.²⁰ He was convinced that he was promoting, by his own activities, the objective development in the direction of Czechoslovak "synthesis", and "integration".

According to Štefánek the Czechs and Slovaks were one nation from the sociological, historical, linguistic, and ethnographic points of view, the historical continuity of which "only was seemingly torn". Social development going in the direction of integration should be the basis of Czechoslovak unifying efforts. A political nation too has to crystallize "through a natural development into a unitary ethnic whole. This must be our ideal for future centuries". According to him – "apart from the purely tribal Slovak nationalism – we must love, cultivate and create Czechoslo-

²⁰ He published a series of articles on these question, first of all in the revue *Průdy: Slovenská a československá otázka* (1922); *Československo a autonómia* (1923); *Československý problém* (1924); *Asociácia a izolácia* (1925); later: *Príspevok ku sociológii národa a nacionalizmu* (1938).

E. Beneš clearly formulated his attitudes towards the Slovaks and the Slovak question during his stay in Slovakia in 1933. He delivered his "Reč k Slovákom o našej národnej prítomnosti a budúcnosti" /The Speech to the Slovaks on Our National Present and Future/ in Bratislava (on December 6th, 1933, later "The Speech" was delivered in different places in Slovakia).

He presented himself as a "Czechoslovak" here due to his feeling of not only being a Czech but of having subordinated this feeling to the "Czecho-Slovak" one. He stressed on this occasion, too, that the current task for the Czechs and Slovaks had been "to finish definitely their historical advancement towards unification". He expressed openly his wishes for both "branches of the Czechoslovak nation", to unite gradually in all directions. He was speaking here about the need for the unstoppable biological and sociological enhancement of "our nation, Czechoslovakhood" as a future, new national consciousness. He was sure that "no power in the world will stop this union today".²⁷

According to him the Slovaks are to contribute to this national unity by a "new national force" as "the younger branch of the national stem, the branch that had not been exhausted, rich in a folk biological potential and culture".²⁸ In this unrestrainable process of national unification within which the culturally and materially stronger Czech element could suppress the "Slovak element" (he was aware of the fact) Beneš did not see the way to gradual assimilation of the Slovaks. This consciously brushed-aside element of his own concept of the unifying process, as well as openly pragmatic-political motivation showed that his Czechoslovakism was to support the actual state power-political aims and intentions of Czech policy.

As early as in the thirties, the creation of powerful national units was used as an argument in favour of the international development in Europe. This led Beneš to his appeal "to all patriotic Slovaks and Czechs" to behave responsibly and to understand this development and "to leave everyday useless squabbles, quarrels, party and individual distastes".²⁹ Beneš was (frankly, perhaps) convinced that his own Czechoslovakistic concept of unification, that was but the hidden expression of an intention to strengthen "the Czech element" through assimilation of the Slovaks, thus "reviving" the advanced Czech part of the nation (that was "closer to the Western culture") by use of the new national power, was based on the "common principles of promotion of our nation and Europe".

From this view-point he felt it acceptable to deny Slovak autonomism identified with separatism. The political autonomism and national separatism of the Slovaks aimed, in Beneš's eyes, at weakening the state in relation to foreign countries which looked upon autonomism as the means in the struggle for "Slovak territory". According to him, European advancement itself called for "rapid creation of a unified,

²⁷ SIDOR, K.: *Slovenská politika na pôde pražského snemu (1918-1938)*. II, p. 160.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

strong nation at the borders of three expansive nationalisms – German, Hungarian, and Italian”.³⁰ The national unification was to serve the strategic-political and power intentions of the Czech policy within the Central European region. Paradoxically, he thought, that attitudes towards Germany were good and correct and “in any attack aimed at us, the whole pressure will always effect Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ukraine”...³¹ The actually effective and successful “firm dam” against this threat was seen undoubtedly in “absolute Czecho-Slovak unification”.³² “Thus the great historical duty of our whole generation is to create, in accordance with the development, respecting the specificities, the higher national unit from both branches of our nation”.³³ He was determined to follow this political aim without compromises. He refused to seek an agreement (that was finally evidenced by his further political activities up to the end of the forties).

However, the strategy of a Czechoslovak nation-building process failed in practice. Beneš’s attitudes are an example for the politics as well as the ideology of Czechoslovakism, which was not only a fiction adopted for convenience to bolster the right to a nation-state, but it denied the Slovak separate identity and served as a cover for Slovak subordination, even for imposing Czech colonial ruling style on Slovakia. At the end of the thirties not only the Czecho-Slovak problem but also the Sudeten German problem (after K. Henlein’s party gained 70% of Sudeten German votes in 1935) became acute. Czechoslovak state policy had failed to solve these crucial problems and its consequences to the stability and even the existence of the Czecho-Slovak state were far-reaching.

The idea of Czechoslovak unity bore a remarkable political dimension (that of constitutional law), as well as the cultural one. Its adherents and advocates did not take into account the cultural specificity of the Slovak milieu. Many of the Czechs identified Czechoslovak with Czech and thought it was their task to transform the backward Slovaks to the Czechs – they “behaved inconsiderately or even contemptuously, treating the Slovaks as country bumpkins who had to be civilised, and despising their religious beliefs as primitive superstitions”.³⁴

The Czechs as the representatives of a more advanced, west-oriented society, brought a different spirit, way of working activities, cultural orientation into Slovakia. These differences gave rise to many misunderstandings and discrepancies. Many Czechs did not take into consideration adequately the needs and expectations ensuing from their activity here, as well as that their primary task was to serve the Slovak society, to contribute to enhancement of Slovak culture and society. However, due to their Czechoslovakistic conviction such expectations were frequently disappointed.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p. 162.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ SETON-WATSON, H.: *Nations and States*, p. 173.

The Czechs helped the Slovaks in the process of transformation in various fields, such as the school system, political organization, in building and functioning of the state and public administration, legislation, social services, and in the wholesome social restructurization that inevitably had to be carried out with the new dynamics in Slovakia after the era of retarded development within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the ideology of Czechoslovakism problematized many positive impulses.

The idea of a Czechoslovak nationality had been spread downwards to the population, but the masses had little interest in it. A considerable part of the Czech intelligentsia tried to contribute to the assertion of this idea within the Slovak educational system. Some of them even believed in the possibility of reintegrating "the original" linguistic and literary unity by means of school education. But these attempts had no chance to be realized and the growth of a Slovak nationally conscious intelligentsia was enormous.³⁵ One should appreciate the Czech role in the development of scholarship in the interwar Slovakia, but their tendentious activity should have been rejected by the young Slovak intelligentsia (it even contributed to the growth of Slovak nationalism).³⁶

However, the Czechoslovak idea had been spread and supported not only by the Czechs. Representatives of a part of the Slovak intelligentsia grouped around the revue *Prúdy* (1922-1938) defended the conception of the unitary "Czechoslovak nation" too.

Svätopluk Štúr draw inspiration from Masaryk's philosophy and stressed his point regarding problems of nation (e.g. from his lectures collected in "Národní filosofie doby novější" /National philosophy of recent times, 1904/). The characteristics of a nation (according to Masaryk – language, state, political, economical, and social situation and individual components of spiritual culture, first of all morality) pass nationality borders according to Štúr and point to universal dimension proper.

For Štúr too, language was an important component of nation, this not only as a means but also as "the rare instrument with many strings" or speech as "the expression and content of our soul in its totality".³⁷ As such, language overcomes nationality barriers and the interest sphere of a nation. At a superficial examination language appears to be a primary sign of nationality, we can, however, "by no means regard it as a nationality affair only when attaining universal aims with the help of this language".³⁸

³⁵ For more on the role of secondary and higher education in the rapid growth of the Slovak intelligentsia, see: JOHNSON, O. V.: *Slovakia 1918-1938. Education and the Making of a Nation*. New York 1985.

³⁶ In the thirties (according to estimates at that time) about one-third of the younger generation of Slovaks was "centralist", two-thirds "autonomist". MACARTNEY, C.A.: *Hungary and Her Successors. The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences 1919-1937*. London/New York/Toronto, 1968, p. 146.

³⁷ ŠTÚR, S.: *Národnosť ako problém*. *Prúdy* XIV, 1930, no. 5, p. 286.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

Spheres such as art, science and philosophy are an expression of tendencies towards universalism, they are an expression of permanent transgressions of borders of a nation, they have a universal human basis. He wrote: "If art can perhaps be national in a certain case, science and philosophy must always be universal without fail, because they would lose their scientific character in the moment we would make them national".³⁹ First of all it is morality that stands above nations and nationalities as a "firm, universal human, unifying force". Štúr stressed: "Ethics is definitely antinational, because it is universally human". Morality cannot stand on a national standpoint, because this standpoint always contains a piece of "national egoism". According to him: "Ethics must not know national differentiations, it is the highest, most comprehensive human value, a universal value that breaks most strongly the borders and manacles of a nationality today".⁴⁰

By his stressing the ethical standpoint, he wanted to show a possible way to harmonize national and moral principles on the basis of universal humanism. He wrote: "If we regard ethics as a criterion of human life and highest value, we necessarily must come from it to the negation of national differences in the sense of values and to the unity of the whole of mankind".⁴¹

Štúr, however, acted rather on a level of ideas, postulates, ideal projects than on an analytic level of investigating real contexts of national life (that is why he rejected Rádl's view that the national phenomenon is a product of social conditions). He rightly criticized the Romantic nationalism of the 19th century and its new variants. However, he did not comprehend the consequences of the modernization processes that took place in the Slovak society as well. In the dynamics of these the modern Slovak nation has been shaped. He sharply rejected contemporary Slovak nationalists (and political autonomists) describing them as followers of Romanticism, he blamed them for dogmatism and destructiveness. Such a biased attitude could not contribute to explanation of recent events of the national emancipation movement.

He saw the soil for national activism in spiritual spheres – in art, science, ethics. According to him, nationality "must honestly be lived to the very foundations!" He pathetically proclaimed and invoked the birth of a new nationality issuing from the sensation of the unity of the human race, unity of humankind fate. There was no more thinkable "a nationality that would not be simultaneously diffused into universal human ideals". Chaos and disharmony should be overcome by a grandiose synthesis. In such a hope he pronounced the conviction that "there are no more borders between nationalism and universalism, they merge together, cover each other in a mighty initial accord to a new painfully conquered harmony and unity of the whole world".⁴² He postulated a principle of entirety, synthesis for this sphere as well. That is why he

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 291.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 294.

⁴² Ibid., p. 296.

stressed several times that "the question is for us today – with all of its seriousness – the synthesis of individualism and collectivism, nationalism and universalism".⁴³

From this global view of modern development, Štúr believed that the dusk of Romanticism and platitude of rationalism were surmounted by a "new European spirit". He appealed: "We realise fully that we have to carry to completion the process of democratization which English empiricism inaugurated early in the XVIIIth century, and find a synthesis between reason and sentiment, between nationality and humanity".⁴⁴ A postulate he emphasized in various articles and books from the 1930s on.

According to Štúr the upheaval of 1918 meant national liberation for the Slovaks. In the Czechoslovak Republic the national language and culture preservation was no longer a patriotic deed of moral significance. Speech and art could be diverted from their mission of national awakening and inspiration, the culture should accustom itself to new possibilities of development; it had to absorb the modern European spirit and at the same time to express "the genius of the race". As he has written: "We feel that the year 1918 has not merely brought us national freedom, but has also laid upon us the duty of recasting all our national ideals and interests in a European mould. The leading idea of our development in these ten years has been that we must emerge from behind our narrow national frontiers and become conscious members of the European commonwealth".⁴⁵

In spite of the fact that Štúr felt very intensively the disharmony of the contemporary contradictory development, he did not succeed in overcoming the abstract character of his own humanism which was a variant of secularized humanism refusing to strike root in the transcendent (by this he also became estranged from Masaryk and his synergism). Štúr turned away from real contradictions and referred to the idealness of "what should be". Such a humanism can be appreciated for its purity and suggestivity. The formation of a modern democratic society as an open pluralist community is unthinkable without the foundations of universal human values. Their weight and validity must, however, be projected to the level of concrete relations and the real life of individuals and the national community.

As a nation the Slovaks and Slovak society too headed to self-confirmation at that time; this happened not only in the sphere of cultural and spiritual manifestations of their own capabilities but also on the level of self-realization in social and political institutions. Slovakia entered a new stage in the dynamics of the modernization process and the Slovaks were confronted with the challenge to form a developed national and civil community. This community had to create new value structures, open to human values and simultaneously create their specific forms within its own national culture.

⁴³ ŠTÚR, S.: *Slovensko hľadá juce*. Průdy XIX, 1935, no. 5, p. 262.

⁴⁴ *Slovakia Then and Now. A Political Survey*. Ed. by R. W. Seton-Watson. London, Prague 1931, p. 163.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

However, a great part of the Slovak intelligentsia in the interwar period wanted to preserve the specificity of Slovak national culture based on tradition. Language as an expression of its essence, immanent values of national community, its spiritual tradition, should be preserved in the interest of the further development of the nation. Not only traditionalism but a certain kind of isolationism was a reaction to the challenging situation of Slovakia getting into the whirl of dynamic movements resulting from its inclusion in the West-European social and cultural context.

On the other hand the intelligentsia orientated towards Czechoslovakism seemed to accept another societal vision of the national future. The Slovak "Czechoslovakists" not only understood the Czechoslovak unity as the political but also as the cultural factor that was to shape and develop Slovak society.⁴⁶ They saw almost cultural-civilization reasons within the Czechoslovak unity conception in the incorporation of Slovakia into the Czech or Czechoslovak social and cultural space. They saw help of the Czechs as the way by which Slovak society could pass through the social and cultural modernization process.

But the effort to "czechicize" Slovaks, not so much as far as language is concerned but in the cultural and spiritual sphere, resulted in an inevitable controversy of various concepts of cultural and social development, different views of the world and life. The result of the two concepts of the national development was the conflict not only between two competing elites (Slovak nationalists and Czechoslovakists) in the modernization process of Slovakia but between two competing nationalisms.⁴⁷ As we have seen, it was not exclusively an inter-ethnic but an intra-ethnic elite conflict as well, for many Slovaks supported, instead of radical nationalist demands (secessionism), the idea of Czecho-Slovak national unity.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ A. Štefánek wrote as follows: "I saw the result of the permanent anti-Czech agitation and hardly explainable feebleness of Prague in slackening the Czechoslovak national idea. The most serious would be if my natives do not enter the Czech cultural space until its time for it. It can be explained psychologically that the Czechs are increasingly tending towards the idea of federation. They want to avoid the least interpretation of Czechization. They claim that the Slovaks can administer their own matters by their own will. We, the home ones, see the matters more clearly and we are afraid that weakening the central power would result in further strengthening the numerous inferiors." (A. Štefánek in a letter to R. W. Seton-Watson of October 9th, 1930. In: SETON-WATSON, H.: *A. Štefánek and R. W. Seton-Watson*. München, Collegium Carolinum 1977, p. 31.)

⁴⁷ On two concepts of nation, two types of nationalism and its manifestation in the diverse cultural orientations, see: BAKOŠ, V.: Nation, Nationalism and Culture. In: *Formen des nationalen Bewußtseins im Lichte zeitgenössischer Nationalismustheorien. Vorträge der Tagung des Collegium Carolinum in Bad Wiessee vom 31. Oktober bis 3. November 1991*. Hrsg. von Eva Schmidt-Hartmann. München (Oldenbourg) 1994, pp. 309-320.

⁴⁸ On elite-competition for control over social and economic processes in developing societies see more in: BRASS, P.R.: Ethnic Groups and Nationalities: The Formation, Persistence and Transformation of Ethnic Identities. In: *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*. P. F. Sugar (Ed.), Santa Barbara, California/Oxford, England, 1980, p. 13 ff.

However, the attempt at the creation of a higher Czechoslovak national whole could not be seen as successful as it was not projected into the topical needs of the Slovak national community. This ideology could not explain the justification of the artificial construction of a "Czechoslovak nation". In addition to it, the failure of the Czechoslovakism to create a synthetic nation was one of the causes leading to the disintegration of the state.

The attempt to push the Czechoslovak idea in practice as a higher integrating principle of the Czechoslovak state had no success. After twenty years "Probelauf" this ideologically biased attempt at nation-building was wrecked.⁴⁹ Like the theory of a unified "Czechoslovak nation" it remained an unsuccessful attempt to synthesize two concepts of nation: as a linguistic-cultural (ethnic) and state-political (territorial) community. Besides, as Jan Patočka put it, the tragedy of the Czechoslovak state was "a tragedy of democratism not thought through to the end", because the attempt failed to raise elemental democratism to a supranational state idea by placing it higher than the narrow linguistic nationalism of individual nationalities.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ As recently noted LEMBERG, H.: *Die Tschechisch-slowakischen Beziehungen aus der Sicht der Historiker*. Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder. Bd. 32, 1991, p. 69.

⁵⁰ PATOČKA, J.: *O smysl dneška*, p. 148.