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***Slovak Quislings: Tiso Sympathizers in Postwar  
Correspondence of the US Department of State***

Bachelor's Thesis

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1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
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In Prague on December 25, 2024

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## Reference

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## **Abstract**

This thesis applies post-structuralist linguistic inquiry, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis, to the telegrams that had been addressed to the US Department of State in the aftermath of the Second World War, and sent by the Slovak Action Committee, a Nazi-adjacent Slovak separatist group. A large body of text is analyzed such that summary statements can be made about the specific semantic means this Committee used in its apologia of the Slovak State, its advocacy for US intervention in the trial of Jozef Tiso, its pleas to the international community to initiate certain countermeasures against Czechoslovakia for alleged mistreatment of the Slovaks, its demands that a plebiscite be incited in Czechoslovakia etc. To this end, the rhetoric of Tiso sympathizers mobilizes several (oftentimes mutually contradictory) discourses, leaning its arguments on almost anything, be it the doctrine of Self-Determination, international law and universal human rights, pseudo-biological justifications, theological and fatalist beliefs, anti-imperialist resentments, anti-Communist hostility or national chauvinism. The desire for Slovak statehood in these texts is so strong, in fact, that it is entirely willing to plunge itself to the veneration of any political philosophy that might justify such an end. Sympathies for the cause of Slovak independence as well as for the absolution of Tiso from the side of Americans of Slovak origin is also touched upon. Feeling out the underbelly of this obscure fascist group may prove useful in the analysis of the discursive patterns employed by fascists today.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce užívá poststrukturalistického lingvistického výzkumu, konkrétně aplikuje Kritickou diskurzivní analýzu na telegramy, které byly adresovány americkému State Departmentu po konci druhé světové války a jejichž odesilatelem byl Slovenský akční výbor, slovenská separatistická skupina spojená s nacistickými tendencemi. Větší množství textů je v ní analyzováno tak, aby mohly být učiněny povšechné výroky o specifických jazykových prostředcích, kterých tento výbor užíval ve své obhajobě Slovenského státu, ve svém lobování za americkou intervenci v soudním procesu s Jozefem Tisem, ve svých provoláních mezinárodnímu společenství, aby byla proti Československu užitá některá protiopatření za údajné špatné zacházení se Slováky, ve svých požadavcích, aby byl v Československu rozpoután plebiscit o Slovenské nezávislosti atd. K tomuto účelu rétorika Tisových přívrženců užívá několika (často vzájemně se vylučujících) diskurzů a opírá své argumenty o téměř cokoliv, ať už je tím doktrína o sebeurčení národů, mezinárodní právo a všeobecná lidská práva, pseudobiologická odůvodnění, teologická a fatalistická přesvědčení, antiimperialistický odpor, protikomunistická nevraživost či národní šovinismus. Touha po slovenské státnosti v těchto textech je natolik silná, až je zcela ochotna vrhnout se k uctívání jakékoli politické filosofie, která by mohla tento účel obhájit. Taktéž jsou zde tematizovány sympatie pro snahy o slovenskou nezávislost, jakož i pro zproštění Tisa viny, ze strany Američanů slovenského původu. Prohmatávání podbříšku tohoto obskurního fašistického seskupení se může ukázat užitečným pro analýzu diskurzivních vzorců, kterých užívají i fašisté dnešní.

## **Keywords**

Critical Discourse Analysis; Slovak Action Committee; Ludák Exile; Postwar Separatism; Fascist Discourses

## **Klíčová slova**

Kritická diskurzivní analýza; Slovenský akční výbor; Luďácký exil; Poválečný separatismus; Fašistické diskurzy

## **Název práce**

„Slovenští Quislingové“: Tisovi přívrženci v poválečné korespondenci s americkým State Departmentem

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis primarily focuses on the Slovak Action Committee<sup>1</sup> (SAV), a postwar separatist group that considered itself the government-in-exile of the clerical-fascist Slovak State. The subject of its analysis is the correspondence of said group with the Government of the United States (as well as its reflection in the internal communication of the government) in the years 1946 – 1948. All hitherto studies, as far as preliminary research could tell, reconstruct either the activities of the Slovak Action Committee or those of the exiled proponents of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party (Ľudáks). None, however, subject their texts to analysis in order to understand the narrative they tried to construe to justify Slovak independence and to downplay the atrocities committed by the Ľudák-run Slovak State. This analysis draws on the post-structuralist linguistic tradition, specifically several schools of critical discourse analysis (CDA), with a special focus on the Dialectical-Relations Approach (DRA) of Norman Fairclough, a British linguist and one of the founders of CDA.<sup>2</sup> As will be clear from the following chapter, CDA alone is a wide family of approaches, and the work of Professor Fairclough narrows it down into a specific set of stages and guidelines. The reason for choosing this topic is twofold: Firstly, it is the low representation of the Slovak Action Committee in the existing academic literature, and secondly, it is the ideological coloration of the primary sources themselves, the deciphering of which may offer a more accurate understanding of how the texts reported on the decline of fascism in postwar Europe. Concerning the first reason, it ought to be added that although the Committee is found in the academic literature, it is never thematized on its own. Instead, it is mentioned only as a political project of Ferdinand Ďurčanský, and even then, only very briefly. The main secondary sources regarding the Committee are the following:

*Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* by James Mace Ward, professor of Modern European History at the University of Rhode Island, a publication which has been useful for the purposes of this thesis in terms of mapping the Slovak separatist narratives at the end of the war, and during Tiso’s trial and execution;<sup>3</sup> *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970: Mýty a realita*, a comprehensive historical account of the activities of all strands of the Ľudák exile and their (at times sectarian) interplay and a summary of primary sources, written and edited for the Slovak Academy of Sciences by the historians Jan Pešek and Václav Vondrášek;<sup>4</sup> *Slovenský exil v Itálii 1945–1949* by the Czech independent historian Petr

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper, it shall be referred to only as “the Committee” where appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. A dialectical-relation approach to critical discourse analysis in social research. In: R. Wodak & M. Meyer eds. *Methods in Critical Discourse Analysis*. 2nd edition Sage, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. Cornell University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0801449888.

Kubík, summarizing the activities of Ľudáks predominantly in Rome;<sup>5</sup> and *American and Vatican reaction to the Tiso trial* by Walter Ullmann,<sup>6</sup> which reflects some of the correspondence between SAV and the United States, and is particularly interesting because it draws conclusions from some of the same primary sources as this thesis. Lastly, while not having much to do with the topic of this thesis, *Mezi Východem a Západem: České politické diskurzy 1945–1948* by Christiane Brenner, a research assistant at the Collegium Carolinum Institute, also derives discourses from the same time period from a large number of primary sources using a historical discourse analysis, and in this regard, her work has been a great inspiration.<sup>7</sup>

The only source yielded by preliminary research that concerns itself with exclusively the Committee is a publication written by Štefan Polakovič, a theologian, a Ľudák ideologue, and a functionary of the Slovak State.<sup>8</sup> The information found therein cannot be taken at face value, but it is nonetheless useful for understanding the discourses that Slovak separatists were constructing. The second reason for the choice of topic has to do with the chosen method, which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

The main aim of the thesis is to answer the research question of how the Slovak Action Committee framed events such as the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the extradition of the representatives of the defunct Slovak state, focusing on its language of choice. The analysis will identify what the Committee was striving for in this matter, as well as what semantic means it used to do so, and what ideology it constructed in the process. The primary sources analyzed for this thesis originate from a collection of digitized frames of microfilm reels provided by my thesis supervisor. These documents – a subset of the broader archival holdings of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland – pertain to the U.S. State Department's documentation on Czechoslovakia from March 14, 1945, to April 1, 1948. However, only a small fraction of them – specifically, 66 of them spanning 155 pages, which will be subject to analysis – are directly relevant to the research questions addressed in this work. Additionally, familiarity with this specific documentation, stemming from previous archival work conducted at the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences further informed the selection of this topic.

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<sup>4</sup> VONDRÁŠEK, Václav, PEŠEK, Jan. *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970: Mýty a realita*. Bratislava: VEDA vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 2011. ISBN 978-80-224-1224-7.

<sup>5</sup> KUBÍK, Petr. *Slovenský exil v Itálii 1945–1949*. In: *Securitas imperii* 02/2012. Available from: <https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/publikace/securitas-imperii/no21/026-047.pdf>. p. 30

<sup>6</sup> ULLMANN, Walter. *American and Vatican reaction to the Tiso trial*. In: *Bohemia: Jahrbuch des Collegium Carolinum*. Vol 18 No 1 (1977). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18447/BoZ-1977-1150>

<sup>7</sup> BRENNER, Christiane. *Mezi Východem a Západem: České politické diskurzy 1945–1948*. Argo, 2015. ISBN 978-80-257-1499-0.

<sup>8</sup> POLAKOVIČ, Štefan, VNUK, František. *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943 – 1948)*. Lakewood-Hamilton: Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988.

The upcoming chapter introduces the methodological background and summarizes the origin and development of Critical Discourse Analysis as a result of the philosophy of language and semiotics. The third chapter will briefly place Slovak separatist narratives into a historical context and will present the circumstances of the formation of the Slovak Action Committee after the Second World War and its further existence. Chapter four analyzes the first month of telegrams as captured in the studied microfilms and sets the groundwork for understanding the terminology that the Committee used and the discourses it constructed. The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapter each deal with a single topic that appeared throughout the correspondence as well as with how this topic is portrayed. These topics are the trial of Tiso, the alleged mistreatment of Slovaks by the Beneš government, and the objectives of the Committee respectively. Finally, the last chapter offers an alternate discourse produced by the United States to see how the activities of the Committee were understood and framed by the State Department itself.

## 2 METHOD

Long gone are polemical disputes about whether historical discourse analyses are useful for the study of the past; replaced by the general consensus that their contribution lies in the reconstruction and critique of discourses,<sup>9</sup> the understanding of which can grant us a better grasp of not only the past but also of the present. The means by which the outlined texts will be analyzed is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which – on the account of its complexity of both approach and history – warrants to be explained in its own chapter. It is possible to define CDA as a methodological study of how ideology, identity and injustice are reenacted through texts produced in [certain] social contexts,<sup>10</sup> wherein language is the means of construction and sustentation of ideologies, which, in turn, maintain the said social identities and inequalities.<sup>11</sup> (And since racism, national identity, and political discourse have by now become well-established domains and genres targeted by CDA,<sup>12</sup> choosing it to analyze the outlined topic at hand treads on known territory.) Czech linguist Ondřej Dufek, whose contribution lies among other things in analyzing the reception of CDA in Czechia, outlines it as “seeking to expose and make visible the power relations in society

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<sup>9</sup> BRENNER, Christiane. *Mezi Východem a Západem: České politické diskurzy 1945–1948*. p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> VAN DIJK, Teun. *Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity*. In: Wodak, Ruth & Meyer, Michael (eds.) *Methods of CDA*. London: Sage, 2001. pp. 95–120; WODAK, Ruth. *Critical Discourse Analysis: Challenges and Perspectives*. In: *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, Vol. 1*. (eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer). London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013. DOI: 10.4135/9780857028020.d4.

<sup>11</sup> WODAK, Ruth. *The discourse-historical approach*. in: Wodak, Ruth & Meyer, Michael (eds.) *Methods of CDA*. London: Sage, 2001. pp. 81–115; WODAK, Ruth. *Critical Discourse Analysis: Challenges and Perspectives*. In: *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, Vol. 1*. (eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer). London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013. DOI: 10.4135/9780857028020.d4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

and their linguistic/discursive nature; it focuses on power in discourse and power over discourse.”<sup>13</sup> CDA locates the causes of human action in the functions of language<sup>14</sup> and traces how cultural hegemonies influence and recuperate these actions.<sup>15</sup> The categories, under which we subsume the phenomena of our world are not merely discovered by language but rather created by it; the world is thus determined by the conceptual apparatus we use.<sup>16</sup> Under this premise, the method analyses bodies of text – and “text” is here used in the structural sense of the word, that is to say, it can be anything that retains information – and asks of these texts, *who is turning to whom, from which position, on what occasion, and under what pretense*. To this end, it identifies argumentative patterns, narrative principles, linguistic images, connotations of statements and semantic novelties, frequent utterances, omissions or taboos in the text.<sup>17</sup>

Having outlined its approach to discourses, a word must be spared on what makes CDA “critical”: *What is a critique?* Critical theorists inherited the meaning of this word from the Marxist school of thought,<sup>18</sup> wherein it is understood not as a mere vilification of a system of beliefs, but the re-examination of such a system through the reality of a society that is governed by it. According to Fairclough, “*Critical* implies showing connections and causes which are hidden,”<sup>19</sup> where that, which obscures this hidden reality, is language itself.

As these historical excursions indicate, to serve justice to CDA, one must, albeit briefly, introduce its roots in the philosophy of language. In the various tendencies of modern philosophy, the Aristotelian stance that human abstractions are ontologically independent from language<sup>20</sup> had been dominant in all of Western thought. The teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, which adapted Aristotelianism to the needs of 13<sup>th</sup> century theology (and was later proclaimed the official ecclesial doctrine), developed this broad conviction that the power of the agent intellect is the power to unearth eternal *actual* forms,<sup>21</sup> hidden by particular material conditions; according to this scholastic

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<sup>13</sup> DUFEK, Ondřej. *Korpusová kritická analýza diskurzu: povaha, možnosti a limity (na příkladu analýzy jazykových ideologií v českém parlamentním diskurzu)*. “CDA se snaží rozkrývat a zviditelňovat mocenské vztahy ve společnosti a jejich jazykovou/diskurzí povahu; soustředí se na moc v diskurzu a moc nad diskurzem.”

<sup>14</sup> WAUGH, Linda R. *The Poetic Function in the Theory of Roman Jakobson*. *Poetics Today* 2, no. 1a. 1980. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772352>. pp. 57–82.

<sup>15</sup> KHAYATI, Mustapha. *Captive Words (Preface to a Situationist Dictionary)*. In: Guy Debord and The Situationist International (edited by Tom McDonough). London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002. ISBN 0-262-13404-7. p. 178.

<sup>16</sup> The pre-Copernican world, for instance, cannot interpret the trajectories of the planets as elliptical, since its language does not know the concept (or “sign”) of a conic.

<sup>17</sup> BRENNER, Christiane. *Mezi Východem a Západem: České politické diskurzy 1945–1948*. p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> MACARAAN, W. E. Racelis. Philosophical foundations of critical discourse analysis: A diachronic sketch. In: *Philosophia International Journal of Philosophy* 16(1):19-34. p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity, 1992. s. 9.

<sup>20</sup> In his *Praedicamenta*, most famously, the objects of human apprehension are quite literally derived from grammatical rules and the structure of speech; Aristotle, *Categories*.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Ia 79.3c*; “[the power] on the side of intellect to actualize intelligible things by abstracting the species from material conditions.”

doctrine, once we abstract away from any particular object (individuated by signate matter [*materia signata*]), we arrive onto the lowest *species* of the porphyrean tree of being. These *species* are the God-given abstractions, which terms in language only happen to denote. Some academics<sup>22</sup> hold it that the first major departure from this speculative ontologies, which operate with language as if it was a logical system inherent to the structure of the world, happened only with Gottlob Frege,<sup>23</sup> who is hailed by them as the first mover of the linguistic turn,<sup>24</sup> and who – proclaiming to have stumbled upon the shortcomings of language<sup>25</sup> – noted that the goal of philosophy ought to be to break the dominion of language over humanity and to disperse the illusions that arise from the application of language onto the relations among concepts.<sup>26</sup>

This very turn is central to CDA: Language is not neutral in the sense that it is always entangled in political realities. The philosophers that refused this cellophane impartiality of language as a hidden assumption later became an inspiration for the emerging schools of discourse analyses. The development of CDA, as articulated by linguist and proponent of its German school Siegfried Jäger, draws heavily on diverse intellectual traditions, including (at least initially) Marxist thought (e.g. Gramsci, Poulantzas, Althusser), Foucault’s discourse theory, and contributions from critical psychology.<sup>27</sup> The way that CDA acknowledges its own embeddedness within discourse and cannot claim a detached or absolute truth,<sup>28</sup> is also the reason why it grew apart from its initial roots in Marxism, as Marxist orthodoxy of the Second Internationale became yet another dogma, the linguistic domination of which became worthy of analysis to the CDA.

Since the late 1960s, many discourse-analytic schools have emerged. CDA is largely influenced by the French school of deconstruction,<sup>29</sup> particularly the work of Jacques Derrida.<sup>30</sup> Der-

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<sup>22</sup> Such as analytic philosopher Michael Dummett, who substantiates his claim in: DUMMETT, Michael. *Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics*. Harvard University Press, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Many generalizations have been made for the purposes of summarizing the emergence of discursive analyses. Philosophers have, of course, questioned the primacy of abstract concepts over language long before Frege, be they the medieval nominalists, some modern empiricist or various philosophers of language that do not belong to either of these categories.

<sup>24</sup> The phrasing here is careful as not to imply that Frege ushered in the end of the aforementioned status of abstractions of language as ontological truths. Even as late as the 1930s, analytic philosophy is dominated by attempts akin to those of Carnap’s elimination of metaphysics by the means of a linguistic analysis, where metaphysical statements are deemed meaningless, either because words are put together with incorrect syntax, or because the words themselves do not have meaning. To these authors, language is still found, not constructed.

<sup>25</sup> “[...] fand ich ein Hindernis in der Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache.“ FREGE, Gottlob. *Begriffsschrift und andere Aufsätze*. Georg Olms Verlag, 2007. ISBN: 978-3-487-00623-9. p. IV.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> JÄGER, Siegfried, and DIAZ-BONE, Rainer. *Kritische Diskursanalyse: Zur Ausarbeitung einer problembezogenen Diskursanalyse im Anschluss an Foucault*. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research 7, no. 3 (2006). Available form: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/>. p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> MACARAAN, W. E. Racelis. *Philosophical foundations of critical discourse analysis: A diachronic sketch*. In: *Philosophia International Journal of Philosophy* 16(1):19-34.

<sup>30</sup> His project was, in a word, to challenge the established dualities (asserting speech over text or the literal over the figurative), and to point out that individual signs are duplicated in meaning, which is always

rida's deconstruction of text was even considered when the time of choosing a methodology for this thesis came about. This initial intention, however, posed two problems: (a) Derrida never developed deconstruction as a replicable method of textual analysis based on a set of rules that could be followed as a guide; such an approach would only affirm that the subject exists outside of text and can dismantle it through its own activity. It was only Anglophone authors – notably Gayatri Spivak and Paul de Man – who applied deconstruction methodically, and even then, it was mainly to works of literature. Adapting it to primary sources such as the ones at hand would be unprecedented at best and cumbersome at worst; and (b) Deconstruction would by its nature require working with a specific excerpt (and thus would take the form of a case study), whereas the method required by this thesis, due to the large amount of primary literature, had to be inductive and able to generalize from a larger number of samples. Unlike deconstruction, a discursive analysis makes it possible to abstract from individual texts and produce summary statements that apply to the texts at large, but at the same time retains the same assumption as deconstruction: That any critical stance towards text is inseparable from a critique of political institutions. It has therefore been chosen as an entirely appropriate method for the purposes of this thesis. What this chapter argues, however, is that CDA is not only appropriate, but also the most well-equipped to analyse the outlined body of texts.

The reason this method was chosen lies in the specific linguistic character of the studied texts. Often – whenever they appeal directly to the supposed obligation of the United States to intervene in the Slovak matter – they offer their own interpretations of the history of the Slovak nation, gesture toward higher principles from which they derive their pleadings, and use expressive terms, (e.g. *Czech-Communist imperialism*, *Czech chauvinism*, or the *Beneš's conglomerate monstrosity*). Thus, completely new discourses emerge from the framing of the political situation in post-war Europe influenced by the official language of the Ludák regime and tailored to an American addressee. These framings try to further the cause of the SAV through so many mutually exclusive means that discursive analysis alone is considered appropriate to determine their number and interplay: This will best be seen on the various principles the SAV claims to base its activities on, which include anything from the interwar doctrine of the self-determination of nations, to the struggle against imperialism, to even the divine right to a state supposedly conferred upon the Slovaks by God.<sup>31</sup>

CDA, however, cannot be viewed as a single and holistic paradigm, and each declaration of its use must be followed by a specification of which school of CDA is going to be mobilized for

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determined retrospectively and is not inherent to signs

<sup>31</sup> To what extent this accumulation of discourses is influenced by Ďurčanský's own academic background as a lawyer (and therefore also the tendency to develop a defense of a party to proceedings on all possible fronts) serves as nothing more as a point of speculation.

the purposes of critique.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, since CDA draws inspiration from post-structuralist thought, it has a tendency to resent positivism and the premise of objective scientific inquiry and develop political commentaries – following these tendencies to their conclusion would place this thesis outside of the standards for an academic work, and so a method has to be chosen such that these tendencies are kept to a minimum. For these reasons, the method that was found the most suitable is the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) developed by the aforementioned Norman Fairclough. He narrows down the wide family of methods that is the CDA into a set of four stages: (a) identifying a social wrong in its semiotic aspect, (a social wrong here understood broadly as an aspect of society that undermines human well-being); (b) identifying material circumstances that prevent addressing this social wrong; (c) considering the emergence of alternative discourses as solutions.<sup>33</sup> In order to facilitate these stages, DRA identifies several semantic genres to look for, such as interdiscursivity (blending of discourses, genres and styles) or recontextualization (transformation of discourses across contexts).<sup>34</sup> With these general stages and tools in mind (but also considering the constraints of a bachelor's thesis), this paper will (a) summarize the conditions and circumstances under which the texts came about, (b) identify the rhetoric of the SAV in terms of the groups of people it vilifies and the justifications it offers for social wrongs; c) distil the discourses by the means of induction, identifying interdiscursivity and recontextualizations and d) distil an alternate discourse from the internal communication about the SAV.

The historian and philosopher Benedetto Croce held it that erroneous historiography arises when the authors of chronicles imprint Spirit onto lifeless objects in the interest of romanticizing a national past. Thence abstractions become “[the] receptacles of all the morbid and the monstrous which lies like a coiled serpent in the slimy recesses of the human soul.”<sup>35</sup> According to the famous Derridean formula, monsters must remain unnamed, uncaptured by the text, because by being named, they cease to be monsters.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, in his essay *On Grammatology*, Derrida warns against letting language itself get in the way of what we want to capture with it.<sup>37</sup> What we want to see upon analyzing these texts, are the monsters of fascism. *Where Perseus put on his hat to be invisible and be able to follow the monsters, we have grown accustomed to pulling the hat*

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<sup>32</sup> MACARAAN, W. E. Racelis. Philosophical foundations of critical discourse analysis: A diachronic sketch. p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. A dialectical-relation approach to critical discourse analysis in social research.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> CROCE, Benedetto. *History as the Story of Liberty*. London: Clements Newling and Co., 1949. Available from: <https://archive.org/details/HistoryAsTheStoryOfLiberty/page/n5/mode/2up>

<sup>36</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. *Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms*.

<sup>37</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967. Available from: <https://archive.org/details/delagrammatologi0000derr/page/6/mode/2up>

over our eyes to deny the existence of monsters.<sup>38</sup> Critical discourse analysis, when applied correctly, lifts this cap just enough so as not to remove it – so as to allow us to see the monsters.

### 3 POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT OF SEPARATIST NARRATIVES

This chapter argues that the narratives that were adopted by the postwar advocates for Slovak independence are the very same narratives that had been used to justify and propagate the Slovak State, as it had existed during the Second World War. During this period, the Slovak State – created and maintained as a client state to Nazi Germany, which had installed within it a single party puppet government – stirred hateful rhetoric and organized repressive actions against its national minorities (Jews, Czechs, Hungarians) as well as its political opposition (Communists and the broader political left, Social Democrats, Democratic Party), resulting, among other things, in the extermination of approx. 57 000 Slovak Jews; all the while enjoying the support of ecclesial institutions and large corporations.<sup>39</sup>

As the Second World War drew to a close and the breakaway state started to succumb to its internal crises, the policies toward the domestic insurgents that fought against its regime underwent a steep change: The partisans posed a significant threat to the cabinet of Jozef Tiso, a catholic priest, head of state, and the president of the Nazi-aligned *Slovak People's Party* (Ľudáks). Not only militarily but also symbolically, as Slovak rebels proclaimed opposition to both German forces and Tiso's administration, which they viewed as a collaborator with the occupiers.<sup>40</sup> Before July 1944, the government's response to partisan activities had been largely restrained. Eventually however, he granted permission to German forces to operate in eastern Slovakia to suppress the partisan movement<sup>41</sup> and partially disarm the Slovak Army.<sup>42,43</sup> Tiso later publicly denounced the leaders of the revolt as a "small clique of traitorous Slovaks," but also Bolsheviks, "Jews, and

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<sup>38</sup> The passage is an allusion to the methodological remarks in *Das Kapital*, [MARX, Karl. *Capital: A critique of political economy*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers] wherein economic critique is equated to the mythical cap of Perseus that captures the object of inquiry without disrupting allowing the means of inquiry cloud the observer.

<sup>39</sup> CONWAY, John S. "The Churches, the Slovak State and the Jews 1939-1945." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 52, no. 126 (1974): 85–112. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4206836>. p. 106.

<sup>40</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. p. 249.

<sup>41</sup> SYRNÝ, Marek, HRUBOŇ, Anton. "Anti-Fascism in the Land of Holy Water Blessed by the Swastika: The Case of the Slovak State." In *Anti-Fascism in European History: From the 1920s to Today*, 143–156. Central European University Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.7829/jj.4032515.12>. p. 151.

<sup>42</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. p. 249.

<sup>43</sup> In a broadcast, he justified the German presence by stating that the German military's sole purpose was to "liquidate the partisan scum" in Slovakia. [*ibid*]



especially Czechs”.<sup>44</sup> To affirm his regime’s loyalty, Tiso approved the provisioning of German forces and authorized a Slovak offensive to support their operations, reportedly telling others that it was essential for the Germans to see that “not all of Slovakia is revolting”.<sup>45</sup> Tiso expressed sorrow and disbelief that Slovak soldiers would join the uprising, as had happened in August when parts of the army defected to the insurgents: To younger Ľudáks, he insisted that the target was the Germans, not his regime. Reflecting to Höfle however, Tiso expressed regret that so many Slovaks had been “misled”, remarking that most were unaware of the *true* implications of the uprising.<sup>46</sup> According to some accounts, Tiso even seemed to have convinced himself that it had been rumors of his death or imprisonment that had, in fact, sparked the uprising.<sup>47</sup>

I devote parts of this summary to Tiso’s framing of the insurgents, because the reinterpretation of their activities will constitute a vital part in the discourses of the SAV; The motivation that the Ľudáks ascribed to these partisan groups shifted swiftly; from Tiso’s above-mentioned characterizations of them, to Ďurčanský’s claim that they did not aim their actions against the Slovak State, but rather sought to *maintain* the independence that it had secured.<sup>48</sup>

As Tiso’s power waned, he was forced to accept direct German influence over his administration. His government was reshuffled under pressure from the German SS, and Tiso could no longer resist the demands of German forces, who dominated Slovak security measures and intensified repressive actions. By the beginning of 1945, the rebellion had long been suppressed, and reprisals against its adherents – both actual and alleged – orchestrated. The chimera of Slovak independence was more clearly false than it had ever been before. As the front approached, Tiso fled Slovakia and sought asylum in multiple ecclesial institutions. His last radio broadcast addressed to the Slovak territory (now occupied by the Allies Powers) is especially illustrative in terms of discourse construction: Firstly, Tiso insisted on the persisting existence of the Slovak State, basing his claim on the existence and functioning of all of its organizational structures.<sup>49</sup> This effective statement of legal continuity of a government-in-exile was to become

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<sup>44</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. p. 250.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. p. 252.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> It would likewise be misleading to hold that the entirety of the Slovak antifascist resistance was motivated to restore Czechoslovakia, as was claimed later by the ‘historical materialist historiography’ of the Communist Party. On the contrary, the partisan movement included diverse strains of political and ideological thought. For that matter, both the two previous expressions of Slovak separatism adopted ideologies that the Ľudáks were directly opposed to: The Eastern Slovak Republic that lasted for 18 days in 1918 was adjacent to Magyar irredentism, and the similarly short-lived Slovak Soviet Republic was a satellite of a communist country.

<sup>49</sup> FABRICIUS, Miroslav, et al. *Jozef Tiso: Prejavy a články. 3 sv.* Bratislava: HÚ SAV and AEP, 2002-10; “[...] Ako kedysi pri úteku Svätej rodiny nazaretskej do Egypta bolo povedené svätému Jozefovi: ‘Vezmi Dieťa a Matku a utekaj do Egypta, lebo Herodes číha na jeho život.’ Tak sme išli s paládiumom národa

the groundwork for the narratives of the SAV. Secondly, Tiso draws a comparison between himself and Pope Gregory VII, who was driven out of Rome in the 11th century, and makes an allusion to the story of the flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13–23), saying: “Just as during the flight of the holy family of nazareth, St. Joseph was told: ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ So we went abroad with the palladium of the Slovak nation.”<sup>50</sup> Both of these framings are important to later discussions about Tiso’s potential martyrdom; these discussions accompanied his trial before the National Court in Bratislava, and had a significant political dimension, as the opposition to Tiso’s execution voiced by the Slovak Democratic Party<sup>51</sup> was used as a guise by the Communists to attack the Democrats.<sup>52</sup> And thirdly, in the said broadcast, Tiso again labeled the seeming threat to Slovak independence as “Czech Imperialism”,<sup>53</sup> which is also a term later adopted by the Committee and used abundantly.<sup>54</sup>

After lengthy negotiations between the American CIC and the Capucin monastery in Bavaria, under the auspices of which Tiso had sought refuge, he was finally arrested.<sup>55</sup> Once extradited, while Karol Sidor was the official incumbent of the presidential office, it was the former minister of foreign affairs Ferdinand Ďurčanský who leaped to the front of the Slovak separatist efforts. Although German press reported at the time that he had been arrested and detained,<sup>56</sup> he had, in fact, fled to Vienna, whence he continued the “agitative”<sup>57</sup> broadcasts, as well as perpetuated the claim of legal continuity of the Slovak State.

All subsequent efforts of the separatist cause are inexorably linked to Ďurčanský, so much so that the correspondence of the past dismissed them as mere personal endeavors of his, and the literature of today analyzes them in parallel with his personal biography. It is then necessary that this thesis also walks this path, and illustrates the role of Ďurčanský in the development of the separatist tendency and of the narratives, which will emerge from the ensuing discourse analysis, if only in the harshest contours.

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slovenského – ideou slovenskej štátnosti – do cudziny, aby sme ju tam chránili pred tlamou českého imperializmu.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> FROMMER, Benjamin. *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. ISBN 978-0521008969. p. 322–323.

<sup>52</sup> The Democrats claimed to oppose the sentencing with the rationale that Tiso’s death would grant him martyrdom that would be conducive to the rise of fascist sentiments.

<sup>53</sup> FABRICIUS, Miroslav, et al. *Jozef Tiso: Prejavy a články*.

<sup>54</sup> Alternatively also “Czech-Communist imperialism” or “Beneš imperialism” (see below).

<sup>55</sup> KLIMENT, Charles K., NAKLÁDAL, Břetislav. *Germany's First Ally: Armed Forces of the Slovak State 1939 – 1945*. p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> ZEMAN, Adolf. *Československá Golgota: Historicko-politická reportáž*. Jos. R. Vilímek: Praha, 1947. p. 336.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

In the 1930s, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, an academic and a jurist in the field of international law, was already an active member of the Slovak People's Party.<sup>58</sup> The influence he was to exert over the fascist rhetoric of the future Slovak State can already be seen from his texts from this period, as he comes to the fore by establishing the *Nástup mladej slovenskej autonomistickej generacie* periodical, within which he targets various demographics – namely leftists, Jewish people, and Czechs – with hateful remarks. Noteworthy examples of his framing are his denunciation of what he refers to as “materialist ideology and Judeo-Bolshevik anarchy”<sup>59</sup> and his belief that “the Jews have adopted the socialist – originally Marxist – ideology, which is hostile toward all that is Christian and national.”<sup>60</sup> (This linkage made by antisemitic and nazi-adjacent discourses between leftist theory on one side and an alleged Jewish conspiracy on the other, is one which will find its way into the correspondence, however desaturated.)

Following the German-orchestrated Slovak parliamentary meeting that had passed the proposal to secede, Ďurčanský laid hold of a position in the Slovak “autonomous” government, and later became the minister of foreign affairs of the Slovak State. In 1940, however, he was ousted from political positions due to pressure from Germany, and retreated to academia, where he tried to develop legal justification for the existence of a Slovak state. Upon his escape to Italy at the end of the war, he first attempted to converge his efforts with Sidor as the most appropriate person to spearhead the efforts of the exile,<sup>61</sup> but soon found Sidor to be too moderate and unwilling to connect his name to some of the more extremist elements of the Slovak exile: After their falling out, Sidor and Ďurčanský would never again attempt to join their efforts;<sup>62</sup> Ďurčanský would never return from exile, as he was sentenced to death in absentia as a war criminal by the National Court in Czechoslovakia in 1947. In March 1946, the Slovak Action Committee is established as an amalgamation of the most radical figures of the Ľudák exile, devoted to developing anti-Czechoslovak activities and appearing to the international community as the “official” representation of executive and legislative branches of the defunct Slovak State.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> KUBÍK, Petr. *Slovenský exil v Itálii 1945–1949*. p. 30

<sup>59</sup> A broader rhetorical tendency promoted by fascism can be identified here: That is, the recuperation of the revolutionary language of leftist theory, and its use in contradiction to the internal logic of this very theory. In this case, the term originates in Marx's manuscripts *The German Ideology*, where ideology is understood as skewed bourgeois thought, from Strauss to Stirner, that finds its basis in labor and exchange, and that can mask the underlying truth about material reality. Here, Ďurčanský rejects the entire philosophical tradition of materialism, and deems it ideological. It is unclear, whether he would adopt purely idealist philosophies, wherein matter is rejected, and beings are said to subsist entirely within the soul (e.g. Berkeley).

<sup>60</sup> The original source has not been found, only a video interview, in which a historian refers to it; DENNÍK N. *Agenti a zradcovia: Ďurčanský zostal verný nacistom, aj keď ho odstavili*. In: Youtube [online]. 15. 03. 2024 [cit. 3034-06-29] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSx-egDjbHc>.

<sup>61</sup> *Jednota, orgán Prvej Slovenskej Katolickej jednoty v USA*, č. 100, 24. 7. 1991, s. 13.

<sup>62</sup> VONDRÁŠEK, Václav, PEŠEK, Jan. *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970: Mýty a realita*. p. 71

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

These activities were conducted under the conviction that a war between the West and the East was imminent, and that the role of Slovaks within this conflict was to contribute to the dissolution of a Soviet-aligned Czechoslovakia: These activities would include the plans for the establishment of local units and formations on the Czechoslovak territory to develop anti-state actions.<sup>64</sup> The Committee would also often turn to foreign officials and foreign press to advocate for an internationally mandated Slovak plebiscite on the secession from Czechoslovakia.<sup>65</sup> Ďurčanský would direct his followers to send threats to their domestic enemies and even resort to violence when necessary, intending for the palette of means used to intimidate the people and the functionaries of postwar Czechoslovakia to be as wide as possible. He would refer to rebels performing anti-state actions as Slovak Crusaders (abbreviated as SK).<sup>66</sup>

In terms of its documentary production and vast correspondence with various addressees, the Committee published memorandums on the Paris Peace Conference and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, petitions to the United Nations, and several declarations to the catholic Christendom of all countries. It sent letters and appeals to the Senate of the United States, to President Truman, to international organizations such as UNESCO and the Red Cross, to ecclesial figures, namely Pope Pius XII, and to Clement Attlee, Winston Churchill or George C. Marshall, just to name a few.

In 1948, the Committee was renamed and reorganized into the Slovak Liberation Committee (SOV),<sup>67</sup> and it would attempt to escalate its efforts in the wake of the Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia. These efforts, however, while still under the lead of Ďurčanský, fall outside of the span of analysis delimited in the introduction to this thesis.

Some of the SAV activities were frowned upon by the moderate branch of Ľudák exile represented by Karol Sidor, which preferred to advance the separatist cause by other means, namely through the London-based Slovak National Council led by Peter Prídavok, and various interest groups and citizens' associations in the United States.<sup>68</sup> These later initiatives were mobilized heavily during the trial of Tiso, as Slovak-American organizations turned to the Department of State via their elected officials to try to lighten Tiso's sentence. It is by the virtue of the diverse material interests and personal backgrounds of the leading figures of Slovak fascism and Slovak secessionism, that the following discourses are identified in the correspondence of Tiso sympathizers:

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 91.

<sup>65</sup> POLAKOVIČ, Štefan, VNUK, František. *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943 – 1948)*. p. 143.

<sup>66</sup> VONDRÁŠEK, Václav, PEŠEK, Jan. *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970: Mýty a realita*. p. 90

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 371

<sup>68</sup> VONDRÁŠEK, Václav, PEŠEK, Jan. *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945 – 1970: Mýty a realita*.

## 4 FIRST MONTH OF TELEGRAMS

Evident from the chapters above, the idea of a Slovak nation was not only one of the goals of the chief ideologues of the Tiso regime, but also the only real one; that is, the regime cared little for the political contents of such statehood, provided that its ruling classes could secure and maintain their power. In this regard, Slovak separatism turned a deaf ear to the noises of the 20th century European arena of ideologies, and instead, adopted whatever political stance was necessary to fight the very struggle toward nationhood that some European countries had already played out in the preceding century, believing it to be the highest goal. It follows then, that the only ideology that could sustain this sublated conception of nationality, could be the *beehive of contradictions* that is fascism.

In this chapter, we will see how the rhetoric of the proponents of Slovak independence had to shift with the end of the Second World War, and how the unsubstantiated form of a nation state had to accommodate for the values held by the allied powers. Consequently, the separatists' apologetic is uprooted from any coherent political philosophy and uses signs from discourses, which are various and oftentimes contradictory: They range from the decolonial discourse of struggle against imperialism, or the critique of feudal exploitation developed by Marxist thought, to the discourse of Christian fatalism, or the discourse of universal human rights and liberties as anchored in international public law and the founding treaties of the United Nations.

Although the earliest mentions of Ďurčanský can be traced to the first telegrams regarding the demand for his extradition<sup>69</sup> and to the founding of the Committee in March 1946,<sup>70</sup> the first telegrams of the Committee itself – insofar as secondary literature and the examined body of documents suggests – were received by the Department of State a year later, in February 1947.

What needs be remarked concerning specifically the following chapters is that the reproduced discourse contains skewed information ranging from the tendentious to the factually incorrect. To refute these claims one by one would go beyond the stated goal of reproducing a manufactured discourse. The only information valuable for the purposes of this paper that the claims of the Committee's are presumed to have is the interpretation of historical events that the Committee wanted to impress onto its addressees.

In its pleas for the intervention into Czechoslovak domestic affairs by The United Nations and the United States, the Committee had to make the case for Slovak independence. To achieve this, it indulged in didactic excurses, in which it explained to various addressees the history of the

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<sup>69</sup> e.g. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel I. 860F.00/3-1546. Telegram from J. D. Hickerson (Department of State) to Major General O. P. Echola (War Department). May 1946.

<sup>70</sup> KUBÍK, Petr. *Slovenský exil v Itálii 1945–1949*.

struggle for Slovak independence. Andrej Hlinka – a Catholic priest portrayed as a clerical fascist by Communist historiography, as a controversial national hero by mainstream bourgeois thought, and as a symbol for Slovak sovereignty by Nazi sympathizers – was considered by the Committee to be a prime opponent to Hungarian feudalism and a direct predecessor to the separatist cause. The Committee claimed that he had been expelled from France after the First World War for his efforts to incite a plebiscite in the Slovak lands to determine whether its people wish to become part of the newly forming Czechoslovak statehood.<sup>71</sup> For this effort, which had been at odds with Beneš’ “conglomerate monstrosity,”<sup>72</sup> Beneš was to ouster him under the pretense that he was an enemy of the Allied Powers, despite his prior opposition against one of the nations of the Austro-Hungarian hegemony. The Committee regards the establishment of Czechoslovakia – or as it continues to refer to it throughout its correspondence, *Czecho-Slovakia*, often even adorning the very name with the attributive “so-called”<sup>73</sup> – to be the result of a “diplomatic intrigue”;<sup>74</sup> one which can never truly express the will of the Slovak people, as it is not a united nation-state. The idea of national pluralism of a state is in fact entirely foreign to the discourse that the telegrams construct: Their inner logic has it that only a nation-state can ever be the bearer of the legitimacy to represent its constituents. The Committee goes so far as to claim that Czechoslovakia had never existed,<sup>75</sup> and has it that because of the creation of this illusory country, the pleas of the Slovak people were not taken into due account by the competent organs of the international community.<sup>76</sup> A note here is to be taken on the contradictory understanding of the notion of a state. What the rhetoric seems to imply is that the recognition of a state by other states is not constitutive, and that statehood is rather something that naturally emerges out of the inherent rights of nations. Later, however, the Committee was to go on to argue that the independent Slovak State was a legitimate subject of international law precisely because of its recognition by other nations.<sup>77</sup> The discourse, of course, cares little for formal distinctions, or for basing itself in either the declaratory or the constitutive

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<sup>71</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947.

<sup>73</sup> e.g. NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/4-2947. Telegram from H. M. Byington (Counselor of US Embassy in Rome) to Department of State. 29 April 1947. Enclosure: Copies of a letter from the Slovak Action Committee asking for support for its cause.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Specifically, it argued by the recognition of “27 foreign powers, including states that were bound by treaty against Germany, or neutral states”; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947. Enclosure: Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to the United Nations in the Trial of Dr. Josef Tiso and Other Representatives of the Slovak Republic Before the International Military Tribunal.

theory of statehood; rather, it skews reality to whatever is suitable to defend its cause, even if such a thing should be the phantasm that Czechoslovakia had never existed.

What was then to follow the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic were the years of subjugation and oppression by the Czechs, who are accused of breaching both contractual promises as well as wider principles of law at the expense of the Slovaks. There is said to be up to 70% opposition against Czechoslovakia among the Slovaks, as well as an expressed will of the Czechs to make Slovakia into their colonial territory.<sup>78</sup> Neither of these claims is well substantiated. The correspondence does not elaborate in much detail on what was the oppression Slovaks were to be subjugated to during the interwar years (the little that is said is analyzed in the sixth chapter), but it does reiterate on several occasions that the establishment of the Slovak State was the only viable solution to the Slovak question.<sup>79</sup> The declaration of independence is said to have been carried out by the Slovak Parliament by the virtue of a mandate gained in a general, secret, and direct election. As far as the Committee's explanation for the objection that fascist Germany is factually responsible for the founding of the Slovak State, such claim is considered a "Czech statement" and "an impudent lie" meant to excuse the Czech "imperialist aims."<sup>80</sup> It is further claimed that all nations that strive toward emancipation benefit from the good faith of greater powers; such was to be the case for the Slovaks as well. To substantiate these claims, it also states that the Slovak State did not in fact declare war on the Western Allies.<sup>81</sup> This (untrue) claim, however, will be further explored in the following chapter.

During the turbulent period from March 14 to 16, 1939, Czechoslovakia ceased to factually exist. As the provisional government, assembled by the Czechoslovak National Committee, was successively being recognized as the official government-in-exile, the legal order of Czechoslovakia was considered as uninterrupted, and all the provisions enacted by the German-annexed Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as legally null, since the Munich Agreement which begot it had been entered into under duress. The way these events are interpreted by the Slovak Action Committee, however, is that the Czechs failed to act in any way such as to protect their own state, and that Beneš's resignation entered into force, that Hácha's subsequent presidency was legitimate,

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<sup>78</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Reel III. 860F.00/11-1247. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 12 November 1947. (Subject: Demanding the Slovak question to be given adequate consideration)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947.

<sup>81</sup> "The Slovak Republic never declared war on the Western Allies, nor did it regard itself in the state of war with them."; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to the United Nations in the Trial of Dr. Josef Tiso and Other Representatives of the Slovak Republic Before the International Military Tribunal)

and that the very recognition of the continuity of Czechoslovak legal order after its factual abolition had been a breach of international law committed by the United Nations.<sup>82</sup>

The renewal of Czechoslovakia is seen – much like the founding of the first republic after the First World War – as the work of “diplomatic intrigue” and a “perversion of facts,”<sup>83</sup> the latter lying in the supposedly insincere rationale given for the Slovak National Uprising: While Beneš is said to claim that the objective of the uprising was the restoration of Czechoslovakia, the Committee considers it to have been the preservation of independence. It is evident from prior chapters that these attempts to recuperate the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising are inherited from the Tiso cabinet.

The liberation of the land by the Red Army is interpreted to be Soviet occupation, and the mirage of the “so-called” “Czech-Communist Czechoslovakia,”<sup>84</sup> which would “collapse without Moscow,” is only kept afloat by the “pression of the Soviet Union”<sup>85</sup> and the “Czech-Communist government” of Beneš, who is at one instance even compared to Kerensky.<sup>86</sup> The restoration of Czechoslovakia is seen as a breach of the tendency toward the statehood of nations. A tendency that is, in fact, not only regarded as an “evolutionary trend of humanity”<sup>87</sup> based in the iusnaturalist theory of law, but also a “God-given mission” for Slovaks.<sup>88</sup> Although any analysis of individual texts is unimportant for our quest to wrestle discourses from large quantities of data, one sentence from an appeal of the Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations is still deemed as illustrative enough of the overall discourse to be included: “[...] these are precisely the aims of the Czech-Communist Government and of Mr. Benes: by this raw encroachment in the biological substance of the nation itself they want to disperse the Slovak Nation and break its resistance to Czecho-Slovakia and International Red Totalitarianism[,] of whom the Slovaks are mortal enemies.”<sup>89</sup>

In the “vasal state”<sup>90</sup> that the new Czechoslovakia was said to be, the Slovaks are again portrayed to be the victim of communists’ transgressions against their “national, political,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs); Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Reel III. 860F.00/11-1247. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 12 November 1947. (Subject: Demanding the Slovak question to be given adequate consideration)

<sup>85</sup> e.g. Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/11-1247. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Mrs. E. Roosevelt

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Slovak Action Committee. *Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs.*

<sup>90</sup> Slovak Action Committee. *Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to his Excellency Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the United Nations.*



and human rights,” as well as “fundamental freedoms.”<sup>91</sup> This “violence of the Czech-Communist Government” (a supposed mere “instrument of international Communism”<sup>92</sup>) was allegedly contrary to not only the Charter of the UN and the Atlantic Charter,<sup>93</sup> but also to “the spirit of modern history and the principle of real democracy,”<sup>94</sup> as the representatives of said government are alleged to be “avowed exponents of a hostile and narrow world philosophy.” The following chapters of this paper will expand more on the alleged crimes that the Slovak people were subjected to from the side of “big powers and oppressors.”<sup>95</sup>

In the aforementioned petition to the Secretary General of the UN, the Committee considered this situation so dire that given the presumed status of both the Slovak State and the Slovak people as “the bastion against bolshevism,” the possibility of a new Slovak insurrection was imminent. No such insurrection, of course, took place.

## 5 TRIALS IN POSTWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The period after the war saw the establishment of special courts for prosecuting individuals accused of treason, collaboration, and war crimes. These domestic measures were paralleled by international treaties, namely the London Charter of 1945, which adopted the principles of the Moscow Declaration and laid the groundwork for prosecuting war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials.<sup>96</sup> Beneš’s wartime cabinet promulgated several presidential decrees concerning retributive justice; among them The Decree of The President of the Republic No. 17/1945 Coll. which set up the National Court, headquartered in Prague. The National Court was an extraordinary judicial body tasked with handling cases against high-profile collaborators and public figures who acted against the Czechoslovak state during the period from May 21, 1938 to December 31, 1946.

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<sup>91</sup> e.g. NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1647. Telegram from Polakovic (Slovak Action Committee) to POTUS. 17 March 1947; Ibid. Reel II. Telegram of a “Slovak Information Service” relaying a message sent to POTUS by the Slovak Action Committee.

<sup>93</sup> The alleged breach of the Atlantic Charter appears multiple times; one of these instances is Polakovič’s telegram addressed to the White House from Rome, saying: “Please intervene [o]n behalf of Atlantic Charter idea[’]s trampled under feet; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1647. Telegram from Š. Polakoviš (Slovak Action Committee) to POTUS. 16 April 1947.

<sup>94</sup> While a principle of real democracy is mentioned in the Committee’s requests for support, it is never made clear what is meant by this collocation.

<sup>95</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs)

<sup>96</sup> NĚMEČKOVÁ, Daniela et al. *Lidová spravedlnost: Mimořádné lidové soudy v letech 1945–1948*. Praha: Auditorium, 2017. ISBN 978-80-87284-68-1. p. 35.

Alongside the Prague court, a separate National Court in Bratislava handled significant cases in Slovakia, including the trial of Tiso, who was extradited, taken into custody, and ultimately tried for his wartime collaboration.

On April 16, a day after the sentencing, the US Embassy in Prague informed the State Department of the condemnation of both Tiso and Ďurčanský (latter *in absentia*) to death by hanging,<sup>97</sup> transmitting a full press release a day later.<sup>98</sup> After the sentencing, the court recommended the government not to pardon Tiso, nor to change his sentence to life imprisonment. The government voted to have Tiso executed,<sup>99</sup> not heeding the warning of the three Slovak Democrats in government, who expressed concerns that such a course of action could lead to a mythos of Tiso's personal martyrdom,<sup>100</sup> one into which, after all, Tiso had also tried to stylize himself.<sup>101</sup> (He has attained this martyrdom and remains a figure revered by contemporary Slovak fascists. Although originally buried into an unmarked grave, his remains have since been exhumed, and the worldview that was thought to have been laid to rest along with him, has too seemingly been resurrected...)

Throughout the trial, Ďurčanský's Committee sought to undermine the legitimacy of the Bratislava Court and refer Tiso's case to the International Military Tribunal (IMT). In its petition, it is adamant about the claim that "Tiso nor his government committed any war crimes,"<sup>102</sup> and that arguing the contrary would require a "misuse of terminology." The court before which the trial was to ensue – the "so-called National Court of Bratislava"<sup>103</sup> – was repeatedly characterized as "only a docile tool of Czechs and Communists"<sup>104</sup> and it was said that it operated under unconstitutional and retroactive measures, with undue Soviet influence and prejudgments from figures like Lettrich and Beneš. The Committee cited supposed procedural injustices, such as Tiso's inability to choose his defense counsel, the appointment of a communist lawyer, and the lack of im-

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<sup>97</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1647. Telegram from L. A. Steinhardt to Department of State. 16 April 1947. Tiso and Durcansky condemned to death by hanging.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1747. Telegram from L. A. Steinhardt to Department of State. 17 April 1947. Transmitting the full text of the press release of the official Czechoslovak News Agency regarding the verdict in the trial against Tiso and Durcansky.

<sup>99</sup> NĚMEČKOVÁ, Daniela et al. *Lidová spravedlnost*. pp. 465–467.

<sup>100</sup> FROMMER, Benjamin. *National Cleansing*. pp. 322–323.

<sup>101</sup> See his previous comparisons to St. Joseph and St. Gregory respectively.

<sup>102</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/11-1247. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Mrs. E. Roosevelt

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1647. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947. Requesting support in efforts to escalate the case of J. Tiso to the International Military Tribunal.

partiality among judges, some of whom allegedly predicted the death sentence before the trial began.<sup>105</sup>

The texts – and their authorship can be attributed entirely to Ďurčanský, given their legalistic formulations – feature a lengthy pleading through regressive logic, akin to Freud’s joke about a borrowed kettle: *Slovakia did not declare war on Western Allies, but if it did, it would be entirely permitted to do so; the Bratislava Court is illegitimate, but if it were not, it ought to escalate the case to the IMT; etc.* The Committee has it that the Slovak representatives, who “placed themselves in the hands of” Western Armies should never have been “given over to the National Court of Czecho-Slovakia for trial,” claiming that according to international law and the practices of civilized nations, refugees are not to be handed over to the governments against which they had strove, and that as per the refusal to extradite political transgressors enshrined in the Bustamante Codex of 1928, Tiso and other representatives were supposed to have been held as prisoners of war,<sup>106</sup> (this supposedly unlawful extradition was to serve as the basis, on which Ďurčanský intended to build the claim that the United States are obliged to intervene.) As for the question of the court’s jurisdiction, the Committee stipulated that if the accused were believed to have committed a crime in the sense of article 6 of the IMT Charter, they should have also been tried before the IMT. To Ďurčanský, such a recognition of jurisdiction was a concession: He was convinced that (i) the treaty of August 8, which establishes the tribunal, is in breach of the principle of non-retroactivity; and (ii) all such treaties are a question of *res inter alios acta* and Slovak representatives had never agreed to be bound by the rules therein. Having stated its reservations toward the applicability of the IMT Charter, the Committee went on to argue Tiso’s innocence, attempting to absolve him of all the crimes he could have been charged with under article 6 of the Charter. These three crimes are (a) Crimes against peace; (b) War crimes; and (c) Crimes against humanity. Ďurčanský’s successive refutation of each of these criminalized acts is as follows:<sup>107</sup>

- (a) The Committee contended that Slovak representatives, including Tiso, held no positions of authority before 1938 that would have enabled them to influence decisions leading to war. They explicitly stated that “no contributing cause for war can be found” in the actions or policies of Slovak officials prior to this date. The Committee noted that Slovakia had not been a signatory to the League of Nations, the Briand-Kellogg Pact, or any treaty explicitly forbidding war. This allowed the Committee to argue that Slovakia

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs)

<sup>106</sup> This claim is substantiated by the Committee with but a reference to the Hague Conference of 1907 and the Geneva Agreement of 1929. Further legal exegesis is needed.

<sup>107</sup> The entirety of this argument is laid forth in the telegrams enclosing the petition to have Tiso’s case escalated, which have been hitherto cited with great abundance. All information in the ensuing argument is considered to originate in this source, unless cited otherwise.

was legally free to declare war without violating international law. Despite this supposed liberty to wage war, the Committee even outright lies about the wartime diplomacy of the Slovak State, saying: “The Slovak Republic never declared war on the Western Allies, nor did it regard itself in the state of war with them.”<sup>108</sup> While the Prime Minister of the Slovak State Vojtěch Tuka may have made public statements suggesting military action, the Committee argued that these declarations were to be neither formal nor binding. Even regarding the Soviet Union, the Committee maintained that Tuka’s decision to engage militarily was framed as a small defensive measure to protect Slovakia from Hungarian aggression, rather than an act of war. While denying ever having declared war on the USSR in some communications, in others, the Committee not only admits to a war with the Soviet Union, but portrays it as a natural consequence of “the ideologically anticommunistic mind of the Slovak Nation.”<sup>109</sup> Acknowledging Slovakia’s collaboration with Germany, the Committee characterized this support as merely symbolic and coerced due to Slovakia’s international isolation and the Allies’ refusal to recognize its independence. It argued that such collaboration was unavoidable under the circumstances and did not amount to a violation of international norms regarding peace. To further deflect responsibility, the Allies were said to “embrace imperialist policies pursued by Edvard Beneš” which were to undermine Slovak sovereignty. This framing positioned Slovakia as a victim of malicious geopolitical maneuvering rather than a perpetrator of aggression. That was important not only in order to depict the Slovak State in a favorable way, but it also bore legal significance, since the Committee attempted to argue the non-applicability of the Stimson Doctrine in the case of the Slovak Republic.

- (b) The representatives of the Slovak State were said never to have issued any orders contrary to principles of waging war. The conduct of the Slovak troops is praised in these texts, being described as “highly regarded by the Russian people.”
- (c) What stands out as a striking is the claim that “not a single person was sentenced to death, [...] no person was tortured or violated in his person, nor was anyone driven to take his own life.” This formulation is reminiscent of the way Tiso himself answered the scolding by Pope Pius XII: “One cannot blame the Slovak government for sending [superfluous] Czechs home and for freeing up Jews for work in Germany.”<sup>110</sup> In fact, the Committee’s position on the systematic liquidation of entire groups of people – a mechanism of persecution and extermination, which disturbed the collective conscience of Europe –

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<sup>108</sup> Slovak Action Committee. *Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to his Excellency Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the United Nations.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> WARD, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator.* p. 255.

stayed ambivalent throughout the texts. While the crimes of the Slovak State were downplayed in the exonorations of Tiso,<sup>111</sup> other telegrams acknowledged the persecution of Jewish people, but only insofar as to immediately claim that the punitive measures that were to be employed against Slovaks in postwar Czechoslovakia were supposedly worse than what the Jews suffered throughout World War II. The absurdity of such an assertion needs not be further explained.

The SAV insisted that the various bodies of the UN not only have the right to intervene in the proceedings against Tiso, but also the duty to do so, due to the presence of punitive practices that were in breach of the principles of the IMT Charter. Furthermore, it viewed this duty to intervene as stemming directly from the general principles of the UN Charter, as well as its concrete provisions, such as article 55. The UN was supposedly to be obliged to fulfill SAV's demands, lest it would "further the imperialism it itself professes to curb."

While the member states of the UN were also to be justified to intervene, the United States specifically were said to be "not only justified but duty-bound to intervene, for it was through the instrumentality of one of their organs that the representatives of the Slovak Republic were turned over to Czecho-Slovakia"<sup>112</sup> This legal construction outlines the very grounds that the Committee was building all of its pleas atop of throughout its communication. As much as this thesis refrains from engaging with the Ľudák rhetoric and seeks only to reconstruct it, it needs be noted that such a basis for intervention is legally nonsensical.

Finally, and quite unsurprisingly, the Committee portrays Tiso as a "man of no guilt, a good citizen, and an exemplary priest," framing his condemnation as predetermined by "Czech dominance" and "Czech chauvinism" rather than evidence, saying that "what is on trial, rather, is the political concept of the independence of Slovakia."

This concludes the position of the Committee on the matter of retributive justice in general and the trial of Tiso in particular. At this point, the full title of the thesis can be realized: The name *Tiso Sympathizers* was chosen because it is not just the texts of the Committee that employed the very specific rhetoric that has hitherto been laid out. Various US-based parish congregations, Slovak fraternities, youth clubs etc. were also well-versed in it. Many of these, oftentimes American Catholics of Slovak origin, turned to the United States Government to plea for an intervention in Slovakia; specifically in order to intercede on behalf of Tiso, whose sentencing they regarded sim-

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<sup>111</sup> The Committee at best admits that up to 3000 people have been persecuted under the Slovak State, but is quick to remark that the number was even higher in other countries.

<sup>112</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947. (Enclosure: Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to the United Nations in the Trial of Dr. Josef Tiso and Other Representatives of the Slovak Republic Before the International Military Tribunal)

ply as an act of vengeance of an Atheist-Communist government against a Catholic prelate.<sup>113</sup> Upon Tiso's trial and sentencing, these messages flooded the State Department's inboxes, so much so that they constitute a substantial part of the analyzed body of documents. The concern over the fate of Tiso was expressed either by these groups themselves or through their elected officials, with perhaps the most illustrative of such instances being when Congressman Alvin E. O'Konski of the State of Wisconsin compared the fate of Tiso to that of archbishop Stepinac, a Croat prelate convicted of fascist collaboration in a questionable trial that lacked due process. (Despite the fact that the Holy See itself had distanced itself from its vicar, abstaining on developing any influence over the Tiso trial.) Ullmann stresses that these sentiments, rather than including a developed apologia of the Ludák activities during the war, were mostly coming from well-meaning citizens and signatories that were not well acquainted with what their priest had given them to sign. He summarizes it perhaps best in stating: "Where knowledge of Tiso's wartime activities was lacking, such lacunae were readily remedied by pious exhortations by clerical leaders who pointed to Tiso's stand against Bolshevism."<sup>114</sup>

As early as January 1947, some associations, namely the Slovak League of America, turned to the Department, demanding that the United States intervene in the trial.<sup>115</sup> It also formulated a petition addressed to President Truman: The petition repeated the unfortunate comparison to Stepinac, but also asserted that the execution could have led to "civil strife" and "a threat to peace in a region where two World Wars had their beginning."<sup>116</sup> The Slovak League of America would be among many who would turn to the President, and whose dispatches would be referred to the State Department. Those only reinforce the discourses that have been hitherto seen in American Tiso sympathizers: Pleas of self-proclaimed "loyal American Citizens and believers in a democratic world,"<sup>117</sup> who "trace their ancestry to Slovakia" and "have intense feelings about"<sup>118</sup> the prosecution of a "beloved leader of the Slovak people,"<sup>119</sup> whom they "sincerely believe was unjustly con-

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<sup>113</sup> ULLMANN, Walter. American and Vatican reaction to the Tiso trial. p. 301

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p. 307

<sup>115</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/1-3147. Telegram from Department of State to Rep. P. J. Philbin. 31 January 1947.

<sup>116</sup> *Enclosure: Petition concerning the trial of J. Tiso, asking for the POTUS to intervene.* Dispatch, to which the attachment is enclosed, is not recorded onto the microfilm; arguably sent by Rep. Muhlenberg. If that is the case, the citation is as follows: Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1147. Telegram from F. A. Muhlenberg to POTUS. March 11, 1947.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1147. Telegram from F. A. Muhlenberg to POTUS. March 11, 1947.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1147. Telegram from Bishop Griffin to POTUS. March 11, 1947. Subject: Expressing the will that the US President intervenes on behalf of J. Tiso before the execution of his sentence.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

demned by a prejudiced court.”<sup>120</sup> His trial, they believed, “was a travesty and his execution would be murder.”<sup>121</sup>

A particularly interesting instance are the dispatches from Rev. F. C. Billy, who urged the U.S. Government to intervene not only in the proceedings themselves but also in response to its supposedly unfavorable depiction in the American media. He turned to General Noce of the US Department of War, criticizing its reporting on the proceedings, and did so “[i]n the name of the 75,000 Americans of Slovak parentage, who did their share in World War II.”<sup>122</sup> Father Billy went on to attach his article regarding the depiction of the “so-called ‘trial’” in the *Time* publication, which he reprimanded, saying that it had “rendered an unjust service against a people, who only want their God-given rights to ‘self-government’.”<sup>123</sup> He and other parish representatives like him considered the proceedings illegitimate and predetermined, citing Beneš’s claim that “Tiso must be tried and condemned to death” as evidence of how little “scrupulous justice” there could be to the proceedings.<sup>124</sup>

While some telegrams were rooted in a seemingly personal conviction of the innocence of an “excellent man,” who “absolutely does not deserve the hanging noose,”<sup>125</sup> others demanded American intervention on the basis of their own policy preferences toward the USSR: Such is the case with representative P. J. Philbin, who supported the intervention in the Czechoslovak situation, claiming that the US ought to assume “a more forceful policy toward Russia,” insisting that “further appeasement” is unaffordable, forwarding a resolution by the Slovak Catholic Sokol Gymnastic Club of East Douglas demanding not merely to free Tiso, but also to hold a plebiscite in Slovakia under US sponsorship.<sup>126</sup> It ought be added that just as the Committee’s discourses were ridden with internal contradictions, so too were the different claims of various American Tiso Sympathizers mutually exclusive: While some constituents would argue that Tiso was “[f]orced by the nazis to set up a[n] independent Slovak State,”<sup>127</sup> others would try to ascribe the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1047. Telegram from Pastor A. Fekety to POTUS. March 10, 1947. Enclosure: Petition signed by the members of SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1347. Telegram from Bishop Toolen to POTUS. March 13, 1947.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2447. Telegram from Rev. F. C. Billy to General Noce (War Department). February 24, 1947. Enclosure: Article by Rev. Charles A. Ward criticizing the article appearing in the *Time* for being biased against J. Tiso

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Such was the case with father Orendac, whose pleading were voiced to Department by Rep. E. A. Hall; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1547. Telegram from E. A. Hall to Department of State. 15 April 1947. Enclosure: letter from Father Cyril Orendac concerning the trial and sentence of J. Tiso.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-0347. Telegram from P. J. Philbin to Department of State. 3 March 1947. Enclosure: Resolution of the Slovak Catholic Sokol Gymnastic Club of East Douglas, Massachusetts

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-2647. Memorandum of a Conversation (Rev. M. M. Tondra [First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union], F. Bobusch [Slovak Catholic Sokol], J. Kridlo [Pennsylvania Slovak Un-ion], M. Vargovich [First Catholic Slovak Union], P. P. Jurchak, F. J. Dubosh & Rev. J. Lach [Slovak League of America]). 26 March 1947.

wartime circumstances in Slovakia to Tiso and portray them as a Slovak golden age, “during which period Slovakia progressed culturally, thrived economically, and grew nationally.”<sup>128</sup> And while some would merely speak on behalf of a Catholic prelate without further comment on the circumstances in Czechoslovakia, others would use the opportunity to try to push their government to preclude Czechoslovakia from “[continuing] the colonial exploitation of Slovakia, as was the case from 1918 to 1938.”<sup>129</sup>

Whoever may have been the sender and whatever their degree of understanding of the conditions in Slovakia, the categorical response of the US Government would not change and would be transmitted to all these persons in nearly the same wording each time: The United States shall not intervene in this matter.<sup>130</sup> Oftentimes, a rationale would be given by the State Department official, namely that since the United States had recognized the Czechoslovak Republic, it could not meddle in its internal affairs.<sup>131</sup>

## **6 DEPORTATIONS INTO SUDETENLAND AND OTHER ALLEGED CRIMES AGAINST THE SLOVAKS**

What was to be the exact nature of the violations that the Slovaks supposedly endured from “big powers and oppressors?”<sup>132</sup> Suffice it to state that the Committee asserted that after the end of the war, Slovaks were “being treated worse than [the] Germans” by the Czechs, and after the election of May 26, 1946, the “patriots” among them “either fled to the West or were thrown into jails and concentration camps,”<sup>133</sup> not to omit, of course, the Committee’s comparison of the treatment of Slovaks to the treatment of the Jewish people during the war (a comparison that is audacious to be sure, given the apologia of the exterminatory activities of the Slovak State). These claims will be further explored in this chapter, but from just those few preliminary quotes, it may be predicated that the objective of these discourses was not so much to develop an account of the (very real problem of) systemic oppression of minorities. The goal, instead, seems to have been solely to stylize the Slovaks as the bearers of universal victimhood.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-2147. Telegram from A. B. Kelley to Department of State. 21 March 1947. Enclosure: Resolution adapted by the Independent Political Slovak Club of Monessen, Pennsylvania.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> e.g. Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1547. Telegram from Department of State to Bishop Griffin. 15 March 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1947. Telegram from Department of State to F. A. Muhlenberg. 19 March 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1547. Telegram from Department of State to Bishop Toolen. 15 April 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1947. Telegram from Department of State to E. A. Hall. 15 April 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-0847. Telegram from Department of State to A. B. Kelley. 8 April 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-2647. Telegram from Department of State to Pastor A. Fekety. 26 March 1947.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-1447. Telegram from Department of State to P. J. Philbin. 14 March 1947.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/11-1247. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Mrs. E. Roosevelt

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs)



The Committee's appeal to the Economic and Social Council of the UN, along with its numerous telegrams, spoke of deportations of Slovaks into the Sudetenland as a deliberate act of their ethnic and economic subjugation. These deportations are presented as one of many policies aimed at "denationalizing" and "breaking the resistance" of the Slovak people. Such claims were contextualized within broader historical grievances (even those from the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic), including what the Committee refers to as "anti-democratic rule," "series of crimes against the Slovak nation, [and the] extermination of Slovak intelligentsia," "establishment of concentration camps, destruction of economy," and the "introduction of Communist rule in Anti-Communist Slovakia."<sup>134</sup>

Tiso Sympathizers in the United States elaborated on one of these accusations, claiming that "[t]housands of Slovak Intelligentsia, men, women and children" had been "arrested and taken to concentration camps in Russia, [...] where they are enslaved [...] without trial or conviction, starved and dying in Camps."<sup>135</sup>

The Committee alleged mass deportation of Slovaks into Sudetenland, which it estimated to affect up to 500,000 Slovak peasants and workers.<sup>136</sup> These events are said to constitute a crime against humanity, one which it likened to the forced labor practices for which Nazi officials had been condemned at Nuremberg. The Committee describes the Slovaks as subjected to conditions akin to "modern slavery," with wages at subsistence levels, bare feet, and inadequate provisions.

Attention is drawn to the rationale provided by Czech authorities for the relocations. According to the Committee, Czech officials claimed that Slovaks were temporarily relocated to assist with machinery transport from the Sudetenland to Germany. The Committee argued, however, that the relocation was part of a broader effort to "Czechize" the Sudetenland following the expulsion of the German population. This "Czechization" policy, it alleged, included resettling Slovak families permanently in regions vacated by Germans to replace the labor force. The explanation of the Czechoslovak government that Slovaks were needed to mitigate postwar economic damage in Slovakia was dismissed by the Committee dismissed as a pretext.

The deportations were presented as not only a violation of human rights but also a threat to the "biological substance" of the Slovak nation, claiming that President Benes intended to "realize the Czechization of Slovaks and Hungarians, to make them his accomplices in the Sudeten-

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-0347. Telegram from P. J. Philbin to Department of State. 3 March 1947. Enclosure: Resolution of the Slovak Catholic Sokol Gymnastic Club of East Douglas, Massachusetts

<sup>136</sup> Other mentions estimated the number of deported Slovaks to 200,000. The origin of these estimates is unknown, and while no further inquiry into these claims has been made, it seems rather unlikely that one seventh of an entire population would undergo logistically difficult relocations requiring vast amounts of machinery and planning, without leaving any traces in the historical record. While the relocation of minorities into Sudetenland is a known phenomenon, the source of the Committee's approximation ranging from 200,000 to 500,000 remains unknown.

German tragedy.” The discourse remained ambivalent toward Hungary. While acknowledging the “denationalizing and exploiting policy of Hungarians,” the Committee emphasized that Slovaks diminished equally, if not more, under Czech domination. The Slovak nation was said to be on the verge of “politically losing its physiognomy”<sup>137</sup> due to the oppressive policies that encroached on their “right to nationality.” The frequent invocation of biology and nature is particularly noteworthy here, seeing how it channels into spastic excourses on Ďurčanský’s legal philosophy, such as when the Committee remarks regarding the relocations: “No positive law is able to render an *anti-natural* action a just one.” The telegrams referenced Czech claims that Slovaks would only remain in Bohemia for the duration of the two-year plan. However, the Committee dismissed these assurances as disingenuous, saying that entire families had been resettled and that Slovak workers were intended to permanently replace expelled Germans.<sup>138</sup>

This thesis shall refrain from any comments on the actual historicity of the alleged crimes committed against the Slovak population by either the Czechoslovak or the Soviet government in the immediate aftermath of the war, for the simple reason that such a study would fall outside of the scope of a discourse analysis.

## 7 OBJECTIVES OF THE SLOVAK ACTION COMMITTEE

The aforementioned grievances provided the Committee with the narrative of a yoke, from under which the Slovaks needed to be freed. This chapter explores the objectives the Committee strove toward, as well as the means it sought to employ in order to reach them. To simply list the goals and the means of achieving them would be an activity altogether easy, given that the Statute of the Slovak Action Committee featured both.<sup>139</sup> We are interested in this information, however, only insofar as textual analysis alone can yield it.

In terms of its own linkage to the legacy of the Slovak State, the Committee demanded its construction of legal continuity to be accepted, and to be “recognized as the Slovak Government in exile,”<sup>140</sup> by the United States; to be seen “as the body uniting representatives of the constitutional organs of the Slovak Republic as well as representatives of all political tendencies, and

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<sup>137</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to POTUS. 25 February 1947. (Enclosure: Appeal of the Slovak Action Committee to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation Concerning the Deportation of the Slovak Population in Sudeten by the Czechs)

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> POLAKOVIČ, Štefan, VNUK, František. *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943 – 1948)*, p. 182.

<sup>140</sup> NARA, Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1945–1949. College Park, MA. Reel II. 860F.00/9-2347. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 23 September 1947.

hence a true interpreter of the political will of the Slovak Nation,”<sup>141</sup> and simultaneously to be regarded as “interpreting the will of the defendants”<sup>142</sup> in the proceedings against the representatives of the Slovak Republic before the National Court in Bratislava. The basis for this status was the legal precedent of a 1910 Swiss court decision, which recognized that insurgent or revolutionary groups could be granted special rights under certain circumstances. This precedent was used to argue that the Committee’s position as representative of the Slovak nation was legally justifiable, even in the absence of formal state recognition.

The Committee’s communication featured specific demands: that the UN Security Council consider the situation in Czechoslovakia and invite the Slovak Action Committee to participate in the deliberation under Article 35, Paragraph 2 of the UN Charter; that a peace treaty be concluded with Slovakia as with a defeated party; and that Czechoslovakia be expelled from the UN under Article 6, citing its methods and existence as persistent violations of the Charter. The Committee warned that failure to act and fulfil these demands would render the UN complicit in the alleged injustices. These demands were featured in its correspondence with the State Department, as well as across several memoranda, namely “*Sur l’existence de la République Slovaque et sur la nécessité de conclure un Traité de paix avec Elle* [On the Existence of the Slovak Republic and the Necessity of Concluding a Peace Treaty with It],” “*Sur la nécessité du plébiscite en Slovaquie* [On the necessity of a plebiscite in Slovakia],” as well as “Memorandum concerning the Rationality of Existence of Czecho-Slovakia.”

A few of words must be spared also concerning the demands for the incitation of a plebiscite, which permeate throughout the body of documents. To add to what has been said about them already, these pleas were often pamphletic, stylized into short and percussive messages intended for the widest range of possible addressees. The Committee, confident in the support the Slovak people would vest into it if they were given the chance, called for a universal plebiscite, in which the Slovak nation would get to decide about its own independence. It would ask various governments to “help overthrow the anti-democratic regime in Slovakia and to restore the democratic Slovak Republic.”<sup>143</sup>

Surprisingly, perhaps as a last effort upon seeing that persistent calls for the intrusion into the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia had not been bearing any fruit, Ďurčanský and Polakovič in-

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2547. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 25 February 1947.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/2-2847. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 28 February 1947. Enclosure: Petition of the Slovak Action Committee to the United Nations in the Trial of Dr. Josef Tiso and Other Representatives of the Slovak Republic Before the International Military Tribunal.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-3147. Telegram from H. M Byington (Counselor of US Embassy in Rome) to Department of State. 31 March 1947; Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-2947. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 29 April 1947. Enclosure: Copies of a letter from the Slovak Action Committee asking for support for its cause.

formed the Department of State of the Committee's intention to propose the creation of a "Central-European Confederation" to the UN Security Council. The Committee "as the only representative of the Slovak Nation" viewed it as its "moral duty" to suggest the establishment of this confederation as a response to "yearning for peace, reconstruction, and cooperation" of the countries of Central Europe, with Slovaks among them as "peace-loving members." Only the framework of a confederation was said to be able to saturate such yearning.<sup>144</sup> References to a project of a confederation in Central Europe have been found in no correspondence but a single telegram.

## 8 SLOVAK ACTION COMMITTEE IN THE INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES

In its responses to various elected officials and their constituents from the ranks of US citizens sympathizing with Tiso, the US Government found itself having to provide explanations, oftentimes arguing that Czechoslovakia provides for fair representation for Slovaks through officials elected in a universal, free, and secret ballot. In the case of the trial of representatives of the Slovak Republic, State Department held it that it was carried out with all due process and with the consent of the Slovak National Council, which was far from containing a Communist majority, and so the process could not have been simply discredited as an illegitimate show trial. Due to the demand of American Tiso Sympathizers, many of whom were writing under the conviction that the Slovak State had never declared war on the United States, State Department also had to turn to the US Embassy in Prague to request photographs of the said declaration, writing: "[The State Department] would appreciate verification and translation of Article [in] *Slovenská Politika* of Dec 13, 1941 containing text of Slovak declaration of war. [...] This evidence [is] necessary [to] answer wide-spread criticism in US of Tiso trial."<sup>145</sup>

The US Embassy in Prague relayed information released by Czechoslovak agencies to the Department of State, which seems to have adapted the educated opinions of the embassy along with any possible reservations. One relayed piece of such information was the communiqué issued by the Slovak commissioner of interior, which summarized Ďurčanský's activities, including the founding of "an illegal organization called SAV."<sup>146</sup> The Committee's claims of legal continuity were said to be tentatively argued for using documents (supposedly signed by Tiso while he was held in custody) that had been smuggled out of prison by an associate of Ďurčanský, so that the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/9-2447. Telegram from Slovak Action Committee to Department of State. 24 September 1947. Central European Confederation.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/3-2247. Telegram from Department of State to US Embassy in Prague. 22 March 1947.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. Reel III. 860F.00/11-2147. Telegram from L. A. Steinhardt to Department of State. 21 November 1947. Communiqué of the Slovak Commissioner of Interior concerning the question of the subversive anti-state plot in Slovakia; On the activities and visions of Durcansky

latter could use them as proof of a continuous Slovak statehood. These documents were to be akin to presidential decrees, intended to name Ďurčanský the prime minister.<sup>147</sup>

The US Government had approved the request of Czechoslovakia to extradite Ďurčanský from the United States zone of occupation in Germany before the Slovak representatives had the chance to contest the charges at the Bratislava Court.<sup>148</sup> Ďurčanský then makes appearances in correspondence among the Department of State, the Department of War, various US Embassies and other American bodies, throughout the studied body of documents. These telegrams, however, are of a logistical nature concerning his extradition (as he was circumventing the organized efforts of to be apprehended, fleeing first to Rome, then to Naples, and finally to South America), and do not yield any new information for the purposes of this analysis.

The Department's stance regarding the Slovak Action Committee is apparent from the internal office memorandums. In one such instance, a department official explains: "Ferdinand Durcansky, President of the Slovak Action Committee, has been listed as a war criminal by the United Nations War Crimes Commission (the U. S. concurring in this decision) in view of his activities as a Nazi appointed government official in Slovakia during the war. For this reason, it has been the Department's policy not to acknowledge the frequent letters he has been addressing to many officials of the Department."<sup>149</sup> The United States also recognized the ruling of the National Court in Bratislava, which deemed Ďurčanský a war criminal and sentenced him to death by hanging *in absentia*, and across the internal correspondence, the federal workers at the Department referred to Ďurčanský as a war criminal, and at one particularly ironic instance even as a "Czech war criminal."<sup>150</sup> One telegram from Polakovič had a hand-written caption added, saying: „Signed same documents Durcansky signed,"<sup>151</sup> seemingly determining the stance of the Department toward its contents based on a linkage to Ďurčanský alone.

Any time yet "another letter" would come "concerning suffering in Czechoslovakia,"<sup>152</sup> officials were instructed to respond to it the same way they had to similar ones responded before. Should the Tiso Sympathizers in the United States make references to documents issued by the SAV, or any of its members, they would be informed that such texts were "linked to a group con-

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Reel I. 860F.00/5-xx47. Telegram from J. D. Hickerson (Department of State) to Major General O. P. Echola (War Department). May 1947.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. Reel III. 860F.00/2-1647. Office Memorandum (Little to Pearson). 16 February 1948.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-2947. Telegram from H. M. Byington (Counselor of US Embassy in Rome) to Department of State. 29 April 1947. Enclosure: Copies of a letter from the Slovak Action Committee asking for support for its cause.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/4-1647. Telegram from Š. Polakoviš (Slovak Action Committee) to POTUS. 16 April 1947.

<sup>152</sup> "Another letter has come in concerning suffering in Czechoslovakia. Perhaps about the same answer you sent to Dr. Oppenheimer will do."; Ibid. Reel I. Department of State, Division of European Affairs. Handwritten note.

doning a war criminal.”<sup>153</sup> One may say then, without great fear of being mistaken, that the State Department was far from taking Ďurčanský seriously, sometimes seeming more annoyed than concerned, having scribbled down a hand-written note reading: “To be filed in Durcansky file, no reply necessary.”<sup>154</sup> And so, each new treatise on the physiognomy of the Slovak nation was quietly laid to rest into the Ďurčanský file, somewhere down in the bowels of the Department.

## 9 CONCLUSION

This thesis reconstructs the discourses manufactured by perhaps the most extremist of any of the strands of the postwar Ľudák exile, the Slovak Action Committee spearheaded by Ferdinand Ďurčanský. These discourses have been subject to analysis, so as to find out both the intention and the effect of being constructed the way they were. As per one of the objectives of this thesis, as delineated in the introductory chapter, multiple discourses have been identified all throughout the analysis. Tiso sympathizers replicated interwar discourse on the doctrine of Self-Determination (gesturing toward the national independence of other countries, which had gained their statehood before the Second World War), discourses of international law and universal human rights (citing general principles of international law, as well as freedoms people are inherently entitled to on the basis of natural law), fascist justifications based in pseudo-biology (“biological substance” of a nation, its “nature” or its “physiognomy”), theological and fatalist discourses (statehood as a “God-given mission” and “destiny” to Slovaks), and even anti-imperialist resentments (“Czech imperialism,” “Czech dominance”), or anti-Communist hostility as well as national chauvinism (the use of “the Czech-Communist Czecho-Slovakia” as a derogatory term). Oftentimes these discourses were intermingled with each other, never being quite rooted in any coherent theory, and in some instances merely serving as a reservoir of buzzwords. Many internal contradictions arose from their interplay.

Several neglected fields have been unearthed and identified as knowledge gaps that future academic inquiry could fill: For instance, a legal exegesis by scholars focused on the history of international law would be helpful to make any judgements on the merit on Ďurčanský’s legal argumentation. The mythologization of Czechoslovakia as a sort of transhistorical force of oppression of the Slovak, hastily identified with any evil that Ďurčanský could think of at the time, would make for a fascinating subject of analysis as well. All these (and more) possible paths of further research seem valuable to political sciences of today. Their contemporary relevance is as clear as

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. Reel II. 860F.00/7-0147. Telegram from CE E Braunstein to DC/R Files. 1 August 1947. Enclosure: Letter from the Rev. Andrew Beros sending greetings on the American Slovak Day; Asserting Durcansky as “the leader of the Slovak people”.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Reel II. Department of State, Division of European Affairs. Handwritten note.

day. The conspiratorial discourses of *false statehood* in the present fascist tendencies in particular are eerily reminiscent of the Committee's assertion that Czechoslovakia had never existed.

More inquiry must be conducted on the fascist rhetoric of the past, seeing it does not differ much from that on the present. For now, the research is concluded: The monsters, whose paths Perseus traced, have been spotted. Unlike Perseus, we must expect to encounter monsters even after we will have retreated from the Lair of the Gorgons. They walk the earth. Tiso's remains, originally buried in an unmarked grave in the National Cemetery in Bratislava, have since been moved, and his corpse has found a new resting place. Due to the favorable stance of ecclesial authorities toward the father of Slovak fascism, his cadaver is buried where he himself had originally intended it to. Many sympathize with him still, or worse, are only now professing their newfound sympathies. Although texts may be filed away, they are never laid to rest quite the same way that human bodies are. The discursive practices, which have been identified throughout this thesis, are hardly confined to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they emerge again and again in contemporary fascist discourses, whether they mythologize a national past, refute the legal existence of a state, or call for the eradication of people.

The findings of this critical discourse analysis ought to serve to understand and curb the rhetoric of fascist tendencies, which have hitherto been under study, wherever they might spring from.

## **Resumé**

Hlavním cílem práce bylo zodpovědět výzkumnou otázku, jak Slovenský akční výbor rámoval různé historické události a jakou jazykovou strategii přitom používal. Identifikované diskurzy zahrnují např. odkaz na právo národů na sebeurčení, principy mezinárodního práva a přirozených lidských práv, pseudobiologické argumentace, teologické a fatalistické interpretace slovenské státnosti či protikomunistické a nacionalistické resentimenty. Tyto diskurzy byly často propojené, a přesto vzájemně vylučné. Práce identifikuje několik oblastí, které by mohly být dále zkoumány. Jsou jimi například právní analýza Ďurčanského mezinárodněprávní argumentace či studium mytizace Československa jako útlačnické mocnosti. Takový výzkum by mohl být hodnotný pro současné politické vědy, zvláště s ohledem na podobnosti mezi fašistickým diskurzem minulosti a současnosti.



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