

Marián Manák

Slovakia, Austria and the Allies during the Years of World War II

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MARIÁN MANÁK (TRNAVA)

SLOVAKIA, AUSTRIA AND THE ALLIES DURING THE YEARS OF WORLD WAR II*

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Abstract: The position of Slovakia during the Second World War, unlike its neighbour's, was significantly different. Whereas Austria lost its independence and became a part of the German Reich, for the first time in its history Slovakia gained its autonomy on 14 March 1939.

The international position of Slovakia during WWII, unlike its western neighbour Austria, was significantly different. Whereas Austria, as a result of the Anschluss of March 12th, 1938, lost its independence and became an integral part of the German Reich, for the first time in its history Slovakia gained its (limited) autonomy on March 14th, 1939 in a complex international political situation and under direct pressure from Germany. Slovak political leaders, after the events of the Munich Conference on September 30th, 1938 and following the First Vienna Award of November 2nd, 1938 understood that in fact the only option for them was cooperation with Germany¹. Other circumstances, such as the passivity of the Great Western

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¹ J. Dejmek, *Zahraniční politika Česko-Slovenska mezi Mnichovem a německou okupací českých zemí (říjen 1938 - březen 1939)*, [in:] *Rozbitie alebo rozpad?* Bratislava 2010, p. 18-20.

powers, pressure from Hungary and Poland to revise borders and the internal political situation in Czechoslovakia, led them to believe this².

The natural desire of the newly created state was to establish itself in the then complex and rapidly changing international system. The Slovak People's Party of A. Hlinka, as a ruling garniture in Slovakia, acceded to building the Slovak Foreign Service unprepared and without diplomatic experience, because during the time of Czechoslovakia they did not have an opportunity to participate more in foreign policy³. Before 1918 Hungarians represented the Slovaks in the world and after the establishment of Czechoslovakia it was almost exclusively Czechs (in 1938, out of a total of 1,246 officers of the Czechoslovak Foreign Service there were only 33 Slovaks), therefore the constitution of Slovak diplomacy had to start virtually from scratch⁴.

Among the first steps of the Slovak Government was the sending of a note by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to forty-five nations, in which it expressed a request for international recognition of the Slovak Republic. Hungary was the first to recognize the Slovak Republic on March 15th, 1939 and it elevated its consulate in Bratislava to an embassy. Budapest, however, did not consider the situation to be definitive and Slovakia remained an object of its geopolitical interests. The next day a northern neighbour – Poland – diplomatically recognized the new state. By taking this step it wanted to prevent the “position of Slovakia under German mentoring”. However, Bratislava was not under any great illusions and was aware that from Warsaw, given its closeness to Budapest, it could only expect the most essential economic and political relations. Of some encouragement, however, was the recognition of the new state by three neutral states (the Holy See, Switzerland, Spain) and one clearly pro-German oriented country (Italy), who recognized Slovakia during the first months of its existence⁵.

The width and depth of the international relations of the Slovak Republic with other countries was substantially affected by the significant power

² P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky (1939–1945)*, [in:] *Historické štúdie* 38. Bratislava 1997, p. 7.

³ M. Ďurica, *Vznik a trvanie prvého Slovenského štátu*, [in:] *Slovenská republika 1939–1945*. Martin 2000, p. 25.

⁴ J. Mikuš, *Pamäti slovenského diplomata*, Martin 1998, p. 67.

⁵ P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika*, p. 13–17.

of the German Empire, which at that time was the dominant hegemonic (not only) in Central Europe. The determining factor was, inter alia, reflected in that shortly after the establishment of the Slovak Republic by the signing of the Treaty of Protection of March 23rd, 1939,⁶ Slovakia conformed its foreign and economic policy to Germany's. Under the terms of the contract clauses of the Treaty of Protection, the foreign and war policy of the Slovak Republic had to be maintained "in close agreement with the German armed forces" over the next 25 years. On the other hand, this treaty had a stabilizing effect on the international position of Slovakia, because to some extent it limited the increasing demands, especially of its southern neighbour Hungary, which openly showed a clear desire to move its northern border to Poland⁷.

Bratislava, despite the constraints of the Treaty of Protection, sought to enhance contacts toward the Great Western powers in order to increase its position in foreign policy. In the UK, however, an effort to establish closer bilateral relations encountered unwillingness, as London considered the existence of the new state the result of German machinations, though in relation to the declaration of the independence of Slovakia there was no direct military intervention⁸. London finally recognized the Slovak Republic on May 4th, 1939, but the British Ambassador in Berlin, Neville Henderson, did not hesitate to mention in front of his Slovak counterpart Matúš Černák that Britain did not intend to involve itself in any way favourable to Slovakia, and advised the new state to try to go the way of neutrality. Official recognition allowed for the opening of the Slovak General Consulate in London, which became operational in August 1939. After Britain six other countries joined the recognition of Slovakia - Liberia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Japan, Manchuria and Yugoslavia. Particularly important was the attitude of another Great European power - France -, which, with respect to good interwar relations with the Prague centralist governments, initially remained reluctant to recognise Slovakia. However, Paris revised its position on July

⁶ I. Baka, *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939-1940*, Bratislava 2010, p. 31-36.

⁷ J. Hoensch, *Slovensko a Hitlerova východná politika. Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana medzi autonómiou a separatizmom 1938-1939*, Bratislava 2001, p. 196-204.

⁸ E. Ivaničková, *Britská politika a Slovensko v rokoch 1939-1945*, [in:] *Slovensko na konci druhej svetovej vojny (Stav, východiská a perspektívy)*, Bratislava 1994, p. 125.

14th, 1939 and officially recognized the Slovak Republic. Up until the outbreak of WWII, Slovakia also managed to be recognized by Belgium, Sweden and Romania. Despite the difficult circumstances of the first five months the leaders of the Slovak Republic succeeded in achieving recognition of the new republic by 18 countries, among them five of the then superpowers⁹.

Of the Western powers, however, it lacked recognition by the United States of America, whose attitude to the Slovak Republic was closely related to the events after the collapse of Czechoslovakia. The US administration has strictly refused to recognize German supremacy over Bohemia and Moravia, because Washington did not distinguish between the military occupation of the Czech lands and events in Slovakia. On May 12th, 1939 the US chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Alexander Kirk, informed Washington that the foreign affairs of the Protectorate had been officially undertaken by the German Empire, and therefore foreign missions accredited to the former Czechoslovak Government were not entitled to exercise consular activity. In response to this the State Department made it clear that the United States did not intend to change its approach to the events of March 1939. Therefore, Kirk did not receive authorization from Berlin to continue consular activity in Prague and therefore this authority was officially cancelled on October 15th, 1940¹⁰.

In the eyes of the Great Western powers the position of the Slovak Republic was complicated by its active participation in the anti-Polish campaign, when, in response to this step, France and Britain declared war on Germany and broke off diplomatic relations with Slovakia. On the other hand, the attitude of another great power - the USSR -, which had until then refused to establish bilateral relations with Bratislava, changed¹¹. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were established as early as mid-September 1939, while in Slovakia, as a result of this, a group cantered around foreign minister Ferdinand Ďurčanský became active and tried "by all means to weaken the German influence in Slovakia and strengthen the position of

⁹ P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika*, p. 17-19. Note: Till the end of the war Slovakia was recognized by overall 27 states.

¹⁰ S. Michálek, *Vstup do niektorých problémov slovensko-amerických vzťahov (1939-1945)*, [in:] *Slovenská republika 1939 - 1945 očami mladých historikov IV*, Banská Bystrica 2005, p. 146-147.

¹¹ This turnover was due to the German-Soviet secret collusion of 23. 8. 1939 (the Pact Ribbentrop - Molotov), which immediately preceded the attack against Poland.

this low stable state". Ďurčanský saw in the Soviet Union a potential ally in the dispute with Hungary, which had annexed a significant part of the South of Slovakia without Germany preventing this step in any way¹².

Ďurčanský, however, went further. Since Bratislava had an interest in the development of British-Slovak trade relations as well as in a renewal of the British consulate, the minister in early 1940 instructed the ambassador in Rome Jozef Zvrškovec to try to establish contacts with British political circles through the Italian Government. Its chairman, Count Galeazzo Ciano was requested by the ambassador to inform the British Government that the Slovak Republic was considering itself neutral in the conflict in Western Europe¹³. This attempt by the Foreign Minister in London, however, did not meet with understanding, because Slovakia did not have a good reputation in British political circles. This is shown by a document from the archives of the British Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which demonstrates the attitude and interests of the British people. According to the authors of this document Slovaks were "*primitive and irresponsible people, completely unable to manage their own affairs and could feel indignation against any country which would take care of them. It would be hard to look for the reasons for any moral obligations towards them, except that we could accept a help of Slovak volunteers from the Czechoslovak Legion, if such one would arise. In fact, they matter much less than the Czechs, because their [Slovak] ability to sabotage is unproven. On the other hand, the more we [British] manage to arouse a discontent among any population under German domination, the better. The question of whether the Slovaks have to be included in our war aims in the same way as it is proposed for the Czechs, it depends on whether we can assume that they are strongly upset because of German rule. But we do not have direct evidence that it would be that case*"¹⁴. Not surprisingly, therefore, Britain finally decided definitively to support the aims promoted by Edvard Beneš, and on July 21st, 1940 it provisionally recognized the government-in-exile in London¹⁵.

¹² D. Čierna-Lantayová, *Tradícia a dejiny. Vybrané otázky zo slovensko-maďarských a slovensko-ruských vzťahov (1934-1949)*, Bratislava 2009, p. 137-138, 145-146.

¹³ P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky (1939-1945)*, Bratislava 2011, p. 272.

¹⁴ E. Ivaničková, *Zahraničnopolitická orientácia Slovenska v dokumentoch britskej Foreign Office (1939-1941)*, [in:] *Historický časopis*, (1996), nr. 2, p. 217.

¹⁵ E. Beneš, *Paměti. Od Mnichova k nové válce a novému vítězství*, Praha 1947, p. 162.

During this period it was a priority of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic – where possible – to particularly maintain balanced relations with its two dominant neighbours, Germany and the Soviet Union, which Berlin regarded with resentment and growing indignation. An undisguised “flirting” of representatives of Slovak diplomacy with Moscow is evident from the words of the Soviet ambassador in Bratislava Grigory M. Pushkin, according to whom “Ďurčanský’s group was evidently trying to avoid the complete subjugation of Slovakia by Germany”¹⁶. The dissatisfaction of Germany with the orientation of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic gradually escalated so much that on July 28th, 1940 the leader of Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, invited the leaders of the Slovak government to Salzburg, but among the ministers invited, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ďurčanský, was omitted. During the discussions President Jozef Tiso, under pressure of circumstances, agreed with the reorganization of the Slovak government according to Berlin’s wishes, and he accepted changes in important posts: the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Interior Minister. Supporters of National Socialism according to the German model – Vojtech Tuka (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and Alexander Mach (Ministry of the Interior) – replaced them. At the same time a new German Ambassador in Bratislava – Manfred von Killinger – was appointed, who was instructed to act more radically towards the Slovak government than his predecessor¹⁷.

The results of the Salzburg meeting of July 1940 were that the ideology of National Socialism gradually began to gain ground in Slovakia, by which the country got deeper subjection by the Third Reich. When the German army invaded the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941, the Slovak government almost immediately broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow, and on June 24th it sent troops to join the campaign against the USSR. As a result, on July 18th, 1941 the Soviet Union (and finally the United Kingdom) recognized the government-in-exile, whereby Moscow, unlike London, contractually committed itself to guarantee the pre-Munich borders of Czechoslovakia. The international status of Slovakia was aggravated on December 12th, 1941, when the Prime Minister, and also Foreign Minister Vojtech

¹⁶ Ľ. Lipták, *Geopolitické postavenie Slovenska v rokoch druhej svetovej vojny*, [in:] *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku*. Bratislava 2000, p. 276.

¹⁷ M. Ďurica, *The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic*, [in:] *Slovak Politics. Essays on Slovak History in honour of Joseph M. Kirschbaum*. Cleveland - Rome 1983, p. 263-264.

Tuka, declared that the Slovak Republic, as a member of the Tripartite Pact¹⁸, had entered a state of war with the Great Western powers – the United Kingdom and United States. Slovak diplomacy exposed itself to complete isolation by the Allies and practically sealed the position of Slovakia, whose fate depended on victory, or respectively on the defeat of Germany.

Over the coming months, the United Kingdom and de Gaulle's Free France followed the attitude of the Soviet Union and refused to acknowledge the Munich Agreement, nor other acts that had occurred as its result. The United States, which had never recognized the Munich agreement, did not change its opposition to the Slovak Republic. Washington continuously supported the actions of the government-in-exile of Edvard Beneš in London, which sought to restore pre-war Czechoslovakia. Also the Czechoslovak exiles in Moscow, in connection with the post-war order in Central Europe, gradually began to communicate only one option - restoring pre-war Czechoslovakia. Likewise London political circles excluded the alternative that the post-war Slovakia would have any form of independence and the Slovak chargé d'affaires in Switzerland Jozef Kirschbaum reported in the summer of 1943 similar attitudes from several diplomats¹⁹. It should be emphasized that until the end of the war the Allies did not adopt any common final verdict concerning the invalidity of the Munich Agreement²⁰.

The Slovak government leaders clearly perceived these signals and therefore tried to establish contacts with the government-in-exile in London. Through it they wanted to find a route to the Great Allied powers and gain their support after the war. Part of the governing powers in fact toyed with the alternative that Slovakia would become part of a larger federation of Central Europe, in which it would retain a degree of autonomy - such plans (and even in several variations) among the Allies actually existed²¹. But the interest of the Slovak political scene of rapprochement with Edvard Beneš met with an absolute lack of understanding as representatives of the exiled government refused to join their fate with politicians who were in the

¹⁸ Slovakia acceded to the Tripartite Pact on November 24th, 1941.

¹⁹ P. Petruš, *Zahraničná politika*, p. 273–276.

²⁰ J. Kuklík, *Cesta k odzúnní Mnichova za druhé světové války*, [in:] *Mnichovská dohoda. Cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě*, Praha 2004, p. 138.

²¹ On this see: E. Ivaničková, *Britské představy v čase 2. světové vojny o povojnové integrácii střednej a juhovýchodnej Európy*, [in:] *Integračné a dezintegračné procesy v střednej Európe v 20. storočí*, Bratislava 2008, p. 170–180.

service of the first Slovak Republic. Moreover, Beneš did not intend to change his previous attitude and recognize an established 'national-state' type separateness of Slovakia, while openly declaring his disrespect for the Slovaks²². Repeatedly he spoke of the Czechoslovak nation and the necessary return to the constitutional arrangement that had existed in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia²³. This strict attitude of the government-in-exile in London made it de facto impossible for Slovak government circles to find a way out of the position of Slovakia since forming an alliance with Hitler.

Slovakia's chances of survival as a separate political unit were finally thwarted by the invasion of the Red Army in the years 1943 and 1944, when it became clear that the territory of Slovakia would fall under Soviet jurisdiction. Similarly, the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and Czechoslovakia on December 12th, 1943 and the Agreement on Relations between the Czechoslovak Administration and the Soviet Supreme Commander after the invasion of the Red Army into Czechoslovak territory on May 8th, 1944 clearly signalled that Moscow and government-in-exile in London both saw Slovakia as part of a renewed Czechoslovakia in the perceived post-war Europe²⁴.

Some representatives of the First Slovak Republic, however, did not resign to this and there was also an attempt to leave Germany and change to the side of the Allies. The action of Minister of National Defence General Ferdinand Čatloš in August 1944 ultimately failed. Although the military aspect of this event had the support of the Beneš government, the exiled representatives, the domestic insurgent command and Moscow disliked the second objective – the maintenance of Slovak statehood. A few weeks later the Red Army began to occupy Eastern Slovakia, and with this any plans and alternatives of the Bratislava government were reduced to a single eventuality – the inevitable demise of the Slovak Republic²⁵. That finally occurred on May 8th, 1945, when the Slovak government, which had fled to Austrian Kremsmünster capitulated to the general of XX Corps of the Third US Army, Walton Walker, and signed the Capitulation Act²⁶. It was also the last step in the internal and foreign pol-

²² *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939 – 1943, (Acta occupationis Bohemiae & Moraviae)*, Praha 1966, p. 53 and 91–92, nr. 1.

²³ I. Kamenec, *Slovenský štát*, Praha 1993, p. 125.

²⁴ P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika*, p. 281.

²⁵ P. Petruf, *Zahraničná politika*, p. 38.

²⁶ J. Beňko, *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II*, Bratislava 1998, p. 380–381.

icy of the First Slovak Republic, which again became a part of the renewed Czechoslovak Republic within the pre-Munich borders.

As regards Austria, there was no unanimity among Allied powers in their opinion about its post-war fate. The British were coming up with proposals requesting that the national borders of Austria not be revived in their pre-war form, but that the Austrian territories become a part of a larger territorial-political entity. In October 1943 in Moscow, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden presented a proposal for the incorporation of Austria into a confederation of Danubian countries, of which southern Germany should also be a part.²⁷ A month later in Tehran British Prime Minister Winston Churchill persuaded the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt that Austria should create a Danube Federation by joining with Hungary²⁸. Similar considerations also existed in the United States. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, in his plan developed during the summer of 1944, envisaged the establishment of an independent southern German state to be linked with Austria by a customs union²⁹.

In October of the same year W. Churchill during his visit to Moscow once again revived the idea of creating a southern German-Austrian Federation; he reiterated its proposal in Yalta in February 1945, where he even suggested Vienna as the capital of the new state³⁰.

The unclear situation about the future of Austria was due to the fact that there was no Austrian government-in-exile, which would be able to form an idea of the relevant political future of the country and which would be able to seek to enforce it in a uniform procedure. After the Anschluss of 1939, Austria's most significant emigrants found refuge in France, and its leaders belonged to different political parties - socialists, monarchists, Christian socialists, etc. Despite the fact that Paris provided sufficient opportunity to form a uniform concept of the future status of Austria, exile groups did not reach ultimate agreement. The main reason was differences in opinion on the question of the independence of Austria. The socialists, headed by Otto

²⁷ *Dějiny diplomacie 1939 - 1945. Diplomacie za druhé světové války*. Praha 1979, p. 353.

²⁸ *Foreign relations of the United States. Diplomatic papers, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, Washington, D.C. 1961, p. 602; V. Berežkov, *Teherán 1943. Na konferencii Velké trojky a v kuloárech*, Bratislava 1973, p. 131.

²⁹ H. Morgenthau, *Germany Is Our Problem: Plan for Germany*, New York 1945, the attachment to the introduction.

³⁰ *Teherán - Jalta - Postupim. Zborník dokumentov*, Bratislava 1972, p. 116.

Bauer, counted on a project of common Greater Germanic Socialist Revolution, which by its nature denied the existence of Austria as an independent state. On the other hand monarchists, led by Otto Habsburg and Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, wanted a restoration of the monarchy and the establishment of the Danubian Federation³¹. The Christian socialists and the Austrian exile representatives in Sweden, headed by Bruno Kreisky, clearly promoted the restoration of Austrian statehood. A transition between these concepts was formed by the Austrian emigration in Britain. Its ideas were based on the idea of the co-existence of an independent autonomous Austria within the whole of Germany³².

An important milestone in how the Allies proceeded with the post-war fate of Austria was the conference of the Foreign Ministers of the three main allied powers, which took place from the 19th to the 30th of October 1943 in Moscow³³. Participants of the conference there, inter alia, agreed that the issue of the post-war fate of Austria would be part of the negotiations of the European Advisory Commission (hereinafter "EAC")³⁴. From this perspective an important starting point was the adoption of the so-called Moscow declaration³⁵ to the effect that all three Allied powers agreed that Austria as the "first free country, which fell victim to Nazi aggression, will be liberated from German domination." Allied powers regarded the Annexation of

³¹ Z. Poláčková, *Reakcia politických strán v Československu na príchod ľavicovej emigrácie z Rakúska. Kontexty, diskusia, dôsledky*, [in:] *Slovensko a Československo v XX. storočí: vybrané kapitoly z dejín vnútornej i zahraničnej politiky: k 70. narodeninám PhDr. Dagmar Čiernej - Lantayovej, DrSc.*, Bratislava 2010, p. 95.

³² Z. Poláčková, *Politická situácia v Rakúsku v roku 1945 a prvé povojnové voľby*, [in:] *Prvé povojnové voľby v strednej a juhovýchodnej Európe*, Bratislava, 1998, p. 57.

³³ The US delegation was led by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, the British by Foreign Minister Anthony Eden and the Soviet by of People's Commissars of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov.

³⁴ EAC's task was to study in detail the current issues related to the war in Europe and develop common recommendations for three Allied governments, whereby the priority was the issue of post-war order in Germany. First meeting of EAC was held on January 14th, 1944, the last on September 6th, 1945. The delegations were led by John Winant (USA), Fyodor Gusev (USSR), William Strang (United Kingdom) and from 14. 11. 1944 a representative of the Fighting France of de Gaulle René Massigli became a full member of EAC. For more details see: M. Manák, *Európska poradná komisia a diplomacia USA v rokoch 1943-1945*, Kraków 2011, 219 p.

³⁵ The text of the Declaration was published on November 1st, 1943, i.e., after the end of the conference negotiations.

Austria by Nazi Germany on March 13th, 1938 as “invalid” and did not feel bound by any changes which took place in Austria after that date³⁶. However ministers in their statement to Austria also noted that Austria would have to take responsibility for its participation in the war alongside Germany and that in the final accounting the Allies would consider how much influence the country would contribute to its liberation³⁷.

To some extent, the statement of Declaration can be seen as a propaganda move by the Allies, who had to support domestic Austrian resistance. Anglo-American analyst predicted that the impact of the recent capitulation of Italy (September 8th, 1943), which was a close ally of the Third Reich, would have strong a mobilizing effect on the home resistance, which could lead to an open uprising against the Germans. These hypotheses, however, ultimately did not occur at all. Austrians understood the Declaration as a promise of independence for the country, but above all it was seen as a promise that the Allies would not bomb Austrian cities, as they labelled it as “occupied territory”. They also did not like the fact that one of the signatories was the Soviet Union, which had been associated with “Bolshevism, despite the fact that in the Declaration the US government and the United Kingdom were also involved.” A positive response to the Moscow Declaration was obvious only in a small number of population, but even this small enthusiasm quickly faded when bombing of the territory of Austria were renewed in the spring of 1944³⁸.

The EAC began to intensively address the problems of the post-war arrangement of Austria right from the initial stages of its activities. Initially, mainly European powers - the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom - were involved in this issue, and within the EAC the issue of Austria was closely tied to the distribution policy of the occupation zones in Germany. In its first proposal submitted on January 14th, 1944, Britain offered the United States a decisive role in the administration of Austria. It would be a kind of “compensation”, since according to the same project they should

³⁶ R. H. Keyserlingk, *Austria in World War II: An Anglo-American Dilemma*, Kingston 1988, p. 152.

³⁷ *Foreign relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1943. General Volume I*, Washington, D.C. 1963, p. 761; *A Decade Of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1941-1949*, Washington 1985, p. 13.

³⁸ E. B. Bukey, *Hitlerovo Rakúsko. Ľudový postoj v ére nacizmu 1938-1945*, Bratislava 2003, p. 296-298.

occupy the smallest of the proposed occupation zones in Germany. The Soviet group, however, had a completely different idea of how to address this situation, and three days after the British introduced a draft plan under which the Allies were to occupy, and together manage, post-war Austria, submitted a Soviet proposal for a tripartite occupation in Austria. US guidelines by J. Winant submitted on March 8th, significantly differed in all areas from the two previous proposals, stating that Austria, together with the whole of France and Southern Germany, should be managed under the exclusive tutelage of the United States³⁹.

Regarding the attitude of the Allies to the post-war public administration system in Austria, it should be noted that under the Moscow Declaration Austria was to acquire special status - it had to be treated as a liberated country, although it was considered a wartime ally of Germany. It appeared that because Austria had been annexed by the Third Reich before the outbreak of World War II, therefore the Allied powers were not directly at war with Austria as an independent country. Therefore, the British memorandum submitted at the EAC by W. Strang on May 31st, 1944, stated that the control system in the country had to be "*much friendlier than in Germany.*" As in Germany, however, the emphasis was on the denazification and demilitarization of the country, whereby the British counted on the fact that Allied troops would be withdrawn from Austria sooner than from German territory. It was based on the assumption that the attitude of the local population towards the allied forces would be positive because people had had several years of negative experiences with the presence of Nazi troops. In contrast to Germany, the primary task of the Allies in Austria should be the operationalization of a central control, which appeared to be quite complicated due to the fact that since 1939 the country had been administered from Berlin. It was therefore very likely that the core of the new government would be formed from exiled leaders. Ultimately the British proposal was to restore the Republic of Austria and aid its progressive integration into international structures. In the ensuing debate Strang added to the memorandum stating that the British were willing to compromise and accept the Soviet proposal for a tripartite occupation in Austria. Winant agreed with this proposal too, although he, as the US representative in the EAC, in the long

³⁹ E. L. Erickson, *The Zoning of Austria*, [in:] *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (Jan., 1950), vol. 267, p. 106-107.

term suffered from a lack of relevant information from Washington. Mostly he could only respond to the views presented by his Soviet and British counterparts⁴⁰. Therefore, the British Embassy in the US, requiring a clear position in this case, turned directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs C. Hull. While the British considered this, they pointed out that if the United States was seriously considering a common management of Austria, they would to commit not only competent military units for the occupation of the country, but also provide administrative capacities for the establishment of military rule and the establishment of the control system⁴¹.

Shortly afterwards – on June 24th – Secretary of State C. Hull sent to London a new, short and concise drafted proposal concerning the political handling of Austria⁴². According to the authors of the document Austria had to be incorporated into international structures as an independent democratic state, while the United States were required to economically support Austria in the long-term under the condition that the Habsburgs remained without any power. When it came to the border with Czechoslovakia, it should return to the form of 1937, i.e. to the period before the connecting of the countries to Germany. Creators of the proposal held the belief that there were still ideas within the Austrian population that promoted an attachment of the areas around Třeboň and Mikulov to Austria. According to the census of 1930, it should consist of about 61,000 inhabitants with a predominance of German nationality (up to 85% of the local population). The US, however, did not encourage such a solution because the attachment of Třeboň would cross the communication links between České Velenice and Pilsen (Plzeň). Moreover, the separation of Mikulov from Czechoslovak territory would rupture not only an important railway line in southern Moravia between Břeclav and Znojmo (part of the Prague-Brno-Vienna route), but would also complicate the traffic on the river Thaya (Dyje)⁴³.

⁴⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1944. General Volume I*, Washington, D.C. 1966, p. 227-230 and 231. Note: Also the President Roosevelt provisionally agreed with a tripartite control of Austria, which he orally confirmed to Winant during his visit in Washington on May 26, 1944.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 434-435.

⁴² Originally, the proposal was broader, but later it was condensed into 32 points; *ibid.*, p. 437-449.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 440.

The US side also confirmed their definitive approval of a common US-British-Soviet occupation. They stated that in the event an Austrian Government (probably formed from exiles) would not be created immediately after the liberation, then the Allies had to form an interim military administration that would have to replace a certain mechanism of allied civilian control as quickly as possible. Like the British, the Americans did not plan on maintaining Allied occupation forces in Austria in the long term. An important requirement, which foreshadowed the later fate of Austria, was a desire for the de facto abolition of the Austrian armed forces, as the authoritarian organisations of the state should consist only of police made up exclusively of citizens with original Austrian nationality. Within the denazification program, Germans acting in Austria who were associated with an active involvement in the Nazi system had to be immediately repatriated to the homeland. The action of the Allied occupation forces in the country should, according to the conception of Washington, lead to the holding of free parliamentary elections related to the subsequent formation of a new independent Austrian government which should take responsibility for the development of the state⁴⁴.

During the next three months two other proposals were submitted at the negotiating table. The first was a project of the British delegation, which had observed only a minimal interest by the US in effectively solving the issue of the governance of Austria. Therefore, in August it submitted a memorandum in which it had calculated a division of Austria into only two sectors - a British one, which should include the area of Tyrol, Styria and the Salzburger Land, and a Soviet one, which should include Upper and Lower Austria, and whereby Vienna should be managed trilaterally with the help of US troops⁴⁵. The second proposal, this time American, felt more like a directive than a serious military plan for trilateral cooperation. It was prepared by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the grounds that the EAC was not longer able to agree on unified common guidelines, and the document only took into account Anglo-American ideas. This proposal was formally addressed to the US State Department and British Embassy in Washington, and was sent to Winant "*only for information*" to inform the other members of the board. The document did not mention a division of Austria into two

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 442–444.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 458–459.

occupation zones at all. Instead it disrupted the previously established organizational structure of considerations on the establishment and functioning of the occupation zones in Austria⁴⁶. Acceptance of such a plan by the Soviet delegation would therefore be difficult to imagine, and, furthermore, it was becoming clear that the Red Army would reach Vienna sooner than Anglo-American troops. Therefore, for tactical reasons, the British government suggested to Washington that they jointly force Moscow to accept an agreement under which the army of state which would occupy Vienna first would immediately invite representatives of the other two Allied powers to the Tripartite Control Commission⁴⁷. Such a step, however, was too transparent and therefore, Soviet Foreign Minister V. Molotov made it openly clear to the US embassy in Moscow that the Soviet government considered the solution to the issue of the creation of the Tripartite Control Commission in Vienna exclusively an EAC task, and not one for the military authorities of the western Allied powers. He also expressed the expectation that in these circumstances the question of the occupation zones in Austria would be clarified.

An interesting opinion on what position the US should take in the case of Austria was expressed by J. Winant in a letter dated December 8th, 1944, which was addressed to the newly appointed Foreign Minister Edward Stettinius. According to Winant the United States needed to pursue two main priorities in small countries: the first was to support the independence of these countries. The second goal was more complicated and was associated with the recognition that local conflicts taking place on completely opposite ends of the globe could dramatically shake up global political stability. As an example he submitted that twice in the last 25 years the United States had been drawn into a world war because of conflicts on the European continent, but in neither one of them did the US have any control of events that ultimately resulted in direct US military involvement. In light of those circumstances Winant called on the Minister to reconsider his previous attitude and suggested he should assent to an American occupation zone in Austria⁴⁸. In this opinion he was paradoxically encouraged by the Soviet representative in the EAC, F. Gusev, who, during informal talks, made it clear that without an American zone and without the direct presence of

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 461.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 466–467.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 477.

their military forces, the United States could only minimally affect the subsequent political developments in the country⁴⁹. Stettinius eventually concurred with Winant's considerations, but the peculiarity of the situation is illustrated by the fact that Winant did not have to make greater efforts in this regard in the EAC, because the Soviet proposal submitted in November 1944 directly counted with such an eventuality: i.e. dividing Austria into three occupation zones and also Vienna being divided into three zones according to the example of Great Berlin⁵⁰.

When it came to the French occupation zone, the representative of the EAC R. Massigli initially assumed that only a small French contingent was likely to be deployed in Vienna, as the priority for Paris remained the undertaking of the occupation zone in Germany. A change occurred at the end of January 1945 however, when the French, through the British government, asked for support in the allocation of their own occupation zone in Austria. In the debate on this issue the British representative in the commission, W. Strang, proposed a technical solution – the undertaking of control of Tirol and Vorarlberg, which lay in the American zone, by French troops, while he put forward a detailed plan of operation for a Quadripartite control mechanism in Austria⁵¹.

Dividing the country into different occupation zones was an oppressive task for the Allies, and in the demarcation of the occupation zones of the capital Vienna Western powers encountered one major logistical problem. For the US and Britain it was vital from a strategic point of view that their troops and staff resident in Vienna were provided with a direct link to the home country. This was only possible through an airport with sufficient capacity, and of the three major airports two were to be managed by the Soviets and one by the French. Although the Americans did have one or two smaller airports available in their zone, these, however, could not cater for the landing of heavy four-engine bombers, nor the cargo aircraft needed for ensuring the supply of necessary materials. Therefore, in April 1945 Secretary of State Dean Acheson instructed Winant to propose a modification to the boundaries of the urban occupation zones so that the United States

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 472.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 471–472 and 478; E. L. Erickson, *The Zoning*, p. 109.

⁵¹ *Foreign relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1945. European Advisory Commission, Austria, Germany, Volume III*. Washington, D.C. 1968, (hereinafter *FRUS 1945*), p. 1, 13, 17 and 41.

would control the area around Schwechat airport, along with all of its infrastructure, and that the airport would also be available to other states' occupation forces⁵².

One of the priorities of the Western Allies in Austria was to strive for the earliest possible appointment of quadripartite military government, whose primary role should be to supervise the severing of links with Germany, and limiting its influence in the country. Another important aspect was related to this – the Americans and British refused to recognize the right of domestic or exiled Austrian groups to create a post-war government, unless the Austrian people could elect their own political representatives in free elections. Therefore Winant and Strang exerted pressure on Gusev to ensure that the Soviet delegation would not block the resolution on the establishment of a joint supervisory authority that would manage the country at the most critical time – from the liberation of Vienna until the surrender of Germany⁵³. However, the situation began to become complicated soon after the Red Army arrived on Austrian land. In the notes of April 24th, the Soviet delegation announced to the governments of the US and the UK that it intended to recognize a new government led by the socialist Karl Renner,⁵⁴ because *“the formation of the provisional Austrian Government may require substantial assistance in the struggle for the complete emancipation of Austria from dependence on Germany.”* The western powers considered the Soviet approach unilateral and contrary to the Yalta Declaration on liberated Europe⁵⁵. Nevertheless, on April 27th, 1945 representatives of the Socialist (Social Democrat), Christian and Communist Parties came together in Vienna and proclaimed the Second Republic of Austria. In a published document they officially distanced themselves from Nazi Germany and pledged to build a civil society based on liberal democracy⁵⁶. Just two days later Moscow recognized the new Renner government.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 22–23, 46 and 65–67.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 38 and 43–44.

⁵⁴ Stalin knew very well Renner's inter-war career and he knew that at this time Renner enthusiastically welcomed Austrian Anschluss. Not surprisingly, therefore, at the mention of Renner Stalin responded by saying, „What, that old traitor is still alive?“ Even more remarkable is the supplement aptly characterizing the thinking and the interests of then Soviet leadership: „He's just the man we need!“ Z. Poláčková, *Politická situácia*, p. 59.

⁵⁵ *FRUS 1945*, p. 94–95; *Dějiny diplomacie*, p. 547.

⁵⁶ E. B. Bukey, *Hitlerovo Rakúsko*, p. 322–323.

However this complicated the issue of identifying the individual occupation zones within Vienna. The end of the war did not bring a positive change, nor did the Soviets subsequently permitted visit of the Anglo-American-French delegation to Vienna in June (the originally scheduled earlier arrival of Western experts to Vienna was undesirable to the Soviets). On the instructions of local Soviet military commanders, delegation members were not allowed to see anything except strictly limited areas of the capital. Moreover, the American and British Permanent Mission in the Austrian capital received a command to leave Vienna not later than June 10th or 11th from Soviet Marshal Fyodor Tolbuchin. As Churchill mentioned about the situation in Austria: *“No one except the Russians has any power in it and even mere diplomatic laws are not granted to anybody. If we submit in that case, we will need to consider Austria as part of the Sovietised half of Europe”*⁵⁷.

The British Prime Minister considered the Austrian problem of the utmost importance, and therefore he proposed to US President Harry Truman⁵⁸ – as a form of pressure on the Soviet delegation – that he should condition the departure of Anglo-American troops from those areas in Germany which belonged to the Soviet occupation zones to coincide with when the Soviet troops should withdraw from the territory of Austria which, according prior agreement, had to be submitted to the western occupation powers. Truman initially hesitated because the agreement drawn up and agreed by the EAC in 1944 excluded that the issue of the withdrawal of US troops could be linked with the solving of other unrelated problems. Truman, while not welcoming an escalation of tensions between the Allies, on the other hand did not want to back down from the Soviets on the issue of Austria, and therefore ultimately agreed with Churchill’s proposal. He decided to send Stalin a diplomatically worded letter in which he suggested that all three Supreme Allied Commanders should release their armies’ guidelines, under which their troops would have to pull back to their particular occupation zones. The innovation was that in the case of Austria he admitted that the definition of particular occupation zones in Vienna could be completed quicker if the resolution of this issue could be carried out by competent commanders operating on the spot. Churchill also sent his own

⁵⁷ *FRUS 1945*, p. 132.

⁵⁸ Harry Truman took the presidential post of USA on April 12, 1945 after the death of F. D. Roosevelt.

letter to Stalin in which he reported on a willingness to pull back British troops from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany. At the end of the letter, however, he remarked to Stalin that he expected a similar instruction from him, “*that on the same day when British movements in Germany start, at the same time Russian troops begin to pull back from that part of Austria, which the European Advisory Commission essentially has appointed as part of the British sector.*” In his reply Stalin agreed to the proposal. However he fixed the date for pulling back troops as July 1st instead of June 21st, due to the participation of Soviet commanders at the ceremonial military parade in Moscow⁵⁹.

The agreement reached at the highest level enabled progress in resolving outstanding issues in Austria to begin and within a few days the EAC finally came to a successful conclusion. On July 1st, the pulling back of armies into their occupation zones actually began and on July 4th, 1945 Soviet troops freed up two major airports for the needs of the Western armies. On the same day the EAC confirmed the “Agreement on the Control Machinery in Austria” under whose terms a mechanism was created of an Allied Council consisting of four commissioners appointed by each military power (and at the same time the main commanders in each occupation zone), then the Executive Committee and staff appointed by the four governments. This system was called the Allied Commission for Austria,⁶⁰ and its role was to ensure the separation of the Austrian administration from the German one. The Commission was only to exist until a central executive body coming from the free parliamentary elections was created. Unlike Germany, where the Allies tried to decentralise the country, in Austria they strove for opposite – to maintain unity among relatively small provinces⁶¹. A significant condition from the point of view of the Western powers was that the Allied Council, despite the existence of Renner’s government, reserved the right to decide all important Austrian issues. The Allied Council used this in September 1945, when in a statement it confirmed the conditions of the Moscow Declaration, although it did not mention the Renner

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 132–137; W. Churchill, *Druhá světová válka VI. Triumf a tragédie*, Praha 1995, p. 583–587.

⁶⁰ *Dějiny diplomacie*, p. 582.

⁶¹ *Foreign relations of the United States: diplomatic papers: the Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945, Volume I*. Washington, D.C. 1960, p. 351–355; Z. Poláčková, *Politická situácia*, p. 57–58.

Government's situation. The Council also agreed on a program of the denazification, democratisation and economic reconstruction of the country⁶².

Only five days after the approval of the Agreement on the Control Machinery on July 9th, 1945 "The Agreement on Zones of Occupation in Austria and the Administration of the City of Vienna" was signed at the EAC headquarters. On October 1st, 1938 Austria was divided into four occupation zones, starting from the state inland border of provinces. The North-Eastern occupation zone consisting of Lower Austria, Burgenland and the part of Upper Austria situated north of the Danube devolved to the Soviets. The Northwest Zone (the southern part of Upper Austria, Salzburg and a small part of northern Styria) was controlled by American troops. The British managed the southern zone; almost the whole of Styria, Carinthia and the Eastern Tyrolean district of Linz and the French received Tyrol and Vorarlberg⁶³. Similarly, Vienna was divided into four occupation zones; the only exception was the centre of the city – Innere Stadt – which was to be occupied jointly. Responsibility for managing the entire city rested on the shoulders of an inter-allied body – the Komandatur – made up of four commanders appointed by the victorious powers. The agreement included a provision that the Soviet troops would release Tulln airport for the needs of US troops and that they would place Schwechat airport under British administration, so it could be utilised by the French army. In Addition the EAC wrote a short accompanying commentary to the document that included measures of a political nature (joint use of the roads in Vienna, free movement of people), but also regulated the conditions for accommodation, training and the use of recreation facilities by members of military units operating in the area of the capital⁶⁴.

It is highly likely that if there had not been an agreement among the Allies about the division of the country into occupation zones managed not only by the Soviet Union, but by the western powers too, Austria would have suffered the same fate of sovietisation, as in the case of Czechoslovakia and East Germany (later the GDR). Regarding the post-war reconstruction of public life, strict denazification measures began shortly after their initiation

⁶² E. B. Bukey, *Hitlerovo Rakúsko*, p. 323.

⁶³ J. Wanner, *Spojené státy a evropská válka 1939–1945. Díl III. Zápas o Evropu*, Praha 2002, p. 148.

⁶⁴ *FRUS 1945*, p. 158–159.

to induce resistance; these manifestations were particularly noticeable in Salzburg and Upper Austria, where the US military administration stubbornly tried to gather detailed data about members of the Nazi party. The subsequent bureaucratic chaos resulting from the organization's inability enabled many big leaders of the Nazi ideology to escape, while only "small fish" were excluded from public life. Only after the Renner Government, to its amazement, discovered that a not insignificant part of the population – 600,000 – was registered Nazis along with their dependent family members, did the Austrian Government recognize that economic recovery could not work without including "*harmless party members and soldiers who believed they had acted their duty*". A strange combination of the Moscow Declaration and the gradually deepening Cold War finally allowed the founders of the Second Republic to lay the foundations of a functioning state, while avoiding the fate of defeated Germany. Under its own efforts the Austrian government managed to convince the former allies to sign the State Treaty of 1955, to obtain the status of a neutral country, and to negotiate the departure of the Allied troops, thus ending a period of seventeen years during which Austria was occupied by foreign troops⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ E. B. Bukey, *Hitlerovo Rakúsko*, p. 323–324 and 326.

Slovakia, Austria and the Allies during the Years of World War II

The position of Slovakia and Austria in international relations during the Second World War had a different character – whereas for the first time in its history Slovakia gained its (limited) autonomy, Austria lost its independence and became an integral part of the German Reich. At the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the USA, USSR and Great Britain in October 1943 in Moscow, however, an agreement was reached: Austria was to acquire a unique status in the post-war period: although it was perceived as a war ally of Germany, Austria should still be treated as a free and again independent country after the war. The post-war fate of Slovakia was quite the opposite: in agreement with the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, the Allied Powers confirmed the restoration of the pre-conditions of the Munich Agreement, according to which the First Slovak Republic ceased to exist after the defeat of Germany in May 1945.

Translated by: Marián Manák