

## **Issue of Czechoslovak radio in struggle against Hungarian and German propaganda**

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*Abstract:* Radio as a tool of political propaganda had introduced a new dimension in ideological struggle between Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) and neighbouring countries. Since its establishment, CSR became a target of hostile propaganda spreading namely by Hungary. Technological progress during the second decade of 20th century enabled the radio to become increasingly popular influencing growing segment of population. Caustic relations between both countries had resulted from reluctance of Hungary to accept the Treaty of Trianon. Hungarian authorities determined to reverse inclusion of Slovakia to Czechoslovak Republic, focused foreign policy and state propaganda upon goal to achieve revision, which would result in establishment of status quo ante. This aim was supported by a significant number of Hungarians living in the Southern Slovakia. Therefore, political and cultural activities of ethnic Hungarians were judged by Czechoslovak authorities with suspicion and in cases when they were classified as irredentist, state security agencies suppressed them. On interstate level both countries waged ideological war, accusing each other of hostile acts. In this state of affairs radio gained an increasing importance. Constant improvement of quality and decreasing price made radio a valuable tool of political propaganda. Unlike other forms of propaganda (newspapers, leaflets, books, public speeches, etc.), radio broadcast was impossible to stop from penetrating state boundary. Significance of radio propaganda between Czechoslovakia and Hungary was increased by geographical closeness of both countries which facilitated spreading of radio signal. In addition, radio broadcast was not limited strictly to political issues. Popularity among population was reinforced by its ability to provide a broad scale of various programs such as music, sport, religion and others, which had been influencing ideological outlook listeners. Submitted paper analyzes various aspects of role of radio in Hungarian cross-border propaganda and endeavours of Czechoslovak security authorities to minimize its impact. The paper is mainly composed of documents deposited in Slovak and Czech archives complemented by Czechoslovak contemporary press.

*Keywords:* radio propaganda in context of Czechoslovak – Hungarian relations, measures of Czechoslovak authorities to curb irredentist Hungarian radio programs, impact of radio upon political development during third decade of twentieth century.

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During the second decade of the 20th century a new phenomenon emerged – a radio. This technical device enabled, till then, unknown form of spreading news, music, entertainment, religious broadcasts, political propaganda and plethora of other radio programs. From its modest beginnings, radio, which became available to only a limited number of owners, as a result of technical progress, gradually became a medium affecting a constantly growing public.<sup>1</sup> Radio ushered a new era which influenced an increasing number of people. Hence, in the atmosphere of growing nationalism in interwar Europe, radio gradually became a valuable and in certain circumstances irreplaceable tool of political propaganda. Unlike periodical press which was censored and if considered threatening state interests, the institutions performing censure were authorized to eliminate inadmissible articles, it was impossible to stop radio waves crossing state boundaries.

Because of strained relations between Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) and Hungary, Czechoslovak security institutions had closely monitored Hungarian radio broadcasting, which was viewed as a potential threat to security of the Republic. Content of Hungarian radio programs was perceived as hostile to Czechoslovakia, mainly in the Southern Slovakia, which bordered Hungary and was populated by a large number of ethnic Hungarians.

For state authorities, the only way to curb a negative impact of radio propaganda from Hungary was to detect unauthorized private radios in Slovakia, confiscate these devices and punish their owners.

Radio receiver was viewed by state authorities as important device, which contributed to forming ideological views of public and therefore potentially dangerous to security of state. Consequently, legal ownership of radio was allowed only to persons after verification of their “political reliability”. The only possibility to buy a radio receiver was to obtain approval. On October 14, 1924, the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs issued concessions only to persons who obtain consent from local police departments.<sup>2</sup> As a result, a large number of people judged to be “politically unreliable”, was excluded from legal possession of radios. Hence, denial

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<sup>1</sup> According to historian Z. Kárník, at the beginning of radio broadcast “Initially there were only 42 registered concessionaires, because radios were expensive, unreliable and operating costs were high. But surprisingly, the rapidity of increase of radio listeners was without parallel... During thirties growth was constantly progressing, in year 1937 the number of concessionaires crossed 1 000 000 and on October 30, 1938, reached 1 128 055 persons. This was a number, which bear comparison with influence of press.” KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk: *České země v éře První republiky (1918-1938)*. Díl první. Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918-1929). Dějiny českých Zemí. Praha : Libri, 2000, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> Slovak National Archive (SNA) Bratislava, fund (f.) The Police Directory (PD) in Bratislava, box (b.) 583, no. 69709/1924.6. *Concession for buying radio receiver.*

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to receive a concession led to infringement of regulation on part of population – a result was illegal construction of radio receivers. This resulted in an unceasing struggle carried on by police against illegal proprietors of radios in Slovakia – a struggle, in which state institutions were not very successful.

Another way to pressure Hungary to avoid hostile radio propaganda was criticism of Czechoslovak diplomacy in regard to Hungarian policy at the League of Nations. However, despite repeated complains, it was to no avail.

Programs broadcasted by Hungarian radio in public were prohibited. The Presidium of the Provincial Office in Bratislava instructed police to impose repressive measures (criminal complaint, revocation of license, fines) against persons who displayed radio receivers in windows, balconies and other open places and played programs in Hungarian language.<sup>3</sup>

To gain evidence about content of Hungarian radio propaganda, security agencies were authorized to gather information about content of Hungarian broadcasting.<sup>4</sup>

During the late 20's, radio became cheaper and number of owners of radios increased. To attract their prospective customers, store proprietors frequently tuned receivers to Hungarian radio station with aim to get attention of customers.<sup>5</sup> The Presidium of the Provincial Office in Bratislava instructed security authorities to eliminate radio broadcasts from Hungary. Persons responsible for playing Hungarian radio programs in public were prosecuted and their concessions revoked.<sup>6</sup> However, this measure was not very successful because Hungarian radio programs were very popular among ethnic Hungarians and restriction had often been ignored. Popularity of Hungarian broadcast was considerable not only because the closeness of language of minority Hungarians in Slovakia and Hungarians in Hungary, but also because the radio station in Budapest was clearly audible in Southern Slovakia when compared to weak signal of radio station in Bratislava. This

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<sup>3</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. 59/00/29 prez. *Hungarian propaganda in radio.*

<sup>4</sup> For example, on June 8, 1928, the County Office in Nitra instructed all security authorities in the County to prevent broadcast with irredentist content by Hungarian radio. State Archive (SA) Nitra, branch office (b.o.) Bojnice, f. District Office (DO) Prievidza, no. 4109/1928 prez. *Irredenta in Hungarian Radio.*

<sup>5</sup> Occurrence of public broadcasting of radio programs from Hungary in Tornaľa, where a large segment of population consisted of Hungarian minority members, led the Police Directory (PD) in Košice to prohibit listening public programs from Hungary, arguing that this type of broadcast threatened security of state. SA Banská Bystrica, f. DO Šafárikovo, b. 2, no. 29.126/28 prez.

<sup>6</sup> SA Banská Bystrica, f. DO Šafárikovo, b. 2, no. 6370/28 prez. *Hungarian propaganda in radio.*

became a target of frequent complains of cultural organizations in Slovakia as well as Slovak periodicals.<sup>7</sup>

The Presidium of the Provincial Office in Bratislava endeavoured to gain detailed knowledge about content and time schedule of Hungarian radio programs judged as “irredentist”. In a circular letter issued on September 5, 1928, the Presidium of the Provincial Office instructed security authorities to prepare reports about Hungarian radio broadcasting “irredentist” programs. Gained information were planned to be used as evidence for accusations blaming Hungary of spreading hostile anti-Czechoslovak propaganda.<sup>8</sup> With aim to gain information about Hungarian propagation in air, the Provincial Office ordered subordinate agencies to pay attention not only to political propaganda, but also to Hungarian programs focused on Hungarian history, literature and poetry, if these were describing alleged injustice committed against Hungary after the First World War.<sup>9</sup>

In atmosphere of strained relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Hungarian radio propaganda, besides rousing hostility against CSR in ranks of ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia, was perceived by security authorities as a tool of spreading negative attitude against CSR in Hungary proper and creating tense relation between both nations.

There were also indices that Hungarian radio was engaged in activities of military type. According to information providing by the Czechoslovak Embassy, radio station in Budapest included in its broadcast weekly course of the Morse Code, which could be utilized for transmitting secret messages in situation when relation between both countries slide to open conflict.<sup>10</sup>

Hungarian radio programs, which criticized minority policies of Czechoslovak government, were denounced by Slovak periodicals, namely newspapers supporting coalition of ruling Czech and Slovak political parties.<sup>11</sup> Hungary, however, also complained about hostile Czechoslovak propaganda. Budapest expressed dissatisfaction about existence

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<sup>7</sup> On occasion of installation of new powerful radio station in Budapest, periodical *Slovenský denník* criticized dissatisfactory quality of Slovak radio stations in comparison to Hungary: “There is no doubt that against Hungarian irredentistic radio is possible to fight only with equally powerful radio ... new Hungarian radio station presently began transmission, which is clearly audible in Bratislava... Slovakia will be not able to defend itself unless will obtain powerful radio stations.” O nový rozhlas na Slovensku. Otázka nových vysielačích staníc. In: *Slovenský denník*, 24 April 1928, vol. XI, no. 96, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. 5.900/29 prez. *Hungarian irredenta in radio*.

<sup>9</sup> SA Banská Bystrica, f. DO Šafárikovo, b. 3, no. 15.416/28 prez. *Hungarian irredenta in radio*.

<sup>10</sup> SA Nitra, b.o. Bojnice, f. DO Prievidza, b. 22, no. 20.643/prez. *Hungarian radio propaganda*.

<sup>11</sup> Irredenta v maďarskom rozhlase. Opatrenie našich úradov proti nej. In: *Slovenská krajina*, 25 May 1929, vol. 1929, no. 103, p. 1. Regional periodical *Slovenský východ* as the most efficient way to counter Hungarian radio propaganda, perceived construction of network of

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of Czechoslovak radio in Arad, Romania, which allegedly served as the Czechoslovak propaganda centrum. The aim of this station, according Budapest, was to instigate Slovak population living in Hungary against Hungarian authorities.<sup>12</sup>

With goal to gain apprehension about impact of the Hungarian broadcast, The Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs in Bratislava on August 13, 1932, required the Presidium of the Police Department in Bratislava to evaluate what effect had political speeches and other radio broadcast with "irredentist" content upon political orientation of Hungarian population living in Slovakia.<sup>13</sup>

Weak broadcasting power of the Slovak radio became a target of opposition media, namely periodical *Slovák*, which criticized Bratislava and Košice radio stations for being incapable to cover whole territory of Slovakia. Radio listeners of the Central and Southern Slovakia were allegedly unable to listen Bratislava and Košice, or in the best case only very feebly. *Slovák* also complained that a majority of programs were broadcasted in Czech langue, which was "discriminating" Slovak listeners.<sup>14</sup>

Worsening of geopolitical situation in Europe in the third decade of 20th century led to the increase of radio propaganda against Czechoslovakia. In that regard the most threatening was imposition of Nazi regime in Germany, which initiated rapid build-up of military and ushered aggressive propaganda mainly against Czechoslovakia.

Till year 1933, main attention of Czechoslovak security institutions was given to radio programs broadcasted from Hungary. However, internal and foreign policy of Nazi Germany constituted far greater danger to CSR. Growing aggressiveness of Germany and its determination to revise status quo in Europe was not to be taken lightly. Under pretense that Germany is entitled to unite all Germans in one state, German dictator Adolf Hitler usurped right to interfere with internal affairs of all states on territory of which German minorities were living. This constituted a direct threat to territorial integrity of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Hitler's boisterous speeches when he had demanded liquidation of the existing status quo with growing audacity, influenced also Hungarian nationalists, because for them substantial revision of geopolitical situation in Europe, promised to realize foreign goals of Hungary. Consequently,

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powerful radio stations broadcasting interesting and popular programs in Slovak language. Nepriateľská propaganda rozhlasom na Slovensku. In: *Slovenský východ*, 28 May 1929, vol. 1929, no. 122, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic (AMFA CR), II section 1918 – 1939, III row, b. 325, no. 3696. *Radio in service of Hungarian revision propaganda*.

<sup>13</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. 438-Pp-VII-32, 1932. *Hungarian radio propaganda*.

<sup>14</sup> Dost' už maďarského a českého rozhlasu! In: *Slovák*, 15 September 1932, vol. XI, no. 217, p. 3.

Hungarian radio reacted by intensifying hostile propaganda against Czechoslovak Republic. Consequently, tone and content of broadcast from Budapest led to increased criticism by Slovak media.<sup>15</sup>

In such political environment use of radio as influential instrument in spreading political propaganda enhanced attention of Czechoslovak security authorities. The Presidium of the Provincial Office in Bratislava on July 28, 1933, issued a circular letter, which instructed state authorities to make sure, that owners of radios will be prohibited to allow broadcast of Hungarian, German and Russian radio stations in Slovakia. Authorities were obliged to make sure that violation of this measure will result in immediate revoking of radio license.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, with aim to curb broadcasts from Hungary in restaurants, stores, bars and similar places, the Provincial Office instructed security agencies to impose repressive measures (criminal prosecution, revocation of license) against persons who allow broadcasting programs in Hungarian language in places where they can be heard by public.<sup>17</sup>

With penetration of radios to all spheres of private and public life, radio receivers became also broadly used in schools. To prevent use of radios to listen unauthorized programs from abroad, the Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment issued on 5 May, 1933, instructions, which regulated use of radios in schools. According to instructions, radios could be used only for broadcasting educational programs or programs broadcasted by the Czechoslovak Radio, devoted to important social and political events such as speeches of the President of the Republic, members of the Czechoslovak Government, programs devoted to commemoration of holidays etc. It was inadmissible to listen foreign radio programs, mainly programs focused on political developments. Responsibility of school directors was to implement these instructions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For example, newspaper *Národný týždenník* wrote, that, „*Budapest radio station began more sharply instigate against Czechoslovakia, then before*“. Štvanie maďarského rozhlasu. In: *Národný týždenník*, 24 November 1933, vol. XI, no. 47, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. 31.575. *Use of radios for gainful activity in public places.*

<sup>17</sup> The Presidium of the Provincial Office in Bratislava informed subordinated agencies that, „*lately increased broadcasting unacceptable political speeches from abroad. Therefore, the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, instructed owners of radio receivers to exclude foreign radio programs if they are undermining public order, or if they are arousing public outrage, or instigate public against unity and integrity of Czechoslovak state, its democratic form, its Constitution, public institutions or against persons because their nationality, race or religion... Transgression of this regulation will result in removal of radio concession... Security agencies are obliged to consistently pursue above mentioned regulation.*“ SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. 19.872/33. *Misconduct of radio to political agitation from abroad.*

<sup>18</sup> SA Košice, f. DO Rožňava, b. 24, no. 21.188/1932. *Misuse of radio for inadmissible political agitation from abroad (in schools).*

In Slovakia, the main institution producing programs was the Radiojournal Bratislava.<sup>19</sup> In democratic political system of CSR, Radiojournal was influenced by political parties, endeavouring to popularize their ideological agenda in air. Program structure of Radiojournal was the main target of left oriented periodicals such as communist *Slovenské zvesti* and *Robotnícke noviny*. They criticized institution, because, allegedly, it was not able to “keep pace with the rest of the world” and was giving only small attention to anti-fascist propaganda. Another cause for concern, according to *Robotnícke noviny*, was construction of powerful radio stations in Hungary in contrast to weak transmitters in Slovakia.<sup>20</sup> Also leaders of Slovak opposition parties (Andrej Hlinka, Martin Rázus) criticized policy of the central government, and in the Czechoslovak Parliament complained against weak broadcasting power of Slovak radio stations in comparison to Hungarian transmitters. They requested the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs to make sure that radio stations, powerful enough to counter Hungarian propaganda, will be built in Slovakia.<sup>21</sup> Weak transmission power of radio stations located in Bratislava and Košice was defined as the main reason that almost whole of the Central and Southern Slovakia was exposed to radio programs from Budapest. They argued that Hungarian propaganda was unacceptably compromising sovereignty of Czechoslovakia and negatively influencing attitude of Hungarian minority members toward the Republic.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Radiojournal Bratislava initiated first program in August 1926. In April 1927 started regular broadcasting in Košice.

<sup>20</sup> *Robotnícke noviny* criticized situation in Slovakia in regard to radio broadcast and content of programs of the Radiojournal: „Today is expected start of operation of gigantic radio station in Hungary, which via fascist-irredentistic false propaganda, aimed against Czechoslovakia, will cover the whole our territory... Workers and progressively oriented population of Slovakia must not passively accept misuse and negligence of Bratislava radio station.” *Odbočka Radiojournalu v Bratislave, ochrankyňou reakcie?* In: *Robotnícke noviny*, 23 May 1935, vol. XVII, no. 122, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> According to A. Hlinka and M. Rázus “Hungarian radio stations and radio transmitters in general are technically in comparison to Slovak stations equipped superbly... Budapest is broadcasting daily with power of 120 kw... Slovakia is drown in this flood of Hungarian broadcasting... We are asking Minister of Posts and Telegraphs to build a real Slovak station, which would be in language and spirit Slovak.” *Poslanecká sněmovna N. S. – 1934. III. volební období. 10. Zasedání. Interpelácia A. Hlinku, M. Rázusa a druhov ministromi post a telegramov pre slovenský rozhlas. V Prahe, dňa 6. marca 1934.*

<sup>22</sup> *Slovenský východ*, wrote: „The Budapest Radio can't be to us Slovaks indifferent, because we must take to consideration that inhabitants of the whole Central and Southern Slovakia are affected by relatively weak power of Bratislava a Košice radio stations and therefore tempted to listening Budapest Radio Station, which is stronger than all Slovak radio stations.” *Maďarská rozhlasová propaganda proti ČSR*. In: *Slovenský východ*, 18 May 1935, vol. XVII, no. 122, p. 2.

Worsening political situation led to increase of intensification of radio propaganda and use of radio in facilitating security tasks. On May 2, 1935, the Central Gendarmerie issued instructions for all units that they must be equipped with radios capable of receiving instructions broadcasted by central state institutions. At the same time all gendarmeries were obliged to inform the central authority about events, which in their judgement were necessary to be reported. Besides information which were broadcasted in a simple language, also secret reports were transmitted.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Ministry of Interior instructed all security authorities to report information, which in their judgement can be inimical to security of state.<sup>24</sup>

Foreign radio broadcasting classified by state agencies as dangerous, led Czechoslovak ministries to establish an institution, monitoring Hungarian, German and Polish short-wave radio stations. Monitoring centre was established at the Police Directory in Prague. Decision was made after joint consent of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs on May 6, 1936. The aim of monitoring was to record all speeches and hostile political programs and attacks against CSR in general.

Monitoring agency should record speeches made by leading political representatives of Hungary, Germany and Poland. Attention had also been given to Hungarian and German “patriotic” music programs containing texts which could be perceived as hostile to CSR. The Police Department in Prague was responsible to make sure that monitoring personnel will be absolutely reliable.<sup>25</sup>

In response to constant complains about insufficient broadcasting power of Slovak radio stations, state authorities finally decided to build a new radio transmitter not far from Banská Bystrica, located on hill of Laskomer. Unlike radio stations in Bratislava and Košice, radio Banská Bystrica was not creating its own programs, but should serve as transmitter of programs produced in Bratislava and Košice. Transmitter, named in honor of President T. G. Masaryk, was designed to broadcast in range of 765 meters, which was suitable for mountainous terrain in the Central Slovakia.

A large segment of Czechoslovak political representation, including Prime Minister Milan Hodža, attended opening ceremony on May 24, 1936.<sup>26</sup> According to periodical *České Slovo*, construction of radio station

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<sup>23</sup> SA Košice, b.o. Rožňava, f. DO Rožňava, b. 17, no. 27.632/1935/13. *Radio broadcasting for security service purposes.*

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, b. 17, no. B-2163-26/4. *Radio broadcasting for security service purposes.*

<sup>25</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 582, no. B-2162-5/11-36. *Radio listening service.*

<sup>26</sup> Banskobystrická vysielačka. In: *Slovenský východ*, 16 May 1935, vol. XVIII, no. 115, p. 2.



at Laskomer was a significant step in enhancement of quality radio broadcast in Slovakia, mainly in central part of country.<sup>27</sup> *České Slovo* emphasized significance of newly built transmitter not only as provider of news, culture and educational programs, but also as “*tool of reinforcement of state idea and Czechoslovak unity*”.<sup>28</sup>

As a reaction to increasing political tensions, The Presidium of the Provincial Office dispatched a circular letter to district offices and to the Police Department in Bratislava in which informed about Hungarian illegal short waves radios operating on Slovak territory. Allegedly, these radios were situated primarily in vicinity of airports and could be activated in case of conflict between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. State agencies were obliged to report existence of any illegal shortwave radio.<sup>29</sup> According to *České Slovo*, duty of “Radio-electric Control Service” was to register legal radio amateurs and control content of their broadcasts. Even more important task was search for illegal radio stations, which could spread anti-state propaganda or disclose secret information.<sup>30</sup>

Significance of radio as a propaganda tool was utilized by Czech and Slovak political representatives who in their radio speeches exhorted public to disregard worries in face of increasing tensions during year 1938. The main goal of numerous radio addresses, made namely by the President E. Beneš and the Prime Minister M. Hodža, was to instill an atmosphere of security and deepen conviction that the Republic will overcome hostile intentions of neighbouring states. Frequently were made assurances that pressing problem of ethnic minorities, primarily Germans and Hungarians, will by peacefully solved. In his radio speech broadcasted on March 29, 1938, devoted to the question of status of minorities, Hodža declared that this is problem, which would be solved to satisfaction of minorities.<sup>31</sup>

Invasion of Austria by the German Army in March 1938 was perceived as unexpected and shocking. In reaction to German attack, Hodža, rather overly optimistically, argued that as a result of firm stance of public, the position of CSR is better than before.<sup>32</sup> Radio speech uttered by

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<sup>27</sup> The Administration of Posts admitted that „*To enable radio program to be accessible to broadest public possessing even weak radio receivers, it was no other solution then to construct a new transmitter.*” Jaký je význam rozhlasového vysílače v Banské Bystrici. In: *České Slovo*, 5 May 1936, vol. XXVIII, no. 122, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 583, no. 20000/1937. *Secret transmitters in Slovakia.*

<sup>30</sup> Naše rozhlasová propaganda. In: *České Slovo*, 21 March 1937, vol. XXIX, no. 69, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Milan Hodža o naší menšinové politice. Bude uzákoněn soubor menšinových opatření. In: *Národní listy*, 29 March 1938, vol. 78, no. 87, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Prejav dra. Hodžu – Kl'ud občianstva nám pomohol v cudzine. Sme silnejší ako kedysi. In: *A-Zet*, 29 March 1938, vol. II, no. 101, p. 1.

the Prime Minister on September 28, 1938, was positively greeted by a majority of political representation of the Republic. Similarly, Czech and Slovak press reacted approvingly, especially periodicals supporting coalition of ruling political parties. However, opposition daily *Slovák* criticized Hodža's allegedly "exceedingly optimistic attitude" in face of growing danger from Nazi Germany.<sup>33</sup>

Significant political event, enacted during summer months, were municipal election. Worries of state authorities that voting will slide into violence, did not materialized. Electoral process went peacefully. Relieved, government representatives on May 25, 1938, in radio broadcast expressed gratitude to citizens of the Republic for peaceful and dignified course of elections.<sup>34</sup>

However, tensions resulting from aggressive campaign of Germany against Czechoslovakia during summer months of 1938 intensified. With aim to ease tense relations with Germany, on September 11, 1938, the President Beneš in radio speech reassured public that relation with Germany will be successfully managed.<sup>35</sup> President expressed conviction that crisis is not unmanageable and in the end a solution will be found.<sup>36</sup> However, in light of real situation President's words were more wishful than a reflection of reality. After Hitler's speech at Nuremberg Congress on September 12, violence erupted among Sudeten Germans, which resulted in loss of lives. Disturbances indicated that German minority members are obedient tool of Hitler's plans to carry out violent aggression against Czechoslovakia. Despite of violent outburst of German minority members, in radio speech on September 18, Hodža emphasized determination of Czechoslovak government to preserve peace.<sup>37</sup>

With aim to prevent possible panic which could be caused by hostile radio broadcasts from abroad, the Ministry of Interior issued a secret directive to the Directory of Posts and Telegraphs ordering that all owners of radios must hand over these devices to post, telegraph or telephone offices. Reliable personnel should be selected to protect security of stored devices.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Vláda sa nedala poučiť. In: *Slovák*, 30 March 1938, vol. XX, no. 74, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Vláda ďakuje občianstvu štátu. In: *Robotnícke noviny*, 25 May 1938, vol. 35, no. 119, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Prezident republiky vyzýva k pokoju a jednote. In: *Robotnícke noviny*, 11 September 1938, vol. 35, no. 206, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Prezident republiky národom republiky. In: *Slovenský denník*, 11 September 1938, vol. XXI, no. 210, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Milan Hodža jménem ústavních činitelů a celého národa. Plebiscit v Československu nepřijatelný. In: *Domovina*, 19 September 1938, vol. XXIV, no. 218, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PD Bratislava, b. 583, no. 18.692/1938. *Measures regarding restrictions in the field of radioelectric devices.*

To dispel tension that had risen after disturbances in Sudetenland, Hodža in his speech broadcasted on September 18, assured public that government had no other option than suppress violent uprising committed by radical segment of German minority and restored peace and security in the Republic. According to the Prime Minister "*Today it is possible to say, that Czechoslovakia fulfilled all tasks needed to assure security of citizens. It is now responsibility of all others to do the same.*"<sup>39</sup>

Feeble resistance of British and French governments against Germany's intention to annex Sudeten territory, increased worries that territorial integrity of the Republic is seriously threatened. To dispel unsubstantiated hearsays which could become source of panic, the Czechoslovak Radio on September 19, in a special broadcast, denied any concrete results of British – French conference enacted to solve German – Czechoslovak crisis.<sup>40</sup>

However, a hope that worst development of situation can be averted was futile. Czechoslovak government succumbed to Anglo-French demands to fulfil German territorial demands on September 21. Diplomatic representatives of French and British government submitted demarche to the President of the Republic in which it was declared that territories occupied by a majority of members of German majority must be transferred to Germany. In case of refusal, both diplomats stated that Czechoslovakia can't rely on their help and will face Germany alone.<sup>41</sup>

Acceptance of request led to momentous change in Czechoslovak political situation. On September 22, 1938, the Czechoslovak Radio announced demission of existing government and establishment of "government of national concentration".<sup>42</sup> The President summoned representatives of political parties and in agreement with them appointed the Army General Jan Syrový as the head of the new government.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Predseda vlády Dr. Milan Hodža – Budme svorní ve chvíli nejtěžší skoušky. In: *Pražské noviny*, 20 September 1938, vol. 259, no. 216, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Vláda volá k občanům republiky: Vyčkejte v klidu a plněm sebevědomí. In: *Pražské noviny*, 20 September 1938, vol. 259, no. 216, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Československá vláda přijala anglo-francouzský plán. In: *Národní politika*, 22 September 1938, vol. LVI, no. 261, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> „Government of the Republic, burdened by stern demand surrender to dictate of the Western Powers, decided to submit... The new Government will be composed of all segments of state forming public including representatives of the Army, because task of today is to work in disciplined manner in absolute unity of all segments of public and military administration.“ Hodžova vláda podala demisiu. In: *Slovenský denník*, 23 September 1938, vol. XXI, no. 220, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Generál Syrový v čele nové vlády. In: *České slovo*, 23 September 1938, vol. XXX, no. 238, II iss., p. 3.

E. Beneš exhorted public to preserve order and not trust to false rumours.<sup>44</sup> According to the President, it was important to uphold equanimity and above all unity of all citizens in the situation at that time.<sup>45</sup>

Also, in Slovakia prominent political representatives in radio speech broadcasted on 24 September, 1938, exhorted public to preserve calm and trust to government. There was an accent on necessity to uphold unity of Czechs and Slovaks and unfaltering loyalty to the Republic.<sup>46</sup>

British Prime Minister in his pronouncement expressed hope that agreement with A. Hitler will be concluded during second visit of Hitler. However, during his visit, to his surprise and anger, Hitler declared agreement dissatisfactory and submitted more stringed conditions. British Prime Minister agreed to give new demands to Czechoslovak leaders, but asserted that they will surely refuse it. As N. Chamberlain predicted, new demands were refused by Czechoslovak government. To confirm decision to resist, on September 23, at 23.30 p.m., radio announced general mobilization. Course of mobilization was by all periodicals depicted as flawless.<sup>47</sup> Also Great Britain and France displayed determination to resist Germany.

Facing war against united allies, German dictator resorted to negotiation. He invited representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy to Germany to conclude a final solution of Sudeten territory status. Negotiations commenced on September 29, shortly after noon.<sup>48</sup> Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini formally guided conference, but acted strictly according to Hitler's instructions.<sup>49</sup>

Disastrous dictate imposed upon the CSR, which went down in history as the Munich Agreement, initiated a chain of momentous changes

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<sup>44</sup> Rozhlasový projev presidenta republiky dr. Beneše „Šetříme sil, budeme je potřebovat“. In: *České slovo*, 23 September 1938, vol. XXX, no. 238, II issue, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> E. Beneš expressed his trust in solidity of citizenry and announced that he has his plan: „*I am saying again: I see situation clearly and I have my plan. And I have trust in our people, in our nation and state*“. We must preserve calmness, judiciousness and unity. In: *Národní listy*, 23 September 1938, vol. 78, no. 261, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Speaking for Slovak branch of the Republican Party Ján Ursíny declared: „*In these fateful moments all Slovaks and all Czechs aware of gravity of situation, should stay at their places and do not let themselves carry to any acts, detrimental to the State and Nation...We need firm nerves, have full trust to our President, Government and Army and appointed authorities*“. In same sense spoke Martin Mičura, a chairman of Slovak section of the Czechoslovak People's Party, Ján Bečko for the Social Democratic Party, Ján Paulíny Tóth for the Slovak National Party and Milan Sidor for the Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party. *Prejavy slovenských politikov v rozhlase*. In: *Slovenský denník*, 25 September 1938, vol. XXI, no. 220, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> For example: Mobilisace naší armády výrazem nadšeného odhodlání národa. In: *Národní politika*, 25 September 1938, vol. VVI, no. 264, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Čtyři velmoci se radí v Mnichově. In: *Venkov*, 30 September 1938, vol. XXXIII, no. 229, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Oznámenie z konferencie v Mníchove: Mier – dohodnutý! In: *Slovenská politika*, 10 October 1938, vol. XIX, no. 223, p. 1.

Issue of Czechoslovak radio in struggle against Hungarian and German propaganda

leading to dismemberment of the Republic. Further blow to political establishment of CSR was resignation of President E. Beneš.<sup>50</sup>

During the meeting of Slovak political parties convened on October 7 to Žilina, Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party (HSPP) coerced Slovak political subjects, with exception of communists and social democrats, to fuse with HSPP. This was an end of political plurality in Slovakia. Slovak leading politicians naively supposed that they will be spared of loss of territory. However, on November 2, 1938, they realized that Slovakia was only a pawn in geopolitical chessboard of Hitler and Mussolini. In Vienna, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop and Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Galeazzo Ciano decided that the Southern Slovakia inhabited predominantly by ethnic Hungarians would be annexed by Hungary. It was sad duty of Prime Minister of Slovak Government Jozef Tiso to announce this decision, which became known as the Vienna Award in radio broadcast on November 4, 1938.<sup>51</sup> As the Vienna Award documented, Slovakia, though formally independent, fully depended on decision of A. Hitler and it became a vassal state of Nazi Germany in reality.

## **Zhrnutie**

### **K problematike zápasu Československého rozhlasu s maďarskou a nemeckou propagandou**

V druhej dekáde 20. storočia sa začal postupne uplatňovať nový technický vynález – rádio, ktoré v rastúcej miere začalo ovplyvňovať všetky sféry spoločenského života. V rozmedzí jedného decénia sa z takmer neznámeho prístroja vo vlastníctve len niekoľko desiatok osôb rádio stalo nástrojom, ktorý zmenil charakter a dosah informácií zábavných programov a v neposlednom rade aj politickej propagandy. Vzhľadom na nebezpečenstvo hroziace Československu v závere 30. rokov 20. storočia zo strany Maďarska a Nemecka, primárnym cieľom článku je poukázať na pomerne málo známy význam rádio-propagandy a jej úlohy v zápase Československej republiky proti externému ohrozeniu.

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<sup>50</sup> On October 6, 1938, in evening radio speech chairman of the Government Ján Syrový announced resignation of President E. Beneš. Prezident Republiky, Dr. E. Beneš odstúpil. In: *Robotnícke noviny*, 7 October 1938, vol. 35, no. 227, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ministerský predseda dr. Jozef Tiso: Stali sme sa obeťou nespravodlivosti. In: *Slovenský A-zet*, 4 November 1938, vol. II, no. 260, p. 1.