

# Self-determination and Communism in Czechoslovakia 1921-1936

*Igor Jašurek*

*Abstract: The author explores the idea of self-determination among communists through the considerable period of the existence of Czechoslovakia. Its existence significantly influenced communist views on the concept of self-determination. The author identifies several crucial determinants of the development of the principle of self-determination in the communist environment though he chiefly focuses on its dynamics during internal Party struggles for which self-determination appears to be more salient than elsewhere.*

*Keywords: Self-determination, communism, nationalism, autonomy, centralism, federalism, separatism.*

## **A. Introduction**

Through the period of analysis communists adopted several mutually contradictory stances to the existence of Czechoslovakia. From the tentative and hesitant acceptance via open enmity to implacable and loyal protectiveness, their affiliation or distrust served different tactical and political goals due to some ideological difficulties with presenting consistent and unambiguous solutions. As I will argue, the dynamics of changing attitudes depended on the Party's tactics, notably the interpretation and realization of Lenin's views, making ambiguity and inconsistency of marginal importance. A national question, namely the question of self-determination, had the utmost salience, yet to the detriment of a national content. The analysis will focus on the question:

How was a national question, namely concepts of self-determination, subordinated to the communist ideology, developed until the mid 1930s?

My assumption is that the principle of self-determination was a device for internal Party struggles and a national question remained to be subordinated to an overall Party strategy and power struggles within the Party. It is interesting that the Party, peripheral until mid 1930s, without a significant influence and considerable changes in political programs, shows great inner dynamics in case of a national question, regarded as minor. The same question served as a guise for a great purge inside the Party in the beginning of 1950s. This method, perfected after the seizure of power already existed in 1930s, though in less hazardous manner.

There are several crucial determinants to be identified before the analysis itself. The first broad area is the internal environment. Amid the set of internal sub-determinants belong political

struggles of the Party and within the Party, diverse attitudes to the state and its central political doctrine of the indivisible Czechoslovak nation. Also, there was a lack of theoreticians who could thoroughly elaborate the fundamentals of Party's approach to a national question. An incapability and reluctance together with distrust of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (the KSČ) towards further theoretical activities for the sake of ad hoc solutions contributed to theoretical ambiguities. The second area is external, namely the international communist environment as represented by the Comintern. The KSČ had to be fully in tune with its strategy and this was, despite some KSČ's reluctance, true. The changing international political situation also proved to be decisive from the middle of the 1930s for defining the Party tactics.

Before proceeding to my case study, I will focus on Lenin's views on self-determination. The right of self-determination per se brings several other broad problems, namely the one concerning the subject of self-determination, the people and an appropriate setting for exercising the principle that means the state for the people. These are two perspectives of analysis of self-determination.

## **B. Lenin's views on the self-determination**

Lenin's approach to self-determination can be characterized as 'strategic Marxism' (Connor 1984: 30) which is the middle-of-the-road position distinguishing him from the nationalist track within Marxism so as from the classical doctrinaire position mostly rejecting any relevance of nationalism for the proletarian movement.

The fact that, "Lenin was the first to insist, to the international community, that the right of self-determination be established as a general criterion for the liberation of peoples" (Cassese 1995: 14), should be perceived merely as a strategic tool on behalf of the proletarian revolution. As Lenin wrote "We are fighting on the ground of a definite state; we unite the workers of all nations living in this state [Russia]; we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal all possible paths." (Tucker 1975: 164)

However, the concept of self-determination itself blossomed in those days and was favoured by many regardless ideological commitments. Therefore, Lenin attempted to distinguish the Marxist approach by including the possibility of political secession.

Nevertheless, Lenin's major concern was not the principle of self-determination to the point of secession but generating conditions for a successful spread of the socialist revolution. In an attempt to avoid fostering nationalistic aspirations, he constrained conditions to which the principle could be applied. As he wrote, "The right of nations freely to secede must not be

confused with the expediency of secession of a given nation at a given moment.” (Lenin 1947: 53)

Then, the legitimate question touches decision-maker(s) entitled for qualified and responsible judgment. The answer is more than obvious: “The party of the proletariat must decide [...] from the standpoint of the interests of the social development and of the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism.”(Lenin 1947: 53)

It seems that in the light of the previous ‘failure’ of the proletariat, Lenin did not completely trust those whose rights he claimed to defend. Chances of spilling a seething cauldron of nationalism appeared to be high enough not to take the risk. However, Lenin’s ideological heritage was a subject of intensive struggles

### **C. Bohumír Šmeral and the idea of federalism**

The first views on the self-determination adopted by the KSČ after the foundation of the Party in 1921 had come from the first years of Czechoslovakia’s existence and were determined by several factors. Views concerning the official state ideology of the indivisible Czechoslovak nation and the legitimacy of the existence of the state from the communist perspective will therefore be given priority.

The Czech socialist elite (the communist intellectual base predominantly came from the Czech lands in the early days) had been significantly influenced by the Austro-Marxian approach to nationalism, particularly in the case of Bohumír Šmeral, the leader of KSČ 1921-1924.

During the existence of Austria-Hungary, Šmeral held the view of the necessity of a federation of nations (Wheaton 1986: 40) which corresponded with the view of nations as cultural communities as adopted from Otto Bauer. (Bauer 1996: 50-51) Nevertheless, as I will explain below, a distinction should be drawn between his “Monarchist” views and those developed in Czechoslovakia.

It is certainly interesting that Lenin’s opinions on the national question were almost unknown at the time and Šmeral familiarized with them only in 1924, a few years after the foundation of the KSČ. (Jelinek 1983: 5 and 10) The first communist documents reflected the Wilsonian formula of self-determination; expressions such as “Czechoslovak proletariat” or “Slovak proletariat” were used interchangeably with a minimal nationalist connotation. (Jelinek 1983: 7) The questions then will be, what views prevailed within the Party, whether the absence of Lenin’s concept led to different perspectives, notably whether Šmeral’s theoretical views represented an alternative approach toward more nationalistic path. Already in the Monarchy, he

did not think small political units could survive. His ideal was the United Nations of Socialist Europe (Mlynárik 1967: 654) though he proposed more realistic plan as well, based on the principle of federal cantons as seen in Switzerland. (Mlynárik 1967: 657) This view is interesting also from another perspective. As it has been pointed out elsewhere (Mlynárik 1967: 657), despite undisputed radicalism, Šmeral never accepted antagonisms toward the existence of Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, the bourgeois state was a part of a process, another transitional stage toward the successful socialist revolution. As he wrote, „This state is also our state [the proletariat]. We do not want to subvert it but conquer it.“ (Mlynárik 1967: 655)

However, the nationalist Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (the HSĽS, also nicknamed Ľudaks) included into its program the question of autonomous status for Slovakia derived from the right of self-determination already in 1921<sup>1</sup> which led, for Šmeral, to unfavorable comparisons. He considered HSĽS's autonomous initiatives as merely formal without a profound social impact. Hence the only feasible solution was the broadest autonomy for a Slovak population leading to radical social changes within the state. (Šmeral 1921: 658) The Party discussions, however, showed that HSĽS and Šmeral's concept were not so contradictory.

Herein, there are two important circumstances to be pointed out. The first, at the time Šmeral paid almost no attention to issues of autonomy and self-determination during the Party discussions, though the same issues frequently came up during parliamentary debates and in some periodicals. It was explained later that these issues had merely an episodic salience for him. (Mlynárik 1967: 658) Moreover, Šmeral's interpretation of the Slovak nation is not entirely clear. In 1921, the year of the foundation and unification congress of CSPA he proposed in parliament to recognize the existence of a Slovak nation though without practical plans for realization. (Steiner 1973: 42) On the other hand, in his speech on the Unification Congress, while referring to the Czechoslovak proletariat, he talked about the three hundred years lasting non-independence of the nation (Protokol 1981: 103).<sup>2</sup>

Second, standpoints in debates showed that the Party was not unanimous in the question of the autonomy. Karel Kreibich, one of the parliamentary deputies, denied the notion of a national or territorial autonomy or other forms of fragmentation of centralism and demanded strict party discipline. He also explicitly talked about a Czechoslovak nation. (Steiner 1973: 260)

Thus, the Party adopted in its program the key doctrine of a bourgeois regime, the indivisibility of the Czechoslovak nation so as the trend for a strict leadership within the Party

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1925 Slovak People's Party (SPS) was renamed to HSĽS.

<sup>2</sup> *Protokol ustanovujúciho a zlučovacieho sjezdu KSČ 14-16.5. 1921* (1981): 103.

and the state. Furthermore, at the time, “still quite a few Slovak Communists sensed the strong spell of the concept of autonomy. “ (Jelinek 1983: 9) The Party evidently did not share Šmeral’s enthusiasm for federation. In terms of Lenin’s concept of self-determination to secession this could be quite an unfavorable situation for the Bolshevik struggle on the national ground.

However, had the KSCĚ been acquainted with Lenin’s works, it still may have produced considerable confusion in the question of federation since he sent a very unclear signal for adopting an unambiguous stance. Lenin abandoned federation and decentralization because “the centralized big state marks a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disintegration towards the future socialist unity of the world...” (Lenin 1951: 54-55) On the other hand, later he recognized its convenience as a “transitional form to complete union [therefore] it is necessary to strive for closer federal union...” (Lenin 1947: 656)

Lenin used the Soviet situation for his theory. Hence I assume that the difference between the pre-Soviet situation and the one after the seizure of power facing several rivalling nationalities within and against the Soviet regime forced him to modify his previous opinion. However, among other communist cells, interpretations for best-fitting local circumstances may have caused disputes, as in the case of communists in Czechoslovakia (even, stressed again, without knowledge of Lenin’s views). Indeed, it should be pointed out that federation did not mean decentralization. Since Šmeral did not question the overall Party view over the indispensability of a continual shift toward a centralized leadership, yet with some tolerable level of federalism needful for minimizing national tensions within the Party, (“Protokol”1981: 136) his project for broadest autonomous status for Slovakia had ipso facto definite constraints and it was hardly imaginable how such a federation should have served its ‘national’ connotation. The ideological commitment took precedence over any political plans or constructions.

The previously drawn line distinguishing between two different periods of Šmeral’s developing views shows that the national element, previously identified with Bauer’s concept<sup>3</sup> („Protokol“ 1981: 131), was considerably abandoned on behalf of ideological goals in the communist camp. Thus, the Czechoslovak communist leader eventually adopted a standpoint unfavourable from a nationalist perspective and at the same a potentially precarious for the stability within the Party. Therefore, I assume that Šmeral’s views did not present any considerable breakthrough of Lenin’s views towards a more nationalistic standpoint. Indeed, it is thought-provoking to see from this perspective how a national question, namely the principle of self-determination, shaped the Party’s tactics.

---

<sup>3</sup> Šmeral himself declared his previous views ‘opportunistic’.

#### **D. The First Regular Congress**

The political struggle in Czechoslovakia in 1923, the year of the First Regular Party Congress, became considerably intensified. This was predominantly due to the municipal election, so the political scene became more sensitive and receptive to popular moods and consequently political rhetoric became even more radical.

There were two momentous issues from the First Congress that are particularly significant for the purpose of this paper. The first was the reconfirmation of status quo of the doctrine of the indivisible Czechoslovak nation. The second brought more problematic perspective towards the legitimacy of the state per se. Speeches attacked the Versailles system more fiercely than those from the unifying congress. Indeed, such tactics were understandable in case of a revolutionary party, notably in an election year. But there was nonetheless some peculiarity in that situation. If Czechoslovakia was a mere colony of imperial powers, namely of the French, subjected to a systematic exploitation, then the entire system of treaties served the only purpose, preservation of decaying capitalism<sup>4</sup> and the system and states to which it gave birth was hostile to the proletariat and vice versa.

The question is whether the proletarian enmity toward capitalism implied antagonism ‘only’ toward the established political order or whether it had further consequences for the mere existence of the state per se, and would these consequences be defined in terms of self-determination?

As I mentioned above, Šmeral’s leadership accepted the existence of the state. Despite the strongly radical rhetoric, the Party has not yet inclined to take its struggle beyond this line. However, it was stated that mass mobilization should have been achieved by the national revolution and the Party proclaimed “self-government of artisans, peasants and retailers” for Slovakia as the best safeguard against Hungarian reactionary endeavours. (Protokol 1989: 27)

Yet, the “Theses on the National Question”, adopted by the congress, accused the HSLS of a reactionary policy under the veil of autonomy which culturally separated Slovaks from Czechs and from the Western culture as such, thus subjecting Slovaks to oppression by Hungarians and the Roman Catholic Church. (Protokol 1989: 36) Blatant ambiguities showed a vague attitude to the national question. On the one hand a proposal for self-government, on the other, an immediate refusal of autonomous status. Though problems were identified, a device for a solution remained quite unknown for the Party. The previous tactics to avoid open nationalistic

---

<sup>4</sup> *Protokol prvního řádného sjezdu KSČ 2-5.2.1923* (1989): 23-25.

slogans, rather adopting a moderate stance, seemed to reach the dead end. Thus the KSČ not only proved its irreconcilable attitude to capitalism but, more importantly, significantly yet hesitantly shifted to a nationalist track<sup>5</sup> (Jelinek 1983: 10) which was already occupied by the Ľudaks. It was a somewhat ambiguous situation that the Party remained loyal to the concept of the Czechoslovak nation; however, at the same time stimulating tendencies (rather unintentionally) fostered national aspirations among Slovak communists. Another reason for the shift could be a rising contest with the Ľudaks over nationalism issues. Even though a competition or cooperation with the HSES served only tactical revolutionary aims, a rising interest in a national question among some Slovak communists was de facto a reality, also due to mutual interaction of both parties.<sup>6</sup> (Protokol 1989)

The right for self-determination remained in its Czechoslovak dress. Jelinek argues that the Party did not reflect the Comintern's strategy to include a possibility of creation of an independent state. (Protokol 1989) It is true but the question is what else could be achieved on the national ground within the concept of a Czechoslovak nation which already achieved its ultimate goal, the formation of a state, and the KSČ pronounced support for it. I suppose that from this perspective there was not much room left for strategic manoeuvring. Despite verbal attacks against the Versailles system, questioned the legitimacy of the state, the Party remained loyal. There was no need for a 'nationalist' architecture designing a new habitat. Changes however were to come and they were already on their way.

At this stage of the analysis, it may be said that the national question, despite some initial disputes and radicalism, was not a part of the internal Party struggle, so at the moment there was not much of a heated controversy. Even though, since the Unification congress it seemed that a national question evidently shifted the Party more to a nationalist track. Since Šmeral's concept of federation, there were endeavours to include a national question, namely some expression of self-determination into the tactics of a political struggle of the Party but at the same time keep it under a lid and did not overemphasise its significance. Hence there is a tension between the Marxist essence and a 'national form'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> One evidence of such a tendency were attempts to set up Slovak (National) Communist Party in 1923 though this was rather a response to Prague centralizing politics.

<sup>6</sup> Jelinek shows that approximately since 1923 issues of nationalism played an important role in a mutual cooperation or rivalry between the KSČ and the HSES.

<sup>7</sup> Here I refer to the notorious Marxist assumption 'national in form Marxist in essence'.

## E. Federation or separation

“The Resolution on the National Question” adopted by the Second Congress in 1924 reflected two important changes in the communist tactics: the abandonment of the state doctrine of a Czechoslovak state-building nation and the adoption of the possibility of secession (Protokol 1983: 31).<sup>8</sup>

Practical realization of ‘class sovereignty’ in nationalist terms had a very peculiar nature. Indeed, needless to say, “national interests must have been subordinated to interests of class” (Protokol 1981) even though it put considerable restraints to an actual possibility of secession. Lenin’s notion of the Party’s key role in the decision-making on the expediency was brought fully into account by the centralist leadership. In the practical implication of Lenin’s thoughts, self-determination to the point of secession, the leadership stressed self-determination and the political independence as an obligation for *unification* between the working class of oppressed nations and the Czech working class in the class struggle. (Protokol 1983)

The demand for a change in the KSC’s strategy addressed by the Comintern was initially stimulated by previous Slovak complaints on Czech centralism. However ‘the Resolution’ did the contrary. Moreover, Eduard Burian, one of the centralists, expressed his belief in homogenized unity of a Czechoslovak nationality (Protokol 1983: 354) and rejected so-called ‘national bolshevism’ within the Party. At the same time he called for the realization of the Comintern’s plan for the Soviet Union of Republics of Czechoslovakia preceded by the federation of independent national republics. (Protokol 1983: 361)

It was evident that the Comintern sent a very perplexed signal and maintaining the Leninist spirit in a national program of the Party seemed to be a Sisyphean task deal for the divided Party. Evidently, Lenin’s message that the right to self-determination to the point of secession did not presuppose the necessity to do so was the Gordian knot in the conflict. While this was the main ‘centralist’ argument for the support of federation, the ‘secessionists’ argued against any form autonomy as a device of the HSLS. Then, the logical question would be what was the content of the term self-determination? A theoretically irresolvable question depended on interpretations of conflicting groups and their power interests.

The question of self-determination paralyzed in the Party’s national policy. Once rejected at the previous congress, the idea of federation was rejected again as being bourgeois, notably by Slovak members, who were satisfied with nothing less than the right of self-determination to the point of secession. At this point, the right of self-determination without the notion of secession

---

<sup>8</sup> *Protokol II. řádného sjezdu KSC 31.10–4.11. 1924* (1983): 31.

became completely meaningless within the Party, which radically reduced its meaning to a minimalist connotation with a maximal impact. An experienced member, the centralist Professor Zdeněk Nejedlý, even “denied the existence of separate Slovak nation altogether.” (Jelinek 1983: 12) This was not as much a thought-provoking idea as stirring more the waters of confusion and bringing more blurs into a somewhat paradoxical situation.<sup>9</sup> Connor grasped a fundamental conceptual problem of the Marxist approach to nationalism by stating that “Grand strategy was...to take precedence over ideological purity and consistency.” (Connor 1984: 14)

Two tendencies were simply irreconcilable and mutually incompatible. One strived for political goals via strategic adoption of the right of self-determination to the point of secession or the idea of some form of federation, the other to remain at the same time well above nationalist surface *expressis verbis* in Marxist terms, nationalist in form but socialist in essence. Comprehension of both ideas, self-determination to the point of secession and the federation, which were initially purported to combat nationalism, proved to be illusory and promoted nationalist responses.

A significant clash within the Party between ‘federalist-centralist’ and ‘secessionist’ camp would have important consequences in near future, affecting also the Slovak question as well. The provocative assumption would be that the principle of self-determination, despite an initial nationalist reaction, was not the initial cause of the internal Party conflict, but rather used for its purposes. Thus the ability of bringing up a solution for practical implementation of a national question, namely the right of self-determination would not measure the Party’s effectiveness of dealing with the problem rather the effectiveness of struggling camps within the Party to achieve their goals, yet to the detriment of actual effectiveness of solutions *per se*. Relevance would then be shifted from a national question subordinated to power struggles of the Party almost exclusively to internal Party struggles. Thus, internal Party struggles would shape Party power struggles. Indeed, a national question would remain a mere device.

---

<sup>9</sup> Those defending centralist leadership proposed a federalization plan and those expressing grievances against the center and calling for the self-determination to the point of secession refused any compromise in the form of autonomy. This pathological situation also signalized that the interpretation of the clash, merely along the national line, Czechs vs. Slovaks would be misleading and irrespective to the logic of a struggle for power within the Party where a national question, notably the Slovak one, was used much more skillfully than in the case of the power struggle of the Party.

## F. From separatism to protectiveness

After the Comintern's intervention, the Fifth Congress in 1929 resolved the conflict in favour of the 'secessionist' camp, and de facto turned down the previous leadership. The major changes which fostered the 'secessionist' perspective were the rejection of Czechoslovakia as an imperialist colony and as a nation-state; instead, Czechoslovakia was characterized as an imperialist state.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the only possible solution was not Šmeral's conquest of the state, but its destruction by means of the right of self-determination to the point of secession. (Protokol 1978) Besides the following of the Comintern's directive for radicalizing an already radicalized policy, the Congress did not bring any practical implications as to the realization of the slogan. Hostility toward the state became almost the sole tool<sup>11</sup> (in Mlynárik 1967: 655), and also the symptom of incapability to move behind the prescribed ideological setting. It again proved that it was practically impossible to bring genuine solutions within the Communist perspective without losing a 'communist essence', thus threatened a political career.

Hence, rhetorical attacks, such as accusing the state of being a state of "Fascist terror"<sup>12</sup>, characterized not only the Party strategy in following years, albeit in tune with the Comintern's orders but to the detriment of formulating own standpoint, but also brought about very concrete conceptual problems. According to the Congress, Slovaks belonged to oppressed nationalities within imperialist Czechoslovakia. Such a statement de facto approved the Congress' denial of the concept of Czechoslovakia as being a nation-state. Gottwald's solution for that situation presented on the parliamentary session in the very same year was based on the idea of the Czechoslovak Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics which conspicuously reminded the Comintern's solution proposed at the Second Congress of the CSPA in 1924, and it was one of the main issues of the 'centralist' camp. Thus the Party eventually adopted the concept that was the subject of the long-lasting conflict. Just a repetition of what being already said that such a paradoxical situation reflected a conceptual paralysis in the question of self-determination.

However, it would be highly controversial to argue merely by the Party's incapability to reach consistent and ideologically incontestable (within a communist approach towards the question of self-determination scarcely conceivable) solutions. The factors of willingness and preference also played a significant role. Goals achieved during internal Party struggles seemed to

---

<sup>10</sup> *Protokol V. řádného sjezdu KSČ 18–23.2. 1929* (1978): 351.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, while a new leader Gottwald referred to an imperialist nature of Czechoslovakia on occasion he talked about "your state".

<sup>12</sup> *Protokol VI. řádného sjezdu KSČ 7-11.3. 1931* (1931): 137.

take more relevance in some periods. Seizure, wielding the power and protecting of an achieved status would be more logical from the perspective of the in-party power struggle. Unfortunately, such claim can not be proved within the extent of this analysis (and by accessible sources) yet it should be taken into consideration. Since the philosophical mutual incompatibility of communist and nationalist ideologies is per se incomplete and insufficient explanation.

Gottwald's leadership, however, seemed to prove that more than skilfulness to adopt the concept of self-determination for an effective struggle of the Party, it matters for strengthening the position within the Party. His unconditional loyalty to Moscow allowed him to adopt conflicting concepts of self-determination. While these were approved by the Comintern and thus helped him to rise to power and maintain his position, there was no need to trouble over the ideological consistency or a philosophical compatibility.

This situation reflects a particularly interesting paradox. The prevalence of the principle of self-determination to the point of secession in the Party after the Fifth Congress and its reformulated version after the Sixth Congress<sup>13</sup> (Protokol 1931: 145) did not increase considerably the Party's influence and popularity in Slovakia and even less so in Czechoslovakia<sup>14</sup> (Leff 1988: 51- 52), despite very radical national rhetoric. However, Gottwald's position was relatively stable and unchallenged. Thus the principle seemed to be more relevant for internal Party relations than as a political device for gaining mass support. This does not presuppose that the national feelings among members did not have any emotional relevance. The contrary was certainly true especially in case of intellectuals gathered around the leftist periodical DAV (The Mass). Despite their support of Gottwald's leadership, they had not supported secession; they were evidently less radical and tended to favour cultural autonomy<sup>15</sup> (Novomeský 1933) which was a contestable issue within the KSČ. Their influence on the 'high' Party politics was therefore marginal despite their endeavours and enthusiasm. It reflected the Party's distrust of intellectuals and further theoretical elaboration.

Finally, only the threat of Nazism was able to bring an ultimate solution to the issue of self-determination, which completely ceased to provide an ideological device. Thus the external determinant radically changed the entire strategy of the KSČ.

Suddenly, it was not the capitalist nature of the state that threatened the proletariat the most but the external factor jeopardizing the mere existence of the state. All actors had to

---

<sup>13</sup> Self-determination to all consequences.

<sup>14</sup> On the Republic level the KSČ gained 10.2% in 1929 and 10.3% in 1935, in Slovakia it was 10.7% and 13.0%.

<sup>15</sup> He did not refer explicitly to autonomy rather to an independent development of a Slovak national life.

eventually respond unanimously<sup>16</sup> (Jelinek 1983: 29) to a changing situation in the international environment regardless their individual preferences. Though the national question was not brought to an end, certainly the principle of self-determination as its expression was buried in the past with all the struggles which produced such ambiguities, biases and paradoxes.

## G. Conclusion

Through the course of the analysis I attempted to show that the national question, namely the principle of self-determination and its variations, gained salience in the KSČ, not for its national expression per se, but as a mere strategic device for the power struggle of the Party and within the Party. Such a device was much more effectively used for the purpose of the latter than as an ideological tool of the former. Though, the Party firstly hesitantly moved on a nationalist track striving for its political goals, later, it adopted radical nationalist stances, however, completely subordinated predominantly to internal Party struggles. These struggles at the same time shaped the overall Party tactics regarding self-determination. Existing devoted nationalist stances were used for this struggle but without significant nationalist benefits. I am not able to prove from documents whether ambiguity, which can be found in Lenin's theory, was then further intentionally promoted by conflicting sides. I assume that such an assumption is not without relevance, notably in case of Gottwald who managed to benefit politically from polarization within the Party despite theoretically inconsistent stances.

## Literature

- Balakrishnan, G. (ed. 1996): *Mapping the Nation*. London and New York: Verso.
- Cassese, A. (1995): *Self-determination of Peoples: A Legal Reappraisal*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Connor, W. (1984) *The National Question Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Leff, C. S. (1988): *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia. The Making and Remaking of a state 1918-1987*. Princeton: Princeton University Press,.
- Lenin, V. I. (1947): *Selected Works*, Vol. II. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Lenin, V. I. (1951): *Critical Remarks on the National Question*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Mlynárik, Ján, (1967): Dr. Bohumír Šmeral a slovenská národnostná otázka v počiatkoch komunistického hnutia. *Československý časopis historický*, XV, 4, pp. 653-666.

---

<sup>16</sup>The Seventh Congress in 1936 definitively abandoned the principle of self-determination.

- Steiner, E. (1973): *The Slovak dilemma*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Tucker, R. C. (ed., 1975): *Lenin Anthology*. New York and London: W W Norton & Company.
- Wheaton, B. (1986): *Radical Socialism in Czechoslovakia (Bohumír Šmeral, the Czech Road to Socialism and the origins of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (1917-1921))*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jelinek, Y. (1983): *A. The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1945*. New York: Columbia University Press.

### Documents

- Protokol ustanovujícího a zlučovacího sjezdu KSČ, 14-16.5. 1921* [The Protocol of the Nominating and Unifying Congress of CSPA, 14-16.5. 1921] (1981) Praha, Svoboda.
- Protokol I. řádného sjezdu KSČ 2-5.2.1923* [The Protocol of the First Regular Congress of CSPA 2-5.2.1923] (1989) Svoboda, Praha.
- Protokol II. řádného sjezdu KSČ 31.10–4.11. 1924* [The Protocol of the Second Regular Congress of the KSČ], (1983) Praha, Svoboda.
- Protokol V. řádného sjezdu KSČ* [The Fifth regular Congress of the KSČ 18–23.2. 1929], (1978): Svoboda, Praha,
- Protokol VI. řádného sjezdu KSČ 7-11.3. 1931* [The Protokol of the Sixth regular Congress of CSPA], (1931): Praha, ÚV KSČ.

### Periodicals

- Dav*, vol. 11-12 1933
- Pravda chudoby*, 3 November 1921