

# **Fr. Tiso, Slovakia and Hitler**

## *Fr. Tiso, Slovakia and Hitler*

BY

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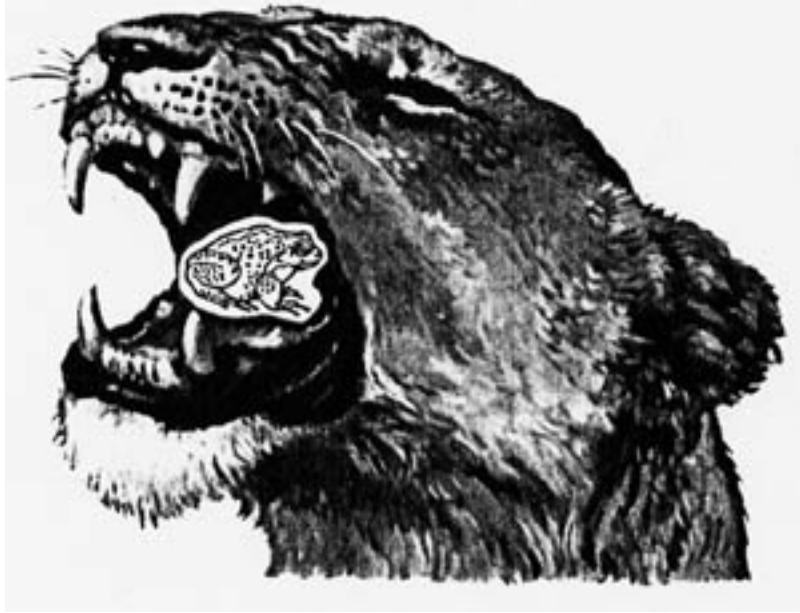


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The lion finds a frog somewhere. He looks at it from all sides, plays with it, and since the small creature pleases him, he keeps it . . . This is exactly what I think about the Germans. They hold us fast, they play with us, and it has the appearance as if we liked them. And what is now our task and duty? To behave as if we like them, so that they will play longer with us, that they will let us live. For, just as the lion could devour the frog, so the Germans could devour us. It is enough for them to close their jaws and we are done for. And our most noble interest is that we should keep alive. Therefore they may continue to play with us. Our duty, from now on, is to keep them in a good mood."

Fr. Tiso at his 'trial' in March 1947.

A leaflet summary of this booklet is available elsewhere on this web site.

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# CHAPTER I

## A PICTURE OUT OF FOCUS

Slovakia between 1939-1945, under its President Josef Tiso, had a semi-independent existence as part of German dominated Europe. Tiso was not only the President but also a Catholic priest, who often undertook parish work on Sundays. He received wide support from other clergy and from leaders of the Catholic laity. In 1941 this predominantly Catholic country placed itself on the German side in the invasion of the Soviet Union, and in 1942 over 50,000 Slovak Jews were sent to Concentration Camps in Poland.

Anti-Catholic political groups and religious sects have used these facts in an attempt to prove that the Catholic Church supported Hitler and therefore shared responsibility for his crimes. Also they often accuse the Vatican of having conspired with the Slovak Catholics before the war to destroy the new democratic, socialist and progressive Czechoslovak state. The Vatican's main strategy being to encourage the Slovak Peoples Party, led by Fr. Tiso and other priests, to demand independence for Slovakia and thereby undermine a united Czechoslovak resistance to Hitler.

A balanced and full presentation of the history of that time shows this picture of Fr. Tiso, the Church and the Slovak people are false. Yet, as bias against Fr. Tiso is evident in very many history books, it is necessary to correct it.

Following the First World War, Marxist Social Democrats and Communists were strong forces in Czechoslovakia and together with the National Socialists dominated political life. Although the British Labour Movement was not Marxist, many of its 'intellectuals' were, while others took a very left-wing stance. It was these writers and authors who used such words as 'progressive', 'freedom-loving', 'democratic', 'social reformist' to describe the marxists and centralists in Czechoslovakia. At the same time they labelled the Catholic led movements as 'fascist', 'separatist' and 'reactionary'. A comparable group, sympathetic to the Catholic and autonomist interests, did not exist in Britain to correct this one-sided reporting.

After the collapse of Czecho-Slovakia in 1939, Socialist politicians fled to Britain and America enabling them to propagate their account of events with ease. The Slovak leaders stayed in their homeland so were not available to refute the accusations made against them.

When Slovakia joined in the invasion of the U.S.S.R., it became easy for Communist war-time propaganda to depict all the Slovak leaders as 'fascist'.

These political controversies have now faded into the past, but their legacy maintains a lasting influence on the British view of Slovak history. So it is not difficult for anti-Catholic sects and individuals to make accusations, and be able to point to otherwise reputable books for apparent confirmation of their claims.

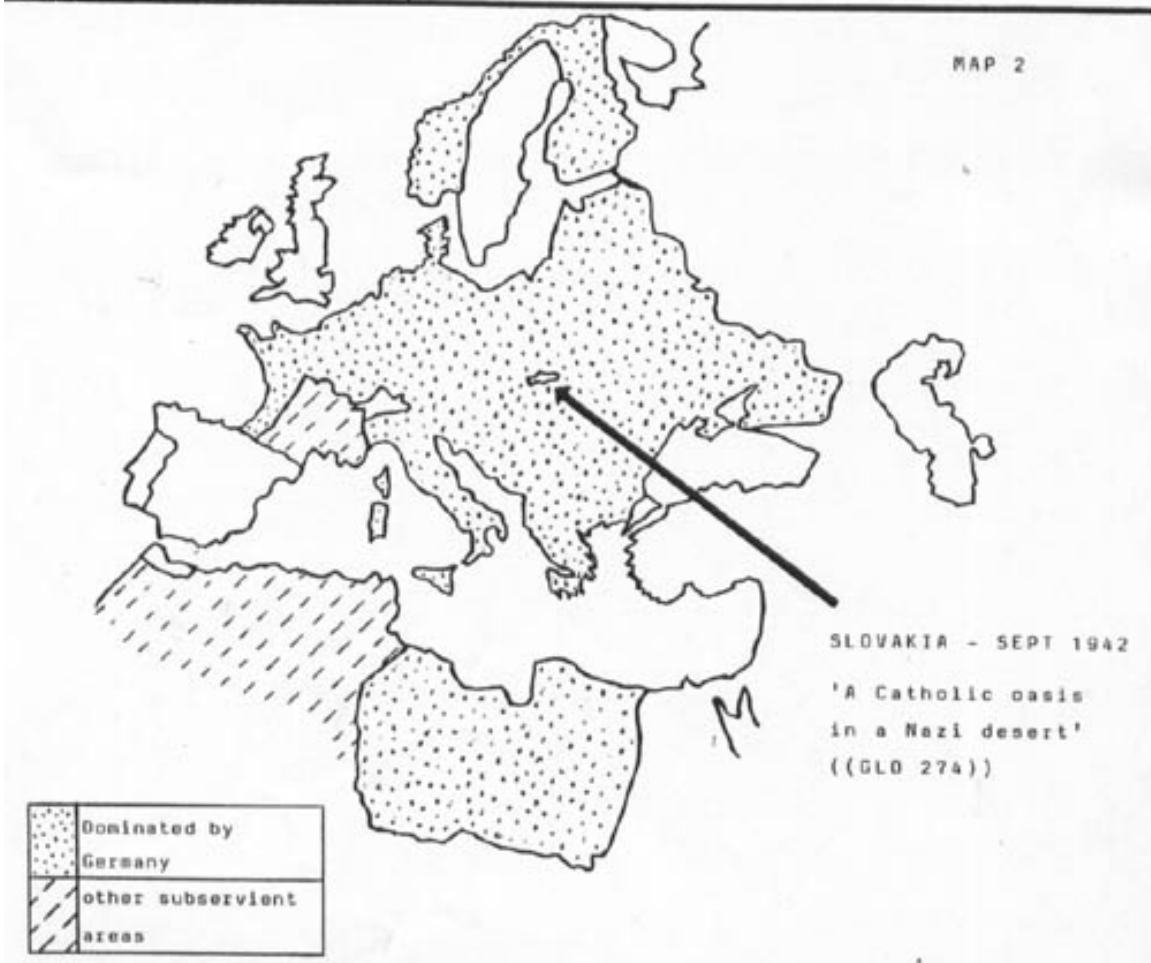
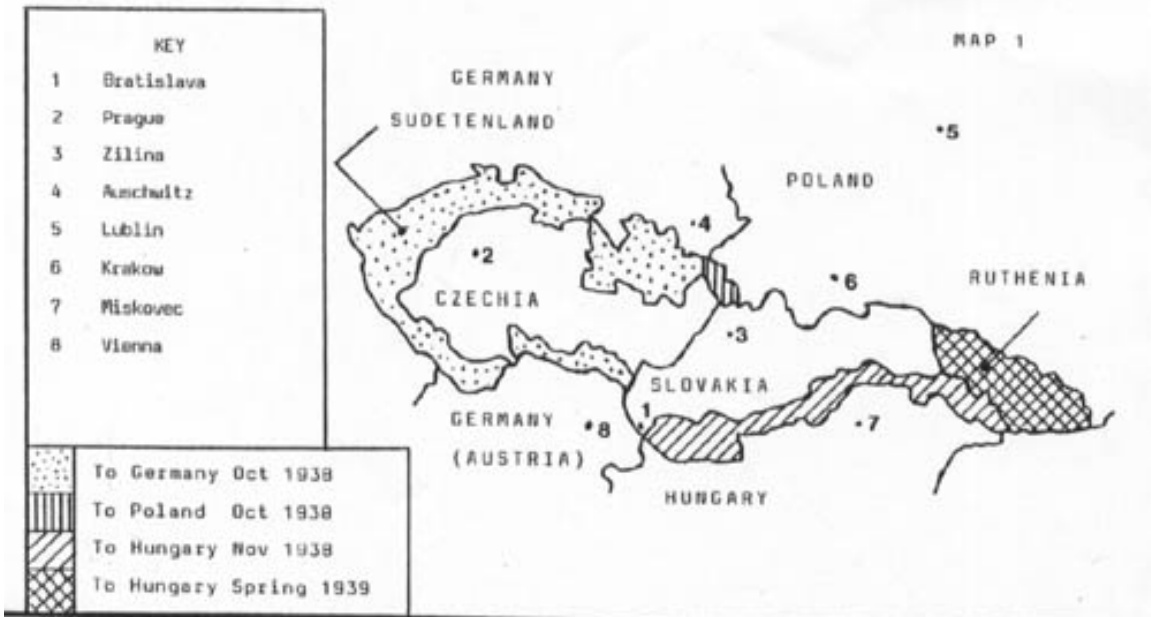
## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE FORMATION OF CZECHO-SLOVAKIA**

Prior to the 1914-1918 War, Austria and Hungary were united under the rule of the Hapsburg monarchy. This Austro-Hungarian Empire incorporated Slavonic peoples along its northern and southern borders. During the war the Allies encouraged these races to fight for their independence. The word 'race' is frequently used to denote the various peoples of Eastern Europe, but this can be misleading for modern readers. 'Race' now tends to denote a biological group, but until the rise of eugenic Nazism, it referred more frequently to a language and culture.

In 1918 the victorious Allies deposed the Hapsburgs, split Austria and Hungary into separate states, allocated the southern slavs to Yugoslavia and agreed to the northern slavonic peoples — Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians — forming a new state of Czecho-Slovakia.

For geographical reasons the German speaking Austrians living in the Sudetenland could not remain part of Austria. But as the victors wished to keep Germany as small as possible, these Sudetenlanders were not permitted to be incorporated into Germany. They were therefore included in Czecho-Slovakia. ((See next page, Map 1)).



The Slovaks considered themselves to be a separate nation to the Czechs but, as they numbered less than three million, recognised that complete independence would be difficult to maintain in that turbulent part of Europe. They therefore saw the advantage of joining with the Ruthenians and the more numerous Czechs to form a federal republic ((GLO 180-182)).

In 1914 there were 500,000 Slovaks and 300,000 Czechs living in America ((DEM 26)), and they were working hard to obtain freedom for their homelands. They were able to organise away from the chaos of the war zone.

In the 'Cleveland Proposal' of October 25th 1915, the Czechs agreed that in any future state the Slovaks would have autonomy ((GLO 162 and AXS 19)). But remarks made later by Czech leaders implied that the Slovak way of life would be submerged in a Czech dominated culture.

This attitude was typified by a phrase in a note sent by Masaryk, the Czech leader, to the British 'The Slovaks are Czechs' ((GLO 162)).

At a special meeting of priests living in America held on September 20th 1917, it was promised that Catholic Slovakia would be free from Czech anti-Catholic discrimination ((GLO 169)). But many Slovaks were still suspicious that Masaryk was using Slovak money and willingness to volunteer for the Czecho-Slovak legions (army), so as to achieve Czech freedom, but once this was obtained would relegate the Slovaks to a subordinate position ((DEM 6)). So on the 30th May 1918, Masaryk signed on behalf of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, 'the Czecho-Slovak Pact', which became known as the 'Pittsburgh Agreement'. This guaranteed to the Slovaks their own administration, parliament, courts of law and the use of Slovak as the official language of their schools, public offices and public affairs generally ((GLO 175, 203-4, AXS 19, JM 111, JFNB 158, VO 85, DEM 32)).

In the same month the Catholic led Slovak Peoples Party, operating in Slovakia, voted to become part of this new evolving state. The smaller Protestant led Slovak National Party echoed this move ((DEM 27)). In October 1918 Masaryk also signed a pact with the Ruthenians promising them autonomy within a federal state. This became known as the 'Philadelphia Agreement'.

In October 1918 a provisional Czecho-Slovak government was established in Prague. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, it expressly recognized as valid and binding: "all Conventions and Engagements concluded or undertaken by Masaryk during the revolutionary period".((DEM 34,GLO 175)).Slovak autonomy seemed assured.

At the Paris Peace Conference Eduard Benes, the Czech leader negotiating on behalf of the provisional government, promised that the new state would very much resemble Switzerland ((DEM 92)). This was a clear commitment to a decentralised Constitution. But while promising that permission would be granted for the wide use of the German language, the Slovak language was ignored ((EW 92-93)).

Fr. Hlinka, as leader of the largest Slovak party, planned to attend the Conference and demand the right to hold a plebiscite so that the Slovaks could democratically decide if they wanted autonomy. When the Czech authorities refused to issue him with a passport, he obtained one from the friendly Polish government. But Benes asked the French police to expel him as 'An agent of the Vatican and the Hapsburgs' ((GLO 190)). At the time France had an anti-Catholic government and complied with Benes's request. On returning home Hlinka was imprisoned without trial for six months ((GLO 191)), even though he had legal immunity as a member of Parliament.

Hlinka did manage to send two representatives to alert the American Slovaks. But Benes sent a telegram saying they were 'Polish-Magyar Agents' (Magyar being an alternative name for Hungarian. By the time the American Slovaks realized that they had been misled, it was too late to influence the Paris Conference ((GLO 191)). This destroyed Slovak trust in the Czech leaders. So Czecho-Slovakia was granted international recognition without the right of the Slovaks to autonomy being recognized. In this manner the new state was born in an atmosphere of mistrust and bitterness.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF THE COUNTRY**

#### **THE COMMUNITIES**

The 1920 census showed the Communities, as defined by language, to be 64% Czechoslovak, 23% German, 6% Magyar, 3% Ruthenian, 1% Jewish, 1% Polish and others 2% ((JFNB 148)). The Slovaks were not allowed to record themselves as such and were entered as 'Czechoslovak'. They formed about 16% of the total population and the Czechs 48%.

75% of the population was nominally Catholic ((DEM 46)), but commitment varied greatly according to racial group.

## **THE CZECHS**

In the 15th Century an unsuccessful revolt against Austrian rule had become identified with Hussite Protestant beliefs, and during the hundred years prior to 1918, Hussite anti-Hapsburg history was used as a means to stimulate Czech national identity and pride. This spilled over to form an anti-Catholic spirit among the politically conscious ((DEM 47)). By the time independence had been gained, the majority of Czech nationalist leaders were non-Catholic ((DEM 47)), and Thomas Masaryk had left the Catholic Church to become a Protestant ((JM 55)). He rejoiced at the Russian revolution because "A free Russia means the death of a Jesuit Austria" ((JM 93)). Srobar, appointed by Masaryk to rule Slovakia in 1918, had also renounced his church ((GLO 205)).

The government unofficially encouraged the Czechoslovak National Church ((DEM 47)), which was formed in 1920. It drew nearly a million Czechs, but few Slovaks, from Catholicism ((GLO 197)).

## **THE GERMANS**

Although culturally attached to the Catholic way of life, they were affected by that spirit of German Nationalism known as Pan-Germanism, which undermined loyalty to Rome ((EW 228)). Vocations were so few that Czech priests had to be appointed to German speaking parishes ((EW 41)) and the Church was criticised for encouraging 'Czechification' ((EW 228)).

## **THE SLOVAKS**

In general they were committed to a more religious life-style. Their priests had been closely identified with Slovak history, culture and the striving for Slovak autonomy within Hungary.

But the middle classes were influenced by liberal agnosticism, which aimed to exclude Christian values from education and public life. The industrial workers were widely affected by marxist atheism.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **POLITICAL LIFE IN THE NEW STATE**

#### **1. THE CZECH ATTITUDE**

The Czechs had a strong belief that they were a superior, freethinking and progressive race, while the Slovaks needed to be liberated from their old fashioned religious superstitions ((GLO 214-9)). They considered that the absorption of the Slovaks into the Czech life-style under the cloak of being 'Czechoslovak' (The Czechs omitted the hyphen) would be to the benefit of the Slovaks. There was also an urgent political motive in treating the Slovaks as if they were the same race as the Czechs. If the Slovaks were accepted as a separate nation then the Czechs with 48% of the population would be seen as one minority amongst many. As such they would have to agree to some form of Swiss or federal Constitution, with each community preserving and developing its own culture indefinitely. But if they could rule in the name of 64% of the population, the Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Poles could be treated as small minorities and forcibly absorbed into Czech speech and culture ((RP 15)).

#### **2. THE GOVERNMENT**

A provisional government ruled from 1918 to 1920. The MPs elected to the Austrian parliament represented the Czechs, but Slovakia and Ruthenia having been ruled by Hungary needed their MPs to be appointed. Masaryk sent Vavro Srobar to choose these MPs. Although 82% of the population was Catholic and the largest party was for autonomy, he appointed 14 Czechs, 30 Protestant Slovaks, 6 anti-autonomy Catholic Slovaks and only 4 pro-autonomy Catholics. So only 4 out of 54 were committed to a Catholic Slovak national revival. It was this 54 strong 'Slovak' delegation that agreed to a centralised national constitution. In 1919 the hyphen was officially omitted from the word Czecho-Slovakia ((AXS 23)).

In elections there were 22 parties ((JFNB)) so coalition governments had to be formed. The Social Democrats (marxists) were strong in the Czech areas but also drew support from those Germans, Hungarians and Slovaks who placed 'class' loyalty before their cultural heritage ((GLO 206 and EW 205)). The Communists had a similar distribution of support.

The National Socialists, led by Masaryk and Benes, were sometimes referred to as being 'liberal' but although not marxists they took the lead during 1930 in 'demanding nationalisation and central control of industry as well as the planning of trade policy' ((VO 179)). So they could be considered as akin to the British Labour Party of those years.

The first elections held in 1920 resulted in a left-wing victory, but in the 1925 elections the Agrarians (Conservatives) became the largest party. But they needed the co-operation of the parties representing the national minorities in order to form a non-socialist coalition government. This administration agreed to establish provincial assemblies ((DEM 54)), but this involved a revision to the Constitution. To amend the Constitution the agreement of the Socialist parties was required. By the time the proposals were passed into law the plan had been severely weakened. 30% of the membership of the Assemblies and their Presidents were to be non-elected appointees of the central government, while the Czech run Civil Service would maintain a tight control over local authorities ((GLO 211)).

When the 1929 elections produced a swing back to the centralist 'left', the minorities became increasingly alienated from central government((GLO 221)).

### **3. THE EXTENT OF ALIENATION**

The British Minister in Prague reported during the early days of the new state: 'Hostility to the Roman Catholic Church is evinced by Czech soldiers and officials and includes the desecration and mutilation of crucifixes and holy images, interruption of marriages, and similar offences against the principles of culture and decency. The country had been flooded with Czech officials and the Slovaks dismissed, or, if employed, they receive from one-half to two-thirds less pay than the Czechs. Corruption exists in public offices and attempts are being made to substitute the Czech for the Slovak language.' ((FV 17-18 quoting DBFP 1919-39, First Series, Vol. VI, page 335))

In 1924 Seton-Watson, a Czech supporter, admitted that 'Slovakia cannot be expected to tolerate the present system, under which not only the vast majority of the best posts are held by Czechs, but preference still continues to be given to Czechs rather than Slovaks for many entirely subordinate positions, indeed in many cases it is not merely preference, but open favouritism'. ((GLO 201)).

Czechs living in Slovakia increased from 7,500 to 121,000 between 1910 and 1930, with most being in government service ((GLO 200)). In central government during 1938 only 33 out of 1246 Foreign Office officials were Slovak ((MSDF 11)). Of 139 army generals, one was a Slovak. ((OB 25)).

In defence of their record, the Czechs pointed to the money and personnel deployed to eradicate illiteracy in Slovakia, and expressed indignation at the 'ungrateful' response of the Slovaks. The Czechs were so confident in the superiority of their secular culture that it didn't occur to them that most Slovaks considered their own Christian culture to be the superior one.

Novak summed up the situation in 1930: 'Educational Institutions in Slovakia are reeking with Pan-Czechism and are manned throughout by freethinking Czechs. The Slovak language is being swept under the carpet, while the Catholic religion is made an object of ridicule'. ((GLO 215)).

The Ruthenians were being treated in a similar manner ((GLO 199)). Although the Ruthenian right to autonomy had been promised at Paris in 1918 and 1919, the Czechs refused to implement it. A Czech military government ruled for 20 years and tuition in the secondary schools was in Czech ((OB 2223)). As for the Hungarians: 'The grievances of the Hungarian minority were real . . . as a peasant population in the main, their problems contrasted sharply with those of the Sudeten Germans, but they were worse off with regard to language rights, and their press was more severely censored'. ((EW 253)).

Hopes of the Germans accepting the new state were undermined because: 'in a thousand little ways the Czechs, in the early days of the Republic, set out to humiliate the Germans' ((EW 118)).

#### **4. THE BEGINNING OF DISINTEGRATION**

Under Hitler, Germany regained its self-confidence and this spirit soon affected the Germans living in Czechoslovakia. In 1935 the party of Konrad Henlein, leader of the alienated Germans, received 62% of the vote in the German speaking Sudetenland ((EW 206)). Their loyalty to the state became extremely doubtful ((EW 277)).

In the early days following the war, Czechs could claim that the number of literate Slovaks was not sufficient to fill administrative posts. But in later years, when this was no longer true, the favouritism became more obvious. As it was the new generation of educated young people who were suffering most, the demands for autonomy gained support amongst Slovak youth ((DEM 87)).

In 1926, according to Czechoslovak police reports, 40-60% of Slovak students supported the Slovak Peoples Party and by 1936 it had increased its hold considerably ((FV 29)).

The Czech centralists became worried and reversed their policies. They promised the Germans an end to discrimination, and permission for a German language radio station ((EW 246, 255 and xi)). The Ruthenians were promised autonomy, and the Hungarians permitted to use their language in their schools and on public buildings in their districts ((EW 253)).

Talks were held with the Slovaks but broke down over the basic principle of Slovak nationhood. The Czechs demanded that the Slovak Peoples Party gave unconditional loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic before the Czechs would decide how much autonomy they would permit, and from past experience the Slovaks feared that this would be extremely little. Although the Slovak Peoples Party supported the idea of Czecho-Slovakia, they maintained their right to proclaim independence if the Czechs refused to keep their promise regarding autonomy. But if the Czechs accepted this principle, the Slovaks would be placed in a very strong bargaining position. A compromise could not be found.

On June 5th 1938 a Slovak rally of 100,000 commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the 'Pittsburgh Agreement' ((GLO 222)). Fr. Hlinka, who was still leader of the Slovak Peoples Party, said: "If possible we will remain with the Czechs. Otherwise, we will be forced to direct ourselves in another direction, for we have no intention of living in slavery". He went on "The Slovak people want to live freely, be it even at the cost of the Czecho-Slovak Republic" ((GLO 222-3)). Fr. Tiso said: "We want this Czecho-Slovak Republic to be able to stand up at any international forum knowing that domestically all is equal and proper". He warned that: "unless the Slovaks were satisfied, the Republic could not survive; but when the Slovak has achieved his rights and autonomy, he would defend the Republic" ((DEM 79)).

It is necessary to note that while the fight for Slovak autonomy was closely identified with Catholic priests and active lay Catholics, autonomy was not itself a religious issue. Many saw autonomy as a means of ending anti-Catholic discrimination and enabling the promotion of Catholic inspired social reform. But good Catholics also supported other parties. The Agrarians favoured regionalism ((AXS 62)) with Provincial Assemblies and were not philosophically anti-religious. The Czechoslovak Peoples Party, led by Fr. Jan Sramek, was also fighting for Catholic rights and social principles, yet opposed Slovak autonomy ((AXS 54, 59 and 63)). This party elected a Representative from Slovakia in 1925 and again in 1929 ((GLO 209-210)).

Protestant autonomists voted for the Slovak National Party led by a Protestant clergyman, Martin Razus ((FV 27)). At a Conference on October 16th 1932, Tiso made his famous statement: "In national politics a Slovak Protestant is closer to us than a Czech Catholic. ((AXS 55)).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **AUTONOMY ACHIEVED**

Although the government's attitude to the Germans had noticeably improved ((EW 273)), the change had come too late. By 1938, 83% of German MPs were preparing the way for their areas to be united to Germany. On September 17th 1938 Lord Runciman, British mediator, reported to the British Premier 'Twenty years of Czech intolerance and discrimination had driven the Germans to resentment and revolt' ((GLO 233)). Two weeks later Britain, France, Germany and Italy signed the 'Munich agreement' which accepted the right of German speaking areas to join Germany. By October 10th the Sudetenland and other German speaking districts had been occupied by German troops to the cheers of the inhabitants. Poland and Hungary now demanded areas of Slovakia. As Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. were unwilling to intervene and the Czechoslovak government was now weak, many Slovaks hoped Germany would speak on her behalf ((MSDF 8)).

Fr. Tiso had become leader of the Slovak Peoples Party after the death of Fr. Hlinka. A few hours after the signing of the 'Munich Agreement', Tiso called a meeting at Zilina of the leaders of eight parties ((AXS 87)). At this meeting, held on October 6th 1938, the parties proclaimed Slovak autonomy. Even the Czechoslovak National Socialists (the party of Masaryk and Benes) supported this move ((GLO 236; DEM 118)). There had been an increasing swing towards the concept of autonomy amongst these parties since the mid-1930s. This was particularly true of the large Agrarian party. ((UK 29)).

President Benes had resigned the day previously and the new central government agreed to accept the situation in Slovakia. Fr. Tiso was confirmed by the central government as Prime Minister of Slovakia with full powers, except for foreign affairs, national finance and national defence ((GLO 237)). On October 19th the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister arranged a meeting between Slovak and German delegations to discuss the future of the area. Hitler urged the Czechs and Slovaks to co-operate with Germany. During this meeting some of the Slovaks indicated a preference for complete independence, but Tiso said that staying within Czecho-Slovakia was nearest to Slovak hearts ((MSDF 10)).

An international conference, presided over by Germany and Italy, met at Vienna. This conference of November 2nd 1938 awarded small areas to Poland and a wide strip of southern Slovakia to Hungary ((JFNB 158)). German influence prevented even greater gains by Hungary ((MSDF 10)). See Map 1.

On November 30th 1938 the Slovak Representatives took part in the election of Emil Hacha as President of Czecho-Slovakia and on December 1st the central parliament agreed to permit the President to rule by decree for two years ((KCA 3366)). All elected bodies and organisations were dissolved. In Czech areas democracy ceased and the President ruled absolutely ((JFNB 158)).

Up until 1938 the Slovak Peoples Party had received about a third of the vote in Slovakia. As non-Slovaks constituted a third of the population it could be claimed that half the Slovaks were demanding autonomy. In addition, the Agrarians and the Traders Party wanted some form of regional independence ((DEM 87 and AXS 25)). The loss of Polish, Hungarian and German areas made Slovakia more homogeneously Slovak ((DEM 110)), the centralist policies of the left-wing governments had made the regionalist parties more militant and the fast moving events had caused an upsurge of national feeling. The eight parties which had declared autonomy ((FV 33)) now formed the National Unity Party as a means of resisting outside pressures.

Although democracy had been suspended in Czecho-Slovakia, the Slovaks exercised their autonomy by asking the people to approve the policies of their political leaders. The National Unity Party alone put forward candidates, the people and press treating the voting as a plebiscite on the issue of autonomy ((LND 19-12-1938)). The Unity candidates received 98.5% of the vote, so some commentators have questioned as to whether 'it was a truly free vote. In judging this, several factors need to be borne in mind. The members of the eight former parties, ranging from fascist to National Socialist (the party of Benes), were urging a 'yes' vote. Although banned, the Communists also now supported autonomy ((YAJ 33)).

The marxist Socialists and the Jewish Party, neither in the Unity Party, had drawn their main support from the area which had now been incorporated into Hungary ((AXS 26, YAJ 3, 4 and 20)), so had little support. As the remaining Hungarian minority was now to be permitted their own schools they would have voted 'yes'. The Unity Party nominated 100 candidates for 63 seats so voters had a choice and knew the traditional political views of the personalities standing. The election was conducted according to central government law. A Commission from Prague, which supervised the voting, found it was secret, without pressure, and legal ((LND 19-12-1938)).

All the parties that had joined the Unity Party had candidates elected and the national minorities had representation. Although non-Slovak parties and the marxist Socialists were not permitted to contest the elections, the 200,000 Czechs and Jews were free to vote ((KCA 3371)). All the candidates supported autonomy and none advocated complete independence ((DEM 128)).

A very significant indication of Tiso's desire for autonomy, not independence, was his statement made at the moment of this triumph of Slovak nationalism. He declared that the voting not only proved the support of the government by the popular vote, but also represented a plebiscite in favour of the maintenance of Czecho-Slovak unity ((KCA 3371)).

On January 18th 1939 the new Slovak Parliament opened in the presence of the central government's Prime Minister. The President of Czecho-Slovakia confirmed Tiso as Premier of Slovakia ((GLO 241)). At this time Ruthenia also gained its autonomy ((GLO 239 and DEM 119)) making Czecho-Slovakia a tripartite federation ((JFNB 158)).

## **CHAPTER VI** **FROM AUTONOMY TO INDEPENDENCE**

In early March 1939 discussions regarding finance between Slovakia and the Czech dominated central government reached deadlock. In 1938 the Czechs could do little to prevent Slovak and Ruthenian autonomy, but now they felt more confident and aimed to gain a firm financial grip again ((DEM 132 and See APPENDIX A)).

Slovak extremists led by Vojtech Tuka openly called for a declaration of independence before Czech domination was re-imposed ((DEM 132)). In February Hitler decided that it would suit his plans if Slovakia became independent ((GLO 241)), so placed the Vienna radio station at Tuka's disposal ((GLO 241)).

The Czechs became worried about Tuka's activities, so on March 10th President Hacha moved Czech troops into the Slovak towns and disarmed Slovak paramilitary Guardists ((AXS 73)). Tiso was dismissed, 200-300 politicians arrested ((MSDF 13)) and Charles Sidor appointed as Prime Minister ((GLO 242 and DEM 133)). The Czechs claimed that Tuka had been poised to seize power and proclaim independence under German protection.

The Czech Foreign Minister did not accuse Tiso of having been involved in the plot, but feared that he would have been too weak to have prevented his own overthrow ((DEM 63, 133 and See APPENDIX B)). Sidor was a firm supporter of autonomy but the Czechs considered him to be a stronger personality.

Some anti-Catholic publications have stated that when the Czechs deposed Tiso, he had to 'flee' to 'his friend Hitler' for protection and assistance. This assertion has not the slightest basis in fact. He moved to a local monastery before retiring to his parish of Banovce ((FV 39 and AXS 73)).

Sir Neville Henderson the British Ambassador to Germany, found the Czech leaders: 'Unbelievably short-sighted and domineering in their treatment of the Slovaks', and he tried to persuade the Czech Minister in Berlin to urge his government to settle its dispute with the Slovaks, and withdraw their troops before it was too late. He warned that it: 'was playing Hitler's game for him and that its folly would end in disaster . . .' ((GLO 242)).

Germany expected the Slovaks to offer armed resistance and call for German assistance, but both Tiso and Sidor rejected the offer of German aid. They then took part in talks to form a new government. A group of Germans visited Sidor and threatened in a brutal manner that the Hungarians would be permitted to take the country if independence was not proclaimed. But neither Tiso nor Sidor would take this step ((AXS 73-4)). Sidor was a popular moderate with views very similar to Tiso's, but most Slovaks saw the latter as their true figurehead. So Hitler invited Tiso to meet him in Berlin and threatened that if he refused to come, two divisions of German troops would march in and divide Slovakia between Germany and Hungary ((WS 441)).

After gaining the approval of the party Presidium and Sidor's cabinet, Tiso arrived in Berlin on March 13th. Hitler informed him that Germany was about to occupy Czechia and that Hungary was preparing to occupy Slovakia. If however the Slovaks wished to be independent, he would guarantee them against Hungarian threats ((SEE APPENDICES C and D)). Although Hitler couched his demands in a friendly form of words, it was a brutal threat. A reply was required by the following day. Tiso telephoned Sidor asking him to arrange a meeting with President Hacha to summon the Slovak parliament. It assembled the next morning and Tiso explained the choice to the Representatives. The 57 present unanimously chose independence ((GLO 249 and AXS 75)). Before leaving Berlin Tiso had been handed an unsigned telegram addressed to Hitler. Following the vote for independence, Tiso had to sign this telegram and send it to Germany, as part of the price of averting a Hungarian and German invasion.

The telegram was published by Germany throughout the world to show that the Slovaks wanted Hitler's assistance and friendship, ((KCA 3484)). This destroyed Tiso's character in the eyes of much of world opinion. But the wording and sentiments were not composed by Tiso ((WS 442)).

At his 1947 trial Tiso stated: "If Hitler's pressure had not been there, the Slovak Parliament would never have voted for Slovak independence" ((MSDF 13)).

In a public statement designed to explain the position to his people, without provoking Hitler, Tiso said: "In this tense political situation, in which states and peoples are changing their form, it is clear that we can maintain ourselves only by becoming an independent state". ((GLO 249)). On March 14th President Hacha went to see Hitler ((WS 444)). When he, and his foreign minister arrived in Berlin, he was met with full military honours ((KCA 3485)). They were put in the best hotel and Hitler sent Hacha's daughter a personal gift of chocolates ((WS 444)). But later that day in privacy Hitler threatened to bomb Prague unless the Czechs asked to become a 'protectorate' of Germany. Faced with this threat Hacha agreed to 'ask' German troops to occupy Czechia ((WS 447)). Hacha was forced to announce that he had: ' . . . confidently placed the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Fuehrer and the German Reich'. ((WS 447)).

Both Hacha and Tiso had acted under duress. The sentiments they had publicly expressed were not their own. British public opinion had been taught that the Czechs, as secular liberals and socialist, were firmly democratic and anti-Nazi, so Hacha's words must be seen as those of an unwilling man. But Tiso had been portrayed as a pro-German fascist, so his words were accepted at face value. In doing so, the myth of Tiso being a fascist was reinforced.

Tiso was not pro-German or in any way fooled by them. In the autumn of 1939 he said: "Do not think that the Germans do anything whatsoever for us because of our blue eyes". ((AXS 87)).

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **INDEPENDENCE**

#### **i) HALF FREE**

The Constitution of the new state was ratified on July 21st 1939 and Tiso was the obvious choice for President, but he hesitated to accept the post. Pope Pius XII expressed the opinion that it might not be wise for a priest to hold such a high political position ((GLO 26 and AXS 834)), but left the decision to Tiso. It was many years after the war that the Church enacted a law prohibiting priests from holding political offices. Archbishop Kmetko encouraged him to accept, as it would place him in a position to be able to protect the Church and people from Nazism ((GLO 269)). So Tiso agreed to become President. The office was more symbolic than executive with his main power that of being in a position to restrain the government. The Germans claimed that it was necessary to station troops in the country in order to 'protect' it, but the Slovaks refused to sign a treaty legalising this. Although Hitler possessed overwhelming military strength, he was aiming to gain the friendship of other small countries in the area, and this gave the Slovaks some room to bargain ((NR 63)). On August 12<sup>th</sup> after vigorous arguments a treaty was signed and German troops had to withdraw to a thin strip along the western frontier. ((GLO 258)).

No country protested at Slovak independence and she was recognised by nearly every European nation including Britain ((SEE APPENDIX E)), and the Soviet Union ((SEE APPENDIX F)), France, Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary, The Holy See, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, Finland and Switzerland. China, Japan and countries in South America also established relations. The only major state which held back was the U.S.A. The League of Nations which at that time did not include Germany or Italy, refused to listen to the protests of the Czech exiles. Of the 28 countries affording recognition only ten eventually fought on Germany's side ((GLO 258-263)).

Left-Wing commentators described the Slovak State as 'fascist', but this word was being used as a term of abuse rather than an objective statement of fact. For many years between the wars, Communists consistently called the Socialist parties 'social fascists' ((HSW 107)).

Tiso, speaking on behalf of his party on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1937 had said: "Fascism is a centralist trick . . . we are against fascism and dictatorship". (GLO 79)). In 1938 when the Party of National Unity was formed, fascists formed a very small minority.

The Slovak struggle for political and cultural rebirth occurred during the same period that Germany and Italy were aroused from despair, lethargy, weakness and lack of self respect. So it is not surprising that a Slovak political speaker such as Tiso might liken the revival of those countries to the similar struggle in Slovakia. But this does not mean that the ideology capturing the imagination and idealism of one country was the same as that inspiring another. In 1938 Winston Churchill issued a statement to the Press in reply to an attack by Hitler. He denied that he and other British politicians were warmongers and continued ' . . . I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war, I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations, . . . ' ((TT 7 Nov 1938 page 12)). This statement does not prove that Churchill was pro-Nazi, nor do similar statements by Tiso indicate that he favoured Nazi ideology.

The Slovak state was established with a full democratic Constitution. Parliament was to be elected by universal secret ballot for five years, with the responsibility of electing the President. Executive power was subject to an independent judiciary, the Constitution protected family life including the right to a family living wage and religious teaching in the schools. Private ownership was recognised but was to be limited by the interests of the common good ((GLO 268)). Tiso said "We intend that industry shall serve the good of the whole nation, not merely its own good. So, you may say that our economic aim is a special type of Socialism based on Christian principles. We know that capital must be allowed to earn a fair return. But we intend that the worker shall have a fair livelihood with security against unemployment and unmerited poverty. The government will interfere in industry only to correct, but not to direct". ((GLO 271)).

Cultural liberty was ensured to non-Slovak minorities with rights to their own language, education and parliamentary representation in proportion to their numbers. Due to the exceptional situation all non-Marxist parties had freely united into one party, but the Constitution allowed for the formation of other parties. The various national minorities had representatives within the National Unity Party ((GLO 272)). A Lutheran was put in command of the Slovak army ((AXS 190)).

Insurance against old age, sickness and unemployment was extended. At the same time co-operation between employers and employees was encouraged as a means of improving working conditions. It was this rejection of the marxist principle of 'class war' that was labelled as being 'fascist' by Communists and left-wing Socialists.

How Slovakia would have developed in a time of peace and complete freedom it is not possible to guess. During most of its existence Slovakia was at the geographic centre of Hitler's empire and surrounded by German and pro-German forces on all sides ((See Map 2)). Within the country the pro-German minority exercised an influence out of all proportion to its size. Slovakia has been described as: 'A Catholic oasis in a Nazi desert'. ((GLO 274)).

Despite these problems, water-power was harnessed for the electrification of industry and the modernisation of agriculture. Large numbers of homes and schools were built, and there was a comfortable and rising standard of living ((GLO 2745)). University students increased from 2,034 in 1938 to 5,432 in 1942 ((GLO 277)).

The Czechoslovak government publication: 'The Central European Observer' of June 27th 1949, by which time the Communists were in complete power, admitted that: 'during its six years of independence Slovak economic wealth was strengthened beyond all expectations and ... it is difficult to ask the broad masses to forget that from 1939 to 1944 Slovakia was prosperous in the midst of a warring world'. ((GLO 275)).

## **ii) THE LION, THE FROG AND ERNEST BEVIN**

Tiso saw Slovakia's relationship with Germany as that of: 'a frog in the throat of a lion'. ((LGN 151)).

During his defence speech, on 17th and 18th March 1947, before the Court in Bratislava, Tiso explained how he had assessed this relationship:

"The lion finds a frog somewhere. He looks at it from all sides, plays with it, and since the small creature pleases him, he keeps it . . . This is exactly what I think about the Germans. They hold us fast, they play with us, and it has the appearance as if we liked them. And what is now our task and duty? To behave as if we like them, so that they will play longer with us, that they will let us live. For just as the lion could devour the frog, so the Germans could devour us. It is enough for them to close their jaws and we are done for. And our most noble interest is that we should keep alive. Therefore they may continue to play with us. Our duty, from now on, is to keep them in a good mood." ((JT 40 as recorded in LGN 15)).

Any judgement of Tiso's motives and policies must bear this assessment in mind.

Mr. Ernest Bevin was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the British Labour Government formed at the end of the war. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 1947 he spoke in the House of Commons regarding the signing of peace treaties with Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Finland and Italy. But his words could also have been applied to Slovakia.

"As regards the German satellite states, their position from the time of the outbreak of war was a most unenviable one. Certainly the Balkan satellites were left little choice but to give way under German pressure". ((HPD, 5th Series, vol. 433, House of Commons, page 2290, HMSO 1947)).

### **iii) TISO VERSUS TUKA**

Vojtech Tuka had spent nine years in prison for his political views, and by 1938 had become bitterly anti-Czech and pro-German. His extremism alienated most Slovaks from him and Tiso didn't trust him ((AXS 85)). He was included in the Unity Government in 1938 and again in early 1939, but was isolated by the rest of the Cabinet. Through German pressure he became Prime Minister on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1939, but still found himself outmanoeuvred by Tiso and the other Ministers. In early 1940 Tiso received a warning from the Germans that Foreign Minister Durcansky must stop expressing his anti-German attitude ((GLO 281)). Before 1939 Durcansky had worked with the Germans so as to put pressure on the Czechs, but he had no wish to substitute Czech rule with that of Germany ((AXS 85 and WS 437-438)). On June 30<sup>th</sup> 1940 Tiso, in a speech not pleasing to the Germans, said the Slovaks needed no foreign ideology to supplement their Catholicism ((AXS 85)).

Tiso was already unpopular with the Germans because he would not persecute the Jews ((See this Chapter, Section v)), so Tuka took this opportunity to visit Hitler. He asked for Slovakia to be incorporated into Germany with himself to be made President in place of Tiso.

Within a few weeks Hitler summoned Tiso and his Ministers to a meeting at Salzburg ((AXS 86)). Hitler intended to put an end to all anti-German attitudes in Slovakia and the Salzburg meeting was a major defeat for Tiso. In order to prevent direct day-to-day intervention in Slovak affairs, Tiso had to dismiss Durcansky and appoint Tuka as Foreign Minister as well as Prime Minister. Sano Mach, a colleague of Tuka, became Minister of the Interior. At the same time a new German representative was sent to Slovakia with the aim of fighting 'Political Catholicism, Jews, Freemasons, Pan-Slavs and the Durcansky clique' ((NR 63)).

On his return home Tuka declared: "It doesn't matter to me whether 99% or 1% are with me, I will carry out my aim". Tuka wanted Nazi style National Socialism to be established ((GLO 283)), but had such little support in the country and amongst the rest of the Cabinet that he had no success ((GLO 283)). In early 1941 Tuka prepared to seize complete power, but Tiso rallied his supporters to prevent it ((GLO 283)). Hitler allowed Tiso to remain as President because he was popular with his people. His replacement by the much disliked Tuka would have led to civic unrest at a time when German troops were required elsewhere.

At the same time Tiso knew that he would be deposed if he showed open criticism of Hitler. So he gave verbal tribute to Hitler, including expressing gratitude for his help in achieving Slovak independence, in order to eliminate or minimise German interference ((AXS 87)). Tiso's public praises of Hitler were tactical and not made out of any admiration for Hitler or Nazi ideology, which he disliked ((AXS 87)). He explained his policy in his own words:

'They [the Germans] were aware of their superiority and of certain success in case they decided to intervene, for they saw in us a small people and a small state. On the other hand, they considered it unnecessary to intervene in Slovak affairs before these became a serious danger from their point of view. My efforts were directed to confirm their belief for as long as possible, to facilitate the undisturbed and conscious development of Slovakia'. ((LGN 19-20)).

Tiso hoped that Germany would not directly intervene in life of Slovakia if he: (1) treated the German minority with justice and granted it broad cultural freedom, (2) banned Communist and any other Marxist pro-Soviet activity and (3) limited Jewish power.

By pursuing this policy he was successful in keeping the SS and racism out of Slovakia for six years. He prevented Nazi teachings entering the schools and most of the youth organisations. His policies shielded the nation so that Christian values could be promoted and the Slovaks saved from the deprivations suffered by other peoples. As a Slavonic race these deprivations could have developed into genocide. The price he had to pay was that of making subservient gestures towards Hitler and from time to time uttering words of praise for Germany. It is these words, torn from their historical context, that have been used by enemies of Slovakia and the Catholic Church to blacken Fr. Tiso's name.

Tiso's policy was firmly supported by the Slovak Catholic bishops and clergy. Their aim was to protect and promote a Christian anti-Nazi and anti-Communist humane society. ((AXS 90-91)).

After the war, Archbishop Kmetko said that he regarded Tiso's regime as a guarantee that Slovaks would not have to fear Nazism ((AXS 92)).

#### **iv) FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE WAR**

The Agreement of August 1939, signed when Slovakia 'asked' for German 'protection', included a clause stipulating that Slovak foreign policy must support that of Germany. So Slovakia was not independent in the full sense of the word, but had a degree of internal autonomy within the German Empire. But for Slovaks who had been ruled by the Hungarians for a thousand years and the Czechs for twenty years, this degree of internal independence was a great historic achievement.

When Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1939, Slovakia assisted the Germans and permanently occupied five small districts. As Poland had seized three of these in 1920 and the other two in March 1938, the Slovaks felt entitled to regain them. Hitler offered further land in the Tatra mountains but being a non-Slovak speaking area it was refused ((MSDF 20 and AXS 82)).

In June 1941, at the time Germany invaded the USSR, Tiso was away from his capital city. Tuka, without consulting him, ordered two divisions of the regular army to join the invasion. Tiso declared that the war was not to the benefit of Slovakia, yet admitted that the country had to comply with the agreement signed with Germany ((LGN 20)). In December of the same year, Tuka declared war on Britain and America. But Tiso hurried to point out that no competent state organ had declared war, so officially Slovakia was still at peace with the Western Allies ((LGN 20)).

Tiso's attitude to the war against the Soviet Union was more complicated. There were many politicians throughout Europe who supported Hitler when he was victorious but became silent as the tide of war changed. By the closing months of the war they often re-emerged as collaborators of Stalin. Tiso did not follow this path. During the first period he tried to minimise Slovakia's involvement in Hitler's aggressive war against Russia, and in the second period he encouraged his people to oppose the spread of Soviet power.

Tiso declared that the Slovak participation in the war was only 'symbolic' ((AXS 117)). Only 20% of the troops mobilised during the First World War were sent to fight ((JMK/MSD)) and by 1943 Tiso had managed to bring them all home. ((JAM 131)).

When Hitler demanded a greater contribution of Slovak troops, they were refused ((AXS 94)). Tiso's sadness, at seeing his country as an ally of Germany, was well known. In November 1941 he visited Slovak troops in the Ukraine to see how the people had lived under communism. While visiting the monastery of Pecerskaja Lavra in Kiev, the building was dynamited. Tiso's life was saved because he had left the building a few minutes earlier than planned. This attempt on his life was probably carried out by Himmler's secret police, who always had an inimical attitude to Tiso ((UGD/MSD)).

Until 1943 Nazism was the greatest threat to Christian life in Slovakia, but as the Soviet armies advanced westwards, Communism became a greater threat. Also, the Czechoslovak exiles in London made it clear that they would neither consider the Slovaks having independence nor autonomy. For Tiso and the Slovak nationalists the future looked hopeless. So they grasped at straws. Their one hope was that the German generals would overthrow Hitler and ask for peace, If accepted, Soviet troops might halt at the frontiers of the USSR and the Germans return home. This would leave the peoples of Eastern Europe free to decide their own futures. So Tiso encouraged the Slovaks to provide economic assistance to the German defence of eastern Europe while secretly planning to break free from German control if the opportunity arrived. It is during this period that many pro-German and anti-Soviet (or anti-Communist or anti-Bolshevik) statements were made by Tiso. Many of these were directed against internal Communist revolutionaries rather than Stalin's armies.

The assertion that such statements showed Tiso to have been a fascist is not based on calm historical analysis but on Communist propaganda. Tiso often assisted anti-fascists. American and French soldiers who had escaped from German prison camps were granted asylum despite German protests ((GLO 277)). Italian and Rumanian diplomats who had deserted their fascist governments were also granted protection in Slovakia ((GLO 277)).

## v). THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Throughout Europe prior to the war, small Jewish minorities held power out of all proportion to their size. By dominating the banks, professions, publishing houses, industry and some of the political movements, they controlled the economic and cultural life of the countries in which they lived. In Czechoslovakia as a whole, 30 - 40% of invested capital was Jewish owned. ((EJ vol. 5, 1192)).

In Slovakia there were 90,000 Jews, so forming 3.35 % of the population ((MSDJ 3)), yet they owned almost half the entire wealth, and occupied most of the economically and civically important public functions ((MSDJ)). 72% of lawyers, 64% of doctors, 58% of restaurant owners and 37% of merchants were Jewish. They controlled 12,000 industrial enterprises including 90% of the textile industry. Tavern owners were proverbially Jewish so were blamed for spreading alcoholism ((AXS 88)). They had the same reputation regarding brothels and the distribution of pornography ((GLO 284)). As owners of large factories they were blamed for what were considered poor wages. They formed one of the major intellectual groups in the towns identified with materialism, communism and scepticism ((AXS 88)). As the media relied on Jewish businesses for advertising revenue, it was often accused of being subservient to Jewish interests. Czechs and Hungarians owned many of the remaining enterprises, so the Slovaks felt themselves to be servants in their own land. The Slovaks, as other peoples of Eastern Europe, saw anti-Semitism as a form of self-defence.

For most people at this time the expression 'anti-Semitism' merely indicated a desire to reduce Jewish power and influence so as to enable each nation to control its own destiny and develop its own culture. Demands to break Jewish power were very strong and many people wished the Jews would emigrate to Palestine or another country.

Extreme anti-Semites saw Jewish power as a facet of a conspiracy for world domination, but the answer to the historical and sociological questions as to why and how a small minority wielded such immense influence, was more complex than this simplistic view.

Many Catholics, as well as others, considered that governments had a moral right to limit Jewish economic and cultural domination. But insisted that this be achieved in a gradual, just and legal manner while respecting the human rights of Jews. This was a completely different attitude to that expressed in the pagan eugenic theories of the Nazis.

In February 1939, while still Prime Minister, Tiso said: "The Jewish Problem in Slovakia shall be solved justly, socially and humanely". ((MSDJ 5)). And in 1947 he agreed that he had set out to limit Jewish economic power, but that it was never: "brutal, inhuman, or . . . done out of racial hatred". He maintained that he wanted to give the Slovak nation only what rightfully belonged to it. ((AXS 89)).

During his first speech after taking power in October 1938, Tiso stressed that there should be no anti-Semitic arbitrary acts ((MSDJ 3 and 17)). On February 21st 1939 in an official pronouncement he declared: "It is proof of the maturity of our nation that despite all incitements the Slovak nation waited for the legal solution of the Jewish question ((MSDJ 18)), and in a broadcast on March 15th 1939 he threatened that anyone guilty of anti-Jewish acts would be prosecuted ((MSDJ 17)). So, unlike the rest of Europe, Slovakia was free from anti-Jewish outbursts ((GLO 284)).

On October 26th 1939 regulations were issued stipulating that Slovaks were to own 51% of Jewish firms. The 51% was not to be confiscated. Shares were to be purchased in the normal manner and the Jewish owner could choose to whom to sell ((MSDJ 6)). The Jewish owner would normally remain manager of the company ((MSDJ 5)). The percentage of Jews in the professions was to be reduced to their proportion of the general population ((MSDJ 6)). Tiso applied the same principle to other minorities, limiting the Germans for example to 5% of state positions ((MSDJ 21)). Tiso also supported the call by local Zionists for voluntary emigration to Palestine ((MSDJ 6)).

In February 1940 a further more precise law, regarding the reduction of Jewish participation in the professions to 4%, was passed. Although it is thought that this law was introduced due to German pressure, it still kept to the same principles ((MSDJ 6)). This law was too moderate for the Germans but Tiso and his government would not introduce nazi-type legislation. It was his refusal to pass harsh anti-Semitic laws that, amongst other matters, led to the critical Salzburg meeting when Tiso had to agree to appoint Tuka as Prime Minister ((See Section iii of this chapter)). So it could be said that the Slovaks lost part of their independence because of Tiso's obstinate refusal to persecute the Jews. Despite delaying tactics by Tiso and his allies, Tuka passed the 'Jewish Code 198' on the 10th September 1941. It was similar to the German Nuremburg Laws with the additional item that all Jews were to move to the new Jewish state being established in the Lublin area of Poland ((GLO 287)). Tiso as said he would rather resign as President than sign the law.

Archbishop Kmetko, Fr. Tiso's religious superior, at first supported this stand ((FV 53)), but then realised that this would lead to Tuka becoming President and the establishment of a Nazi style regime. Many religious and political leaders, including those of the Jewish Community, therefore urged Tiso to stay ((AXS 90, GLO 287-8)). Although he was sympathetic to their arguments, he still refused to put his name to the law. Eventually it was promulgated without his signature. ((MSDJ 7, AXS 89 and GLO 287)).

'The inner circle of Tiso's camp was composed of Church leaders, indeed the Catholic Church was the main buttress of Tiso's regime' ((AXS 90)). The bishops had no sympathy with Nazism but saw that some co-operation with Germany was an unavoidable evil. Tiso made few important decisions without first consulting his own bishop ((AXS 90-91)), and the protests of the bishops and of the Holy See aided Tiso in his struggle against Tuka. The bishops' pastoral letter of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941 vigorously condemned the 'Jewish Code 198' ((GLO 290)). On November 12th the Holy See protested through its diplomatic mission, especially with regard to the forbidding of mixed marriages, the expulsion of Jewish children from schools and the separation of families by forced deportation ((GLO 290)). Accepting that the law had been promulgated the note ended:

'The Holy See hopes that the Slovak Government, as long as the government regulations are not repealed or amended, will try to explain and validate the issued regulations in such a measure and in such a manner, so that they might become as far as possible least harmful to the demands of the Catholic conscience'. ((GLO 290)).

Tiso did all he could, by using delaying tactics, to carry out this desire of the Holy See. He sent an investigator to Poland ((AXS 89-90)) where he was shown the new Jewish city of Sosnowitz in the province of Opel. It had its own city administration and police force, with all the appearances of a new Jewish Homeland. The investigator was assured that families would be kept together ((GLO 289)). Yet unease persisted regarding how humane the Germans would be, so for seventeen months little was done to implement the law. Then the Germans threatened that if the Slovaks didn't solve their 'Jewish Problem', they would intervene to do it for them ((GLO 290)). So on March 7th 1942 all Jews were ordered to stay in their homes and deportation to Poland commenced on March 10th. This brought further protests from Tiso's supporters and the Church, but to no effect ((GLO 291)).

On March 14<sup>th</sup> 1942, The Holy See protested that the human rights of Jewish deportees were not being respected ((AXS 89-90)). Rabbis in Slovakia were now even reporting that: 'deportation meant physical extermination'. ((EJ vol. 5, page 1196)).

By April, more rumours of harsh treatment were circulating, and Tiso insisted that another inspection team be sent to Poland. When the Germans refused to permit this, Tiso's supporters on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 passed a constitutional law overruling Tuka's control of Parliament ((GLO 291)). It widened the exceptions the President could make. It also provided that Jews still affected were to be held in camps within Slovakia ((GLO 291)). Up till this time 52,000 Jews had left for 'resettlement' in Poland, but 35,000 remained. In July 1942 the Holy See told Tiso that it had information that Jews sent to Poland were all being murdered. ((GLO 292)).

So in August Tiso made the German representative in Slovakia visit Berlin to obtain permission for another inspection team. In Berlin the representative was confidentially informed that the suspicions of the Holy See were correct. On his return to Slovakia he gave such evasive replies that Tiso refused to allow any more Jews to leave for Poland ((GLO 292)). A few had left during June and July but from the end of July, until Tiso officially stopped all deportations in September, there were no movements to Poland due to 'technical difficulties' (i.e. delaying tactics whilst the report from the Holy See was being checked).

The Germans went to great lengths to camouflage the European-wide plan to exterminate the Jewish race. They used, 'sophisticated methods of deception, fraud and camouflage'. ((EJ vol. 8 page 856)). It was not until the latter half of the war that suspicions turned to near certainty. The Slovak Jews themselves were asking non-Jewish travellers to take food, money and clothing to the deportees newly 'settled' in Poland ((EJ vol. 16 page 418)). According to Dr. Abeles, one of the leaders of Slovak Jewry, who testified at the 1961 Eichmann trial in Israel, the rumours of mass extermination were not confirmed until the spring of 1943 ((TRJ)).

So Tiso's attempts to prevent Jews being resettled on reservations in Poland during early 1942, was not due to knowledge that they were being systematically murdered. It was due to his growing suspicion that they were being badly treated and separated from their families. This indicates the respect Tiso had for the normal rights and dignity of Jews. The use of the word 'reservations' to describe a Jewish Homeland, allegedly being established in former Polish territory, was widely used. ((EJ vol. 8 pages 854 and 857)).

By 1943, after some Jews had crossed into Hungary, there were about 25,000 left in Slovakia. Many of the 3-4,000 in various Slovak camps, had false papers stating that they were Aryans, while others were in hiding in the countryside. ((EJ vol. 5 pages 1188 and 1197)).

It is difficult to calculate exact statistics, but Tiso used his Presidential right to exempt Jews from the stipulations of the Code 198 Law on at least 9,000 occasions. German documents mention 35,000 ((MSDJ 21)), but figures in such Nazi documents often prove to be exaggerations.

The International Red Cross inspected the camps within Slovakia and reported that: ' . . . the camps provided acceptable conditions of food and housing, the internees were permitted to work for a moderate wage in conditions nearing that in the free economy'. ((MSDJ 20 quoting RCICR vol. 1 page 674)). This body also stated that: 'At definite periods Slovakia was actually regarded as a relative asylum for Jews, especially those from Poland'. ((MSDJ 13 and GLO 293)). This was remarkable considering that Auschwitz was only 65 kilometres from the Slovak frontier. Bishop Skrabik testified in 1947 that Tiso was afraid that if he did more to help the Jews, the Germans would invade and so leave them with little chance of being saved. ((PSN 42)).

In May 1944 German troops occupied the whole country in order to fight Soviet armed partisans who had been landed by air to provoke a revolt. The Jews were now in very great danger. On February 5<sup>th</sup> Tuka and his associates resigned their positions and Stephan Tiso, a cousin of the President, became Premier ((GLO 301)). He rescinded all Tuka's laws and released all Jews from camps ((GLO 293)). On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1944 Hitler's personal representative forced the country to pass new regulations so as to place all the Jews in camps again but: 'The Authorities warned the Jews so they hid themselves'. ((RCICR vol. 1. page 674)). 'The hidden Jews could be aided not only by the population but also by the International Red Cross with the help of the Slovak Red Cross and the Catholic Church'. ((RCICR vol. 1 page 675)).

As the 'character assassination' of Fr. Tiso, was carried out mainly by the Communists, it is enlightening to read:

'Communists in Slovakia regarded persecution of the Jews as a minor evil . . . They equated Jewry with capitalism'. During the deportations to extermination camps, the Communists abstained from assisting the left-wing Zionists who contemplated armed resistance . . . Assistance to deported Jews was on a personal basis, and not a matter of policy' ((YAJ 108)).

*Also see addendum at end of booklet.*

## vi). THE SPEECH AT HOLIC

There is a passage from a speech made by Tiso at Holic on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 that is produced as 'proof' that he hated Jews. It was reported:

'As regards the Jewish question, people ask if what we do is Christian and humane. I ask that too: is it Christian if the Slovaks want to rid themselves of their eternal enemies the Jews? Love for oneself is God's command, and this love makes it imperative for me to remove anything harming me'. [A version of this extract giving its date as the 28<sup>th</sup> and reading: 'and His love' instead of 'and this love', is in error].

This one paragraph from one speech is produced out of context from a period lasting six years. It is then set forth as if it proved that Tiso wished to send all Jews to their deaths. But the timing of this speech needs to be carefully noted.

As recorded in section v of this chapter, the Holy See informed Tiso in July 1942 that it was coming to believe the astounding rumours that genocide was being practised on the whole Jewish race. In September Tiso stopped all movement of Jews to Poland. The Holic speech was made between these dates, so we need to carefully consider what was happening between these dates. To stop co-operating with the German 'resettlement' plan would involve the risk of provoking a German invasion and the establishment of a Nazi regime. Tiso was willing to take this risk in September because by then knew that genocide was taking place, but in July he was not yet sure that the reports were true. In August three things occurred:

(1).....Tiso insisted that a top ranking German officer visited Berlin to obtain permission for an inspection team to visit the new Jewish Homeland. ((MSDJ 12)).

(2).....'From the end of July to the middle of September the transports were suspended due to various "technical difficulties"' ((EJ vol. 5 pages 1196-7)).

(3).....Tiso spoke at Holic.

Attempts had to be made to allay any German suspicion that the, 'technical difficulties' were not genuine. It was at this precise juncture that Tiso included in his Holic speech a show of determination to send all Jews from the country.

It must be remembered that German agents reported back to Berlin every word Tiso spoke. The Germans suspected Tiso of being pro-Jewish. From documents in Hitler's 'Sicherheitsdienst' we read such statements regarding Tiso as: 'Totally under Jewish and Catholic influence'; 'inimical to Germans and a hater of the Germans'; 'For ideological reasons determined with all possible means to paralyse German influence in Slovakia'. ((UGD)).

We know that the non-Nazi German Minister in Slovakia, Hans Elard Ludin, advised Tiso to publicly speak up against the Jews so as to counter the information being sent by the agents to Berlin ((UGD)).

In this scenario the passage in Tiso's speech falls into place. Within a few days the German officer returned from Berlin without the permission for a team to visit Poland. Tiso then, at the risk of provoking his political overthrow, officially stopped all movement of Jews to Poland. Such action taken within a couple of weeks of his Holic speech clearly indicates that the words he used were part of a bluff to deceive the Germans.

The Germans knew that the Jewish Community was held responsible for helping the Hungarian attempts, during previous generations, to destroy Slovak culture ((EJ vol. 5 page 1193)). They also knew that since 1918 many Jews had co-operated with the Czechs to achieve the same objective ((AXS 88)), and had become part of the Czech establishment ((EJ vol. 5 page 1193)). So Tiso's use of the words, 'eternal enemies' and his desire to, 'remove anything harming' Slovakia, would have added authenticity to his bluff.

Dr. Imrich Karvas, a Lutheran freemason opposed to Slovak autonomy and thus not having any sympathy with Tiso's religious and political beliefs, was present at the speech and testified at Tiso's 'trial' in 1947. He said: "I doubt that from this could be deduced his support or agreement with the deportation action. As I knew him, I consider this with him as absolutely impossible". ((PSN 61)).

The writer of a section in a reference book states that Tiso in August 1942 at Holic justified deportations as: 'for the good of the Slovak nation, to free it of its pests'. To give such a false translation indicates that the writer was too blinded by his hatred of Tiso's politics to check his sources or consider the context of the speech.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **UPRISING AND OCCUPATION**

As the Germans retreated westwards, the Slovaks had to make plans to avoid the destruction of their country and at the same time achieve complete freedom. Slovakia was a very mountainous area, so it could be presumed that as Soviet forces advanced across the Polish and Hungarian plains, Slovakia would be left behind. Tiso planned to overthrow Tuka when Soviet troops reached Cracow in Poland or Miscovec in Hungary. ((See Map 1)). An all-party government would declare itself to be on the Allied side, as Italy had done ((GLO 297)). It was unlikely that the Germans would move forward into Slovakia. Having freed their own country, the Soviets would have no reason to invade and the Slovaks would possess a status at any post-war conference. The Slovaks informed both the Soviets and the Czechoslovaks in London, of their plans.

In May 1944 Soviet partisans were dropped by air into the country to start an uprising against Tiso. General Malar appealed over the radio to the army and people not to be fooled by the partisans. "Our time has not arrived . . . when it does come, we shall all pull at the same end of the rope". But Slovak Communists and others joined the uprising and this led to the Germans occupying the whole country. Once the Germans had arrived the partisans returned by air to the USSR. By this manoeuvre Stalin had destroyed all hopes of Tiso freeing his country from the Germans, and the Slovaks had to wait for the Red Army to 'liberate' them and establish a Communist dictatorship.

In the spring of 1945 the Red Army chased the Germans from the country and sent 150,000 people to prison or slave camps ((GLO 305-6)). Benes became President of a Communist dominated administration ((JFNB 169)). In May 1946 the Communists and Marxist Socialists, after excluding a considerable number of people from voting, gained a small majority in Parliament, but as the 1948 elections approached they realised they would be defeated ((JFNB 175)). To prevent this, the Marxists used their existing majority to establish a dictatorship. It may be noted that in 1946 the secular Marxist parties (Communist and Socialist) had received 56% of the Czech vote, but only 34% from the more religious and freedom-loving Slovaks ((KCA 7944)).

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **FR. TISO'S TRIAL**

Tiso refused a Soviet proposal to become President of a Slovak Soviet Republic ((LGN 34)), so retreated into Germany hoping to obtain assistance from Cardinal Faulhaber ((AXS 96)). But he fell into American hands ((FV 60)) and was handed to the Czechoslovak Communist dominated government. He was put before a Court of Communists, pro-Communists and Centralist Slovaks. He was not permitted to choose his own defence counsel, but witnesses were permitted to be heard. The Communist Party was calling for the death penalty ((FV 64)) and the President of the Court and two out of the three prosecuting judges were Communists ((FV 72)).

The bishops issued a letter on January 8<sup>th</sup> 1946 pointing out that: "Dr. Tiso was always a zealous priest of exemplary life. In his extensive activity he worked and laboured for the common good . . . The majority of the Slovak people agree with us that the intentions of Dr. Tiso in the execution of his public activity were always the best". ((FV 65-66)). Archbishop Kmetko declared that 90% of Slovaks welcomed independence and in Tiso's person saw a safeguard against the assaults of the Nazi ideology ((FV 67)). The Press published edited accounts only of the proceedings and gave the impression that Kmetko had criticised Tiso, but the full transcript shows this not to be true ((FV 67-8)).

Tiso declared: "If God allowed me to carry out my policy again under similar circumstances, I would do exactly as I have done". There were large-scale demonstrations and tanks were sent to Slovakia to prevent riots ((AXS 96-97)).

Considering the nature of the, 'trial' it was not surprising that he was found 'guilty' of 97 'crimes'. So Fr. Tiso, who had been the President of his country and credited by his Court-appointed defence counsel with having saved countless thousands of Jews and Christians from death, was hanged on April 18th 1947 as he said his rosary ((GLO 315)). As soon as his death was announced bells tolled all over Slovakia ((FV 76)).

# CHAPTER X **SPECIFIC ACCUSATIONS AGAINST TISO AND THE CHURCH**

## ACCUSATION 1

**The Catholic Church detested the establishment of a democratic, liberal and socialist Czechoslovakia and used all her influence to destroy it.**

## **ANSWER**

Both Czech and Slovak Catholics strove very hard to establish the new state. The Catholic organisations in America, to a great extent led by the clergy, also provided immense financial and political support during the struggle for independence.

Between April 1920 and September 1938 Czecho-Slovakia was ruled, apart from two periods of non-party administration, by eleven coalition governments. The Czechoslovak Peoples Party, led by clergy, had a minimum of two Ministers in ten of them ((AXS 127-131)).

Many Germans refused to take part in the new state, but the German Catholic led 'Christian Social Party' was an, 'Activist party', i.e. one that cooperated with the Czechoslovak state and had two Ministers in the two governments which ruled from October 26<sup>th</sup> 1926 till December 29<sup>th</sup> 1929. ((EW 132)).

Tiso, as a representative of the Slovak Peoples Party, joined the Cabinet in January 1927 and his party had two Ministries in the government that ruled from February 1927 to December 1929. This government had five Ministers from the three Catholic parties in a 15 member Cabinet ((AXS 127-131)).

'In 1926, when the Fascists planned a coup, they were defeated by Masaryk, the Agrarians and the Catholics'. ((VO 159)).

It was not religious issues as such which caused the Slovak Peoples Party to refuse to take part in more Ministries, but the dispute over autonomy.

The Church did object to the anti-religious and anti-Catholic policies of the secular Communists, Socialists and National Socialists, but worked for peace and stability by means of a Concordat, which was signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1928.

## **ACCUSATION 2**

**The Vatican and the German Nazis co-operated for years in encouraging Slovak demands for independence, as this would thereby destroy Socialist Czechoslovakia.**

### **ANSWER**

Bishops and priests in Slovakia held differing political views. Several bishops and many priests supported the right of Slovakia to autonomy. But Archbishop Kmetko, Tiso's immediate superior ((AXS 91)), was associated with the Czechoslovak Peoples Party ((AXS 101)). This Catholic inspired party was opposed to Slovak autonomy ((See Chapter IV section 4)) and its leader, Fr. Sramek, was one of the strongest opponents of Slovak autonomy ((AXS 59)). At no time did a bishop encourage agitation for Slovak independence, but one bishop did regret the break with Hungary ((AXS 90)),

Captured German documents indicate that Hitler did not favour Slovak independence until February 1939 ((GLO 241)).

## **ACCUSATION 3**

**The devout Catholic Konrad Henlein led the devout Catholic Sudetenlanders to demand union with Hitler's Germany.**

### **ANSWER**

Konrad Henlein left the Catholic Church as a young man to become a Protestant ((EW 231)). Although not a supporter of the pagan Nazis, he wished to exclude Christian principles from public life ((EW 222, 230 and 231)). The Catholic inspired German Christian Social Party fought Henlein's party at every election.

When in February 1938, Frs. Hlinka and Tiso favoured co-operation with the Hungarian, German and Polish minorities, it was merely as a tactical move to co-ordinate opposition to the government's centralist policies ((AXS 63)).

#### **ACCUSATION 4**

**The threats of Catholic Hungary were part of the Vatican's aim to destroy Czechoslovakia.**

#### **ANSWER**

Admiral Horthy, ruler of Hungary, was a Protestant ((NEB vol. 6 page 75)). During the 1930s the Catholic Church in Hungary was distributing millions of leaflets attacking Nazi paganism ((JM 5)), and publicising the Pope's encyclical of 1937 which condemned Nazi ideology and its policies ((JM 5)).

#### **ACCUSATION 5**

**The Papal Nuncio in 1933 published a letter encouraging the Slovaks to claim independence.**

#### **ANSWER**

His letter was a sharp criticism of the anti-Catholic bigotry he was meeting in Czech Government circles ((See Appendix G)). Not one word in the letter advocated Slovak autonomy or independence.

#### **ACCUSATION 6**

**Tiso showed his fascist views when he established a one-party state and banned Socialists, Communists, Jews and Liberals.**

#### **ANSWER**

After the Munich Agreement, Hitler was seeking a pretext to invade the remains of Czecho-Slovakia. He loudly pointed to the 1935 pact with the Soviet Union and the strong Socialist and Communist parties together with their Trade Unions. His radios daily repeated that the Czechs were planning to allow the Soviet airforce to use Czech bases near the German frontier. He said that Czech politicians were under the control of Jews, and that democratic regimes were too weak to resist a Communist seizure of power.

As Czecho-Slovakia was at the mercy of the large German army, steps were taken to remove any pretext Hitler might use as an excuse to invade.

In Slovakia democracy was replaced by a strong National Unity Party, the Communists and marxist Socialists were banned, as was the Jewish Party. Efforts were also made to avoid offending Germany in foreign policy.

The largest parties in Czechia also decided to form a National Unity Party ((KCA 3371)), and democratic elections were abolished when the President assumed authoritarian powers ((KCA 3366)). The Czechs promised to adopt a loyal attitude towards Germany ((KCA 3300)) and agreed that its future lay with Italy and Germany ((KCA 3316)). The marxist Socialist party withdrew from the Socialist International, took a new name and changed its policy so as not to give offence to Hitler ((KCA 3300)). The Communist party was banned in October ((ZZ 163)) and all Jewish teachers in German speaking schools suspended. ((WS 438)). Similar action, including the formation of a National Unity Party, was also taken in Ruthenia.

So the Czech anti-Catholic leaders acted in basically the same way as the Catholic leaders of Slovakia. The motivation in both cases was fear, not a sudden conversion to Nazism or fascism.

A party called 'Liberal' did not exist in Slovakia. When Tiso attacked 'liberalism' he was not thinking of a party like the British one of that name, but of the philosophy of uncontrolled capitalism which permitted financial institutions to control the destiny of countries without concern for their common good or for social justice ((AXS 108)).

The Jewish Party was bitterly opposed by half the Jewish population, especially those who were religious. These and other Jews voted for parties such as the Agrarians. The Zionists sponsored the Jewish Party which was closer to the teachings of Karl Marx than to that of the rabbis. In 1935 it had an election pact with the Socialists ((EJ vol. 5 page 1191)). To permit an extreme left-wing party dedicated to increasing Zionist strength would have certainly provoked an intervention by Hitler.

As a firm adherent of Catholic Social teachings, which insist on the rights of free Trade Unions, Tiso would view any limitations on them as a temporary measure in a time of crisis.

The impression is sometimes given that the Communist party was banned because it continued to oppose Slovak autonomy. But this is not correct. When the eight parties gathered on October 6th 1938 to proclaim autonomy, the Communist Party's Regional Executive was meeting in the same town, and 'hastened to endorse autonomy' ((YAJ 33)).

The previous day the Czechoslovak Communists had urged: "Let us give the Slovaks everything necessary". ((YAJ 33)). The Communists approved Slovakia's autonomy and wished to be included in discussions with the Unity Party ((YAJ 137)). But the Unity Party did not trust their last minute change of heart and offer of assistance. They knew that they were ultimately under orders from Moscow. On December 26th the leader of the Party, now in Moscow, publicly admitted:

"We Communists represented in Slovakia the national interests of the Czech nation, while Slovak national interests were better represented by the Hlinka Party . . . Only at the last moment, as the Czechoslovak crisis was reaching a climax, did we put forward a demand for the democratic solution of the Slovak problem, i.e. the granting of full autonomy" ((YAJ 33 and 34)).

### **ACCUSATION 7**

**By Slovakia declaring independence it became impossible for Czechoslovakia to defend itself against Germany.**

### **ANSWER**

Once Austria became united with Germany in March 1938, Hitler's army could advance north from Vienna to easily cut Czechoslovakia in two. The defences built in the mountainous Sudetenland had been surrendered in October 1938 and most of the army had been demobilised due to German threats. Britain, France and the USSR were not willing to assist, while Poland and Hungary were threatening to invade. So the forced acceptance of independence by Slovakia had no military implications.

### **ACCUSATION 8**

**Fr. Tiso was on Hitler's side during the war and so tarnished the reputation of the Church.**

### **ANSWER**

Slovakia was not a willingly ally of Hitler. Tiso did not wish to see Slovaks die for Hitler or Stalin, so sometimes had to compromise. The critics of Tiso judge him by criteria that were not applied to others. All countries were willing to compromise so as to protect their self-interests in their desperate attempts to avoid becoming involved in the war.

Britain and France were the only countries to fight without first being attacked, and even they had compromised in 1938. America and the Soviet Union, two strong nations, both put their peoples' immediate welfare first. So is it just to criticise Tiso and his tiny country? Let us look at two other small countries; Denmark and Sweden.

1) The Danish government ordered its troops not to resist when invaded and undertook a policy of 'loyal co-operation'. Its king and government continued in power, while part of Hitler's Europe. It became known as 'the model Protectorate' ((WS 698-700)). Danes were permitted to join the SS and go to fight in Russia.

2) In 1940 Sweden allowed 140,000 fresh German troops and supplies to cross their country to relieve German army units in northern Norway. The troops thereby avoided the risky sea route along the coast. Later a fully armed division was allowed to pass through on its way to invade Russia in June 1941. All during the war Sweden supplied valuable and vital raw materials to Germany ((WS 709711)). The alternative was to face a German invasion to obtain these essential deposits.

The compromising policies of these governments are very understandable and we do not hear condemnations of the aid their leaders thereby gave Hitler. If Sweden had refused to co-operate, many German troops would have been needed to occupy such a mountainous area. We do not hear their leaders called, 'Pro-German fascists'. Such selective condemnation raises questions. Possibly it is because Sweden and Denmark were Protestant countries with Social Democratic governments, whereas Slovakia was Catholic with a non-Socialist government. Swedish Socialism was greatly admired at the time by the 'intellectual' authors and writers of the British Labour Movement.

We might also bear in mind that the threat to Slovakia, with its Slavonic 'racially inferior' people, was much greater than that faced by Aryan Denmark and Sweden. As Aryans they would have been treated, even as enemies, with respect and not have been exposed to mass genocide.

As for the Church, Her actions in advising and supporting Tiso did not 'tarnish' Her reputation. Any 'tarnish' has come from her enemies spreading the sort of falsehoods being considered in this Publication.

## **ACCUSATION 9**

**Tiso saw himself as a demigod like Hitler and Mussolini.**

### **ANSWER**

There is no evidence that Tiso adhered to Hitler's or Mussolini's concept of being 'The Leader'. At public political meetings he never invoked the kind of mass hysteria Hitler did ((AXS 92)). He allowed his Ministers a great deal of personal judgement in their departments ((AXS 91)). He did not force his will on the Slovak people but was their popular President. He offered Mass every day and remained Parish Priest of Banovce to where he had been appointed in 1924 ((AXS 34)). When possible he drove to Banovce on Saturdays so as to be with his parishioners on Sunday ((AXS 92)). There was little aloofness about him or affectation in his manner ((AXS 92)). He walked freely about his capital city Bratislava without a bodyguard, and when asked about this, he only replied "Why should I be afraid, these are my people." ((AXS 92)).

## **ACCUSATION 10**

**Tiso established the SS type Hlinka Guard.**

### **ANSWER**

The Hlinka Guard was established the year before Tiso became President and was mainly under the leadership of Sidor (the man Czecho-Slovak President Hacha appointed Slovak Prime Minister in March 1939). He was a moderate man and anti-German. Due to German threats he was sent out of the country in July 1941 as Ambassador to the Holy See. At the same time German threats caused Mach, who was pro-Tuka, to be appointed Minister of the Interior. This brought the Hlinka Guard under his control ((AXS 70-71)). It then came into collision with Tiso's policies and was guilty of excesses against Jews and Czechs ((AXS 70)).

Tiso continued to receive support from the Academic Guard, but under German pressure this student organisation was dissolved in March 1942 ((AXS 86)). Tiso managed to retain control of the Party with his policy of Christian Socialism, while the Hlinka Guard promoted Tuka's brand of National Socialism. 'The contest between Tuka and Tiso, which continued to the end of the war, was played out in a struggle between the party and the Hlinka Guard'. ((AXS 86)). Tiso considered that to install the Hlinka Guard in power would be an attack against the basic fabric of the Slovak nation ((AXS 110)).

## ACCUSATION 11

**Tiso was a racist.**

### **ANSWER**

Tiso was certainly very proud of his Slovak culture, but also respected the rights of those with other cultures. The history of the Magyar (Hungarian) minority within Slovakia is instructive.

Between the two world wars the centralist Socialist Czechoslovak governments discriminated against the Hungarians to the point of actual persecution (See Chapter IV, 3). On Slovakia gaining autonomy the Hungarians were allowed to open schools and develop their cultural activities. But during 1944, the anti-Tiso uprising, the left-wing authorities outlawed these schools in the area of southern Slovakia they controlled ((YAJ 111)). Later that year German troops drove out the left-wing pro-Czech partisans, enabling Tiso's government to have some control over civilian administration. The Hungarian schools were opened again during the winter of 1944-45 but, once Tiso was forced to leave Slovakia, they were closed ((YAJ 112)). Persecution then entered an even worse phase.

All Hungarian speakers had their citizenship cancelled and 325,000 'requested' to become Slovaks so as to rescue their livelihood and property ((YAJ 114)). 68,000 were expelled to Hungary: a figure that would have been much larger if the Paris Peace Conference had not intervened ((YAJ 114)). Thousands more were compelled to move to the Sudetenland ((YAJ 115)), which was being cleared of three million people by forcible expulsion to Germany ((JFNB 170)). Brutality was not absent from the treatment of both the German and Hungarian deportees being uprooted from their homes and culture ((YAJ 114-5)).

History thus shows that it was Tiso's enemies who were racist, not him. It is instructive to compare the lack of interest in these mass movements of population, while Tiso's agreement in 1941 for 52,000 Jews to be humanely resettled, as he thought, in a new Jewish Homeland is presented as a great crime.

## ACCUSATION 12

### **In 1944 the Pope condemned Tiso's treatment of the Jews.**

#### **ANSWER**

In September 1944 Burzio, Papal Nuncio to Slovakia, informed Rome that the police were rounding up the Jews. On the 19th the Holy See instructed him to intervene with the Slovak Foreign Ministry and Tiso on their behalf. The following day the Holy See appealed to Sidor, Slovak Ambassador to the Vatican, for action to protect the Jews.

A few days later Burzio reported that the Slovak government had declared it 'would not consent to their deportation', and Sidor was able to state that Tiso had personally protested to the Germans on the basis of the Constitution and had been promised that such activity would cease ((RAG 28)).

But on October 26th Burzio informed the Vatican that the search for Jews was continuing and that the Slovak government had lost its independence. By not resigning it appeared that Tiso was acting as a willing accessory to German actions. As Tiso was not only the President but also a priest, the situation was providing the Church's enemies with an opportunity to slander Her. A further telegram instructed Burzio to go immediately to Tiso and tell him that: 'the information had stricken His Holiness with deep sorrow because of the suffering caused to many people of Slovakia because of their nationality or race against the principles of humanity and justice. In the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, come back to the sentiments and policies conforming to his dignity and priestly conscience.' It continued to declare that the injustices committed by Tiso's government were injuring the prestige of his country and that enemies were taking the opportunity for discrediting the clergy and the Church throughout the world ((SSVG 54 and 462)).

Burzio saw Tiso on the 4th of November and spoke to him not as a President but as a priest. Tiso replied that he would draw up a personal answer for the Holy Father, which was handed to Burzio five days later. Being a private letter, not a telegram, it did not arrive in Rome until December 19th. In the meantime more alarming reports were being received in Rome. One said that Slovak police had placed 400 Jews in a camp and then handed them over to the Germans for deportation. So in November the Holy See despatched another telegram to Burzio urging him and the Slovak bishops to exert all possible influence on the government 'so that any Jews still in Slovak territory may be treated in a humane and Christian way'. ((RAG 29-30)).

On the same day Sidor was informed of the indignation of the Holy See at the failure of the Slovak government to maintain its pledge. The Vatican note concluded with: 'This news, in contradiction with the assurances received above, has been learned with deep sorrow by the Holy See which, once more, finds itself in the painful necessity of expressing its regret. The Holy See hopes that the Slovak government, in accordance with the principles of the Catholic religion, to which the vast majority of the people belong, will leave no stone unturned in order that the Jews who are still in the territory of the Republic may not be subjected to even more severe sufferings'. ((RAG 30))

From the wording of this telegram and the note, it can be seen that Rome did not possess at that time a clear picture of the confusing and fast changing situation within Slovakia. The Germans claimed that their troops were merely helping the Slovak government to restore order. The Left-wing rebels and the Soviet Union claimed the Slovak government was still the enemy. So the telegram had been composed on the presumption that the government administered the country and was therefore responsible for the unjust events taking place there. But the real situation was quite different.

Tiso and his ministers had not resigned but were endeavouring to maintain their legal and moral right to represent the sovereignty of the Slovak people. But: 'From September 1944 Tiso's authority extended only to Bratislava and its environs' ... for all practical purposes the German army was the real authority in the country until the end of the war'. ((AXS 95)). German Einsatzgruppen Units (specially formed to hunt and murder Jews) killed thousands during the uprising and afterwards, as well as deporting 13,500 ((EJ Vol. 5 page 1197)). On January 2nd 1945 the President of the International Red Cross Committee wrote to Tiso asking that the deportations be ended. With much sadness Tiso answered on the 10th that everything possible had been done until the revolt. From then on it was impossible to help the Jews officially. ((LGN 28)).

The full story regarding the group of 400 Jews was that they had been taken under the special care of the Slovak Foreign Ministry and guarded by Slovak police because they possessed American or South American passports. But the Germans seized the camp and declared that all but four of the passports were forgeries. They then deported the others to Germany. ((RAG 30)).

On December 19th Tiso's letter arrived in Rome and he took the opportunity to defend his record since 1938. He asserted that he and Slovakia had been the object of vilification by their enemies. Regarding the current situation he explained that since August, when the Germans had arrived to put down the uprising, they had been in command of the military operations.

He wrote that the Slovak government was not responsible for the ensuing events, and the Germans refused to listen to the Slovak protests that the Jews were protected by the Constitution. He affirmed that he had always kept the dignity of the priesthood before his eyes and that it was hypocrisy for his enemies to express concern for the reputation of the clergy. He had not acted on the basis of his own judgments, but had consulted the best advisors within the Church. ((SSVG 54-55 and 475-477)).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **AN EXTRACT FROM A REPORT FROM THE U.S. LEGATION ON 9 MARCH 1939.**

**'It is not clear why these two questions, namely of finance and defence, which have been chronic causes of conflict ever since the inception of the new political system in Czechoslovakia, should now suddenly have led to a minor crisis in the relations between the regional and the central governments, accompanied by threatening hints of complete secession of Slovakia from the Czechoslovak republic. Some observers are inclined to suspect that the real reason is that the Czechs, who were compelled by the magnitude of their reverses on other frontiers, to play more or less a passive role throughout the fall and early winter, have now gained courage and are talking to the Slovaks as well as to the Ruthenians in a much more vigorous and confident tone. In doing so they doubtless have reason to believe, or to suspect, that there is a certain amount of bluff involved on both sides in the relations between the Slovaks and the Germans and that Berlin is not actually going to raise any serious objections if the Czechs insist on increased political control in Slovakia as a condition for their financial support.**

**If this supposition is correct, it is not difficult to understand why the most radical wing of the present Slovak regime, composed of people who are still hostile in the extreme to the Czechs and to the idea of a Czechoslovak state and have consistently advocated the complete independence of Slovakia, should have taken alarm in no uncertain way and begun to cry out that Slovakia must secede at once or the Czechs would soon re-establish their domination. This applies particularly to Professor Tuka and to Slovak Propaganda Chief, Mach, together with their hot-blooded followers in the ranks of the Hlinka Guard.**

**In any case, talk of, complete independence became rife in Bratislava last week just at the time when the deliberations of the Slovak ministers were in progress in Berlin and in Prague.**

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE 860F.00/736, PRAGUE,  
9 MARCH 1939**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TELEGRAM FROM U.S. LEGATION ON 13 MARCH 1939 REPORTING CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHVALKOVSKY**

**His [Chvalkovsky] explanation of the occurrences was that a group of Slovaks in and out of the government purporting to represent the majority of the Slovaks attempted to set up an independent government under the protection of Germany. This was prevented by the action taken the night of the ninth and subsequently. Tiso, though probably not implicated in the movement, was too weak to prevent it. While Germany does not appear to have been directly supporting the enterprise it was admitted confidentially (repeat confidentially) that there is no doubt that Germany was looking upon it sympathetically and that German authorities in Vienna had probably been given to understand that they were free to encourage the disaffected Slovaks.**

**The Minister claims that Sidor and the members of the new government represent the majority of the Slovaks and that they do not wish to separate from the Czechoslovak state. This is undoubtedly true as to Sidor whose present personal ambitions are inconsistent with an independent Slovakia under German protection.**

**The Foreign Minister was clearly under a heavy strain and it seemed pretty clear that his principal preoccupation was the exact attitude of Germany respecting which he professes to be still in ignorance.**

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE 860F.00/606 PRAGUE  
13 MARCH 1939**

## APPENDIX C

**Extract from the 35-minute conversation between Hitler and Tiso on 13 March 1939. Hitler's first 'disappointment' was the renewal of what he called "the intolerable Benes spirit".**

**Our second disappointment had been the attitude of Slovakia. Last year the Fuhrer had been faced with a difficult decision as to whether or not to allow Slovakia to be occupied by the Hungarians. In thinking that Slovakia wanted union with Hungary, the Fuhrer had misjudged the situation. The reason for this mistake was the distance separating Slovakia from Germany and the weight of the greater problems which at that time overshadowed this problem. It was only during the crisis that the Fuhrer had departed from this idea. Then for the first time he had heard and noticed that Slovakia wanted to lead an independent existence.**

**In his decisions at Munich the Fuhrer had taken not the course of power politics but that of ethnic principles [*volkspolitische Wege*]. He had done something which had alienated him from his friend Hungary, namely, put this principle into practice for Hungary, too. He had repeatedly explained this months before.**

**Now he had sent . . . his envoy to Pressburg [Bratislava] and Sidor had told the latter that he . . . would oppose a withdrawal of Slovakia from the Czechoslovak union. If the Fuhrer had known earlier, he need not have fallen out with his friend Hungary but could have left matters as they were at the time.**

**He had now summoned Minister Tiso in order to clear up this question in *a very short time*. Germany had no interests east of the Carpathians. It was a matter of complete indifference to him what happened there. The question was, did Slovakia want to lead an independent existence or not? He wanted nothing from Slovakia. He would not stake his people, or even a single soldier, for something which the Slovak people did not want at all. He wanted a final confirmation as to what Slovakia really wanted. He did not want Hungary to reproach him for preserving something which did not want to be preserved. . . . It was a question not of days but of hours. He had previously said that if Slovakia wished to become independent he would support and even guarantee her efforts in that direction. He would keep his promise as long as Slovakia clearly expressed the desire for independence. If she hesitated or refused to be separated from Prague, he would leave the fate of Slovakia to events for which he was no longer responsible. Then he would look after German interests only, and they did not extend east of the Carpathians.**

**Germany had nothing to do with Slovakia. She had never belonged to Germany.**

**The Fuhrer asked the Reich Foreign Minister if he had anything further to add . . . He handed to the Fuhrer a report just received announcing Hungarian troop movements on the Slovak frontier. The Fuhrer read this report, told Tiso of its contents, and expressed the hope that Slovakia would reach a decision soon.**

**DOCUMENTS ON GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, WASHINGTON, PAGES 244-245**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **THE HUNGARIAN THREAT**

On March 13th 1939, the day Slovakia was offered 'protection' by Hitler, the Regent of Hungary, Nicholas Horthy, had sent the following telegram to Hitler: "Your Excellency — my sincere thanks, I can hardly tell you how happy I am because this Carpathian Head Water Region — I dislike using big words — is of vital importance to the life of Hungary. In spite of the fact that our recruits have only been serving five weeks, we are going into this affair with eager enthusiasm. The dispositions have already been made. On Thursday, the sixteenth of this month, a frontier incident will take place which will be followed by the big blow on Saturday. I shall never forget this proof of our friendship, Your Excellency may rely on my unshakeable gratitude at all times. Your devoted friend — Horthy."

N.B. Horthy called Slovakia the 'Carpathian Head Water Region'.  
From: 'Slovakia and its People', by G.L. Oddo, page 248

## **APPENDIX E**

### **THE RECOGNITION OF SLOVAKIA BY BRITAIN**

Bratislava, May 4, 1939

Your Excellency:

On the instructions of the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to inform you that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom proposes to appoint me as Consul for Slovakia with residence in Bratislava. Pending preparation of my Commission I have the honour to request provisional recognition by the Slovak Government of myself as His Majesty's Consul for Slovakia. I avail myself of this opportunity to express to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

PARES, M.P. Consul

From: 'Slovakia and its People' by G.L. Oddo, page 259

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## **APPENDIX F**

### **THE RECOGNITION OF SLOVAKIA BY THE U.S.S.R.**

On September 17th, 1939, the Soviet Union, through its ambassador to Berlin, announced its de facto and de jure recognition of the Slovak Republic.

Statement made by the first Soviet ambassador to Bratislava, G. Puskin, on presenting his credentials to President Tiso:

"Presenting to you the documents which accredit me as Envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, appointed by the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, I can announce to you with joy that the nations of the Soviet Union have taken cognizance of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Slovak Republic with deep satisfaction. Because of the war in Europe the establishment of these relations transcends the framework of mutual interests of both our states."

From: 'Slovakia and its People' by G.L. Oddo, page 259

## APPENDIX G

During 1933 the Czech press, especially 'Venkov', which was the organ of the Prime Minister's Party, published a series of articles and strong press attacks on the Vatican and the Papal Nuncio, Mgr Ciriaci. Although the Prime Minister disassociated himself from the attacks, they reflected the anti-Catholic attitude dominating the 'left-wing' government at that time.

As a way of publicly protesting at this situation, the Nuncio wrote a letter to 'Slovak', the organ of the Slovak People's Party, which was printed on September 15th.

"While his Holiness is being treated in Prague, either directly or through his representative, in a manner altogether disregarding international courtesy, you Slovaks have shown due reverence to the high authority of the Holy Father. For this you and yours deserve to be praised.

I also thank you and yours for having brought solace to the Papal Nuncio, who in obedience to the Holy Father, is obliged to live in Prague in bitter affliction. This I shall never forget. I shall always remember the noble Slovak nation. It is a pleasure to me to represent the Holy Father amongst these Slovaks.

This letter may be published."

Following the letter's publication, the Cabinet asked the Vatican to call Mgr Ciriaci to Rome for an official investigation. The Bishops of Czechoslovakia issued a statement supporting the Nuncio. The dispute continued for some time.

The London Times: 1933, September 18, October 26, and December 2.

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## **ADDENDUM**

After completion of this booklet, a leaflet was composed to provide a summary: 'FR. TISO – A MUCH MALIGNED PRIEST'. But, while being assembled, additional material was incorporated into it. This material was taken from:

Dr. Josef Tiso and Modern Slovakia by A. X. Sutherland, First Catholic Slovak Union, July 1978. Pages 88 and 89.

The Political Program of President Tiso by L. G. Nardini, Padova University, 1984 Pages 22 and 23.

The Foreign policy of the Slovak Republic by M. S. Durica, Padova University, 1984. Pages 3, 7, 13 -15, 17 -19, 25 - 28, 32 and 33,

L'Olocausto Nella Slovacchia E La Chiesa Cattolica by Walter Brandmuller, Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2003 pages 27 - 29.

The London Times for 1939.

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This version: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007