

The Role of Professor Władysław Semkowicz and the Jagiellonian University in Promoting Polonophilia in Slovakia in the Interwar Period¹

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Matula P. (2020). The Role of Professor Władysław Semkowicz and the Jagiellonian University in Promoting Polonophilia in Slovakia in the Interwar Period. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12/1, 124–133.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2020-011>

The interwar relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland were tense for almost twenty years. Problems were caused not only by border disputes. In this situation, the interest of young Slovak intelligence in Polish culture and science began to increase in the early 1920s, which was supported by Warsaw, in its efforts to undermine the position of Prague. A well-known Slovakophile, Professor Władysław Semkowicz played an important role in supporting young Slovaks. His largest impact on Slovak-Polish relations was his patronage of visiting Slovak students at the Jagiellonian University. Semkowicz's efforts gradually bore fruit. Many of the programme participants promoted Polish literature, art and history after their return home. This Polonophilia was not limited to the cultural sphere but also had an effect on politics. At the end of 1938, the Polish territorial claims against Slovakia severely disappointed the Polonophiles. Nevertheless, there were a number of Slovaks who kept their contacts in Polish cultural circles and continued to have pro-Polish sentiments even after the country's defeat in September 1939.

Key words: *Slovak-Polish relations; 1918–1939; polonophiles; Władysław Semkowicz; Jagiellonian University*

Slovak-Polish relations after the First World War were determined by the different positions from which the two nations started. While the Poles had their own state, the Slovaks played “second fiddle” in the Czechoslovak Republic despite officially being part of the declared state-forming Czechoslovak nation. Furthermore, the large population, strong national consciousness and historical traditions of the Poles made them one of the well-established nations. The Slovaks

¹ This study was written with a support of the Slovak Scientific Grant Agency (VEGA) no. 1/0711/19 Historical Science and Modern Education system in Slovakia – Theory of Historical Cognition in the transformation of Slovak 19th–20th Centuries History Teaching.

had only just emerged from the long and difficult period of Magyarisation² and their everyday problems were completely different from those of their northern neighbour. To put it simply, while the restoration of their own state made the Poles a subject in international politics, the Slovaks remained more of an “object”.

In the period immediately before and after obtaining independence, the foreign policy objectives of Czechoslovak and Polish representatives were very close. During the war, they were united by the aim of defeating the axis powers, establishing their own states and creating new political conditions in Central and Eastern Europe. This common goal encouraged their cooperation and temporarily suppressed their differing political visions of the post-war situation.

As far as Slovakia was concerned, the Poles were initially unconcerned about its annexation to Czechoslovakia, but gradually changed their views despite signing the peace treaties of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Trianon. There was a similar change in the question of borders. Before the First World War, Polish political representatives had not made any claims against Slovakia (as part of the Kingdom of Hungary) but this changed later under the influence of the “Krakow Centre”.

When two West Slavic states were established in Poland and Czechoslovakia after 1918, there was immediate conflict in the industrial Cieszyn Silesia and in the Spiš and Orava regions. Poland’s dissatisfaction with the settlement made at the ambassadorial conference in Spa in 1920, which was particularly favourable to Czechoslovakia in the Cieszyn region, led to nearly two decades of frosty relations between Warsaw and Prague. Although Poland won a much larger share of the disputed territory in Spiš and Orava, it was not very enthusiastic about the result, and representatives close to the “Krakow Centre” expressed severe disappointment.

Although the border issue was of key importance in the interwar period, there were other problems that added to the tense atmosphere between the states. Both of them aspired to establish and lead a coalition of Central European states. The aim was to create mechanisms that would protect them against states that might threaten their independence. Poland, as a central power wedged between two great powers to the east and west tried to compensate for this disadvantage from the very beginning by associating with the small neighbouring states from the Baltic to the Black Sea. It was Prague, however, that was more successful in building security systems, making the largest contribution to the establishment of the Little Entente comprising Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. The aim of this alliance was to deter Hungarian revanchism against its members.³

² The forced assimilation of non-Hungarian nations during the 19th and 20th century.

³ Dąbrowski, D. (2010). Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Poľská politika voči Československu a otázka maďarských aktivít s cieľom revízie hraníc na Podkarpatskej Rusi. In Bystrický, V. et al. (eds.), *Rozbitie alebo rozpad?: historické reflexie zániku Česko-Slovenska*. Bratislava: Veda, p. 254.

Poland criticised Czechoslovakia not only because it was a rival for power in the region but also because it established relations with states that were hostile to Polish interests. The main threat was Soviet Russia, but the two countries also had different attitudes on Ukrainian issues. Warsaw was afraid that Prague was trying to create a “Czech-Russian corridor” by pushing its borders as far east as possible. The Poles were also annoyed by Czechoslovakia’s support for Ukrainian émigrés. From Prague’s point of view, Polish support for Hungarian revanchism was equally unacceptable.

These foreign policy objectives were decisive for Polish attitudes to Slovakia in the interwar period. The Polish side did not see Slovakia as an equal partner but as a means to destabilise Czechoslovakia, the country’s rival in the Central European space. Slovakia was crucial to Poland’s plan to block the creation of any “Czech-Russian corridor”, and it hoped that it could find points in Slovakia or in Subcarpathian Ruthenia where it could create a common border with Hungary, which would open the way for Warsaw to project power further south. This was something of a gamble from Poland’s side because its policy undermined the foundations of the Versailles system, which had restored Poland’s statehood. On the other hand, Poland and Hungary had interests in common in the Central Europe: an anti-Russian, anti-Bolshevik attitude and opposition to Czechoslovakia. Warsaw thus expressed open support for Hungary’s revisionist plans, saying that Trianon had hurt Poland as well as Hungary.

This is the context in which the Polish assistance to Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938) in travelling to the Paris peace conference in autumn 1919 must be considered. Anything that would weaken the Czechoslovak state was welcome in Warsaw. When Piłsudski found out that Hlinka had not come to him to ask him to take Slovakia under his protection but only wanted passports, he was very disappointed.⁴

Educated Slovak youth began to take an increased interest in Polish culture, art, history and science in the early 1920s. Professor Władysław Semkowicz played an important role in supporting young Slovaks together with the journalist and politician Feliks Gwiżdż and others. They initiated and organised contacts between Slovak and Polish academic and intellectual circles and advocated for the provision of internships for young Slovak scholars at Polish universities.⁵ The Jagiellonian University in Krakow had the most sought-after places.

The attention that young Slovaks, especially the autonomist generation, paid to Poland and Polish-Slovak rapprochement between the wars was motivated mainly

⁴ Orlof, E. (1999). *Stosunek Polski do Słowacji (1918–1920)*. In Koryn, A. (ed.), *Odrodzona Polska wśród sąsiadów 1918–1921*, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN – Mazowiecka Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Pedagogiczna w Łowiczu, p. 140.

⁵ Gniazdowski, M. (2010). *Slovenský autonomizmus v polskej politike v 30. rokoch*. In *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka*, pp. 245–246.

by the desire for their northern neighbour's support in resisting Prague's centralising tendency and promotion of a Czechoslovak identity. As an ambitious Slavic nation with a close language and religion, it fascinated educated Slovak youth. Poland made efforts to tap into this potential and to cultivate it and exploit it to its advantage.

The group that was most active in this respect was the aforementioned Krakow Centre led by Władysław Semkowicz (1878–1949), who joined Poland's oldest university from Lvov in 1916 and three years later had become a full professor. He focused mainly on Polish medieval history and the auxiliary sciences of history.⁶ Semkowicz's activities relating to Slovakia gradually formed into two channels. The first was to promote the annexation to Poland of areas in Spiš, Orava and Kysuce inhabited by Goral people, while the second was the intensive development of stronger links and cooperation between Slovakia and Poland.

At the end of 1918 he became involved in the activities of the Tatra Society,⁷ which sought to acquire border territories in northern Slovakia that the Poles believed had originally been inhabited by a Polish population. In 1919 the society became the Polish National Committee for the Defence of Spiš, Orava, Kysuce and Podhale,⁸ in which he served as treasurer and archivist. He was also actively involved in its publication and propaganda activities. In the same year, the committee's general meeting shortened its name to Defence of the Southern Border.⁹ Semkowicz became the manager of its head office and the chairman of its Krakow branch. Besides propaganda work, he was deeply involved in formulating Poland's demands at the peace conference. He served as an expert advisor to the foreign ministry on issues relating to the Polish-Czechoslovak border.¹⁰ He favoured large-scale demands. A plebiscite was agreed by the supreme council on September 28, 1919 but would be limited to the population of the Námestovo and Trstena districts in Orava and the districts of Spišská Stará Ves, Stará Lubovňa and a part of Kežmarok district in Spiš. Both sides made efforts to win the local population to their side, but they proved to be pointless because the issue was

⁶ Semkowicz Władysław Jan. In: Chodery, J. – Kiryka, F. (eds.), *Słownik biograficzny historii Polski L–Ż*, Vol. I, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład nadodowy Ossolineum, 2005, p. 1362.

⁷ Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie w Krakowie.

⁸ Polski Narodowy Komitet Obrony Spisza, Orawy, Czadeckiego i Podhala.

⁹ Obrona Kresów Południowych.

¹⁰ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko. In Čičaj, V. (ed.), *Rozprawy k slovenským dejinám. Zborník príspevkov k nedožitému 75. výročiu narodenia Pavla Horvátha*, Bratislava: Slovak Academic Press, s.r.o., pp. 277–278; Władysław Aleksander Semkowicz. In *Internetowy polski słownik biograficzny*. <<https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/wladyslaw-aleksander-semkowicz#text>>, [cit. 10. 02. 2020]

ultimately decided not by a plebiscite but by international arbitration.¹¹ Neither side was satisfied with the outcome even though Poland received more than 20 villages with around 25,000 inhabitants in Spiš and Orava, territory that had never previously been part of Poland. Later, Semkowicz's memoirs would describe his feelings about the failure to realise his vision of acquiring whole Poprad basin: "I hadn't cried so much since my father died."¹² He blamed the failure on the Polish government because it had underestimated the importance of the Polish-Slovak border. As a protest, he refused to accept the Order of Polonia Restituta.¹³ He never gave up his efforts to obtain the territorial gains he envisaged in northern Slovakia. The defunct committee was replaced by the Society for the Southern and Western Border,¹⁴ in which Semkowicz became vice-president in December 1920 and led the section dedicated to the Polish-Slovak border. In 1922 he became a member of the Polish-Czechoslovak committee for the solution of the Javorina question.¹⁵ At the turn of the 20's and 30's, the society underwent another transformation when it merged with the Union for Defence of the Western Border¹⁶ and he became vice-president of the Lesser Poland section. In addition to this function, he was an honorary member of the Polish Tatra Society and honorary president of the Spiš-Orava Union.¹⁷ His contribution to the struggle to obtain border territories from Slovakia included "revival campaigns" that were intended as a covert means of "awakening" the Polish consciousness of Slovak Gorals. In 1934 the Krakow branch of the Society for Assistance of Foreign Poles¹⁸ established a Committee for Cultural Assistance for Poles in Czechoslovakia¹⁹ where Semkowicz engaged intensively in such activities.²⁰

As mentioned previously, his activities concerning Slovakia also included efforts to strengthen cultural ties between the Polish and Slovak nations. Although he presented this as a non-political project, the opposite was actually the case. The aim was to emancipate the Slovaks and release them from dominance by the

¹¹ Matula, P. (2007). Úloha cirkvi v zápase o národnú identitu obyvateľstva severného Spiša a Oravy v rokoch 1918–1939. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, Vol. 10, no. 4, <<http://www.saske.sk/cas/archiv/4-2007/04-matula.html>>, [cit. 01.02.2020]

¹² Bartlová, A. (2008). Slovensko-poľské vzťahy v medzivojnovom období. In: Kázmerová, E. – Orlof, E. (eds.), *Slovensko-poľské vzťahy 1918–1945 očami diplomatov*, Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, p. 49.

¹³ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko..., pp. 277–278.

¹⁴ Towarzystwo Kresów Południowych i Zachodnich.

¹⁵ Semkowicz, W. (1923). Prawa Polski do Jaworzyny. In *Ziemia*, Vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3–11.

¹⁶ Związek Obrony Kresów Zachodnich.

¹⁷ Związek Spisko-Orawski.

¹⁸ Towarzystwo Pomocy Polonii Zagranicznej.

¹⁹ Komitet Pomocy Kulturalnej dla Polaków w Czechosłowacji.

²⁰ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko..., pp. 278–279.

Czechs, with the goal of establishing an independent Slovakia with strong ties to Poland. In the mid-1930s his vision aligned with the ideas of the Polish foreign minister Józef Beck (1894–1944). Semkowicz expressed his Slovakophile tendencies in the Slavic Society, where he became a member of the leadership in 1927 and later its vice-president and president.²¹ He also supported the activities of the Society of Friends of the Slovaks in Memory of Ludovít Štúr²², which was founded in Warsaw by Senator Feliks Gwiżdż (1885–1952)²³ in 1936.

His largest impact on Slovak-Polish relations was his patronage of visiting Slovak students at the Jagiellonian University, which even had a Slovak Students' Association.²⁴ He took the initiative in raising bursary funds for these students. They were paid by the Polish Ministry of Faith and Public Education²⁵ based on documents that Semkowicz prepared.²⁶ From 1934 the foreign ministry took over the funding.²⁷ Dozens of Slovak students attended Krakow and other Polish universities thanks to Władysław Semkowicz. For most of them, the experience of the country and its culture developed into a long-term pro-Polish orientation. A minority managed to maintain perspective despite their sympathies and did not fall into uncritical admiration.

One of the first students to receive a bursary was František Hrušovský (1903–1956), who would go on to become an important Slovak historian. In 1923, while a student at Charles University in Prague,²⁸ he took part in a trip to Poland that so charmed him that he decided to seek a way to spend more time there. In mid-May 1923, he wrote a letter to Professor Semkowicz asking for assistance in obtaining a bursary to attend the Jagiellonian University. The keen Slovak student wrote that he had long wanted to get to know the Slovaks' Polish brother nation, whose history had always interested him. Since he also wanted to know its great culture and rich literature, he had decided to teach himself the language, as evidence of which his letter was written in Polish.²⁹ Professor Semkowicz granted

²¹ Ibid., pp. 280–281.

²² Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Słowaków.

²³ Majeriková, M. (2007). *Vojna o Spiš*. Krakov: Spolek Slovákov v Poľsku/ Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, pp. 77–79.

²⁴ Władysław Aleksander Semkowicz. In *Internetowy polski słownik biograficzny...*

²⁵ Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego.

²⁶ Kowalski, R. (2015). Od očárenia ku sklamaniu František Hrušovský a jeho styky s Poľskom v rokoch 1924–1939. In *Verbum historiae*, Vol. 3, no. 1, p. 61, <https://www.fedu.uniba.sk/fileadmin/pdf/Sucasti/Katedry/KH/Verbum_Historiae/VH_1-2015.pdf>, [cit. 01. 02. 2020].

²⁷ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko..., pp. 283–284.

²⁸ Kowalski, R. (2015). Od očárenia k sklamaniu. František Hrušovský a jeho styky s Poľskom v rokoch 1924–1939..., p. 57.

²⁹ Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, Manuscripts Section of Special Collection Department (BJ-CR), sign. 9582, František Hrušovský's letter to prof. W. Semkowicz, May 13, 1923, pp. 202–203.

his request and Hrušovský was able to spend the 1923/1924 academic year at the Faculty of Arts of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Two young Slovaks also studied with him: Mikuláš Stano (1903–1962), who would become an important translator from Polish, and Andrej Germuška (1902–1992), the future governor and deputy.³⁰ Besides the money granted by the ministry, Semkowicz arranged additional support for them amounting to 15,000,000 Polish marks.³¹ The professor had high hopes for the Slovak youth. He expected that in the near future they would become ambassadors of Polish culture and initiate a real, not just a declared rapprochement between the two nations.³² In a letter addressed to the National Cultural Fund in Warsaw,³³ he wrote with conviction that Slovak youth left the precincts of the Jagiellonian University full of enthusiasm for Poland and the bursary programme was achieving evident results and political benefits. He said that they were raising awareness of Polish literature so that it would be translated and popularised in Slovakia.³⁴ The Polish ethnographer and geographer Marian Gotkiewicz (1901–1972), who also supported the annexation of territories in Spiš and Orava to Poland, later recalled the first visiting Slovak students: “All of them were fervent supporters of the priest Andrej Hlinka, fighting for Slovak autonomy... They were all Polonophiles and avoided controversial issues like Spiš and Orava. I often met them at Professor Semkowicz’s... I quickly made such good friendships with the Slovak students that I wrote fewer and fewer articles about Spiš and Orava. Of course, I had no doubt that those were Polish lands, but I started to look at them through Professor Semkowicz’s eyes as real friends of Poland who would explain to their fellow countrymen that the claims of the mistreatment of their nation by Poland in the years 1920–1924, based on the transfer of tiny pieces of Spiš and Orava, were untruthful.”³⁵

Gotkiewicz continued to follow Professor Semkowicz’s guidance on Slovak-Polish relations thereafter. When a group of Slovak students from Comenius University arrived in Krakow in 1929, the professor advised Gotkiewicz to welcome them in Slovak and dictated exactly what to say to them. His speech should express admiration for Slovakia and its people, as well as a call for the two

³⁰ BJ-CR, sig. 9584 III, Mikuláš Stano’s letter to W. Semkowicz, 26 February 1925, p. 54.

³¹ Kowalski, R. (2015). *Od očarenia k sklamaniu. František Hrušovský a jeho styky s Poľskom v rokoch 1924–1939...*, p. 61, 1 million Polish marks were at the end of October 1923 – 16 Czechoslovak crowns (Kč), in mid-November 22 Kč, in late November 10 Kč.

³² Trajdos, M. T. (1999). Władysław Semkowicz wobec Słowacji. In Orlof, E. (ed.), *Od poznania do zrozumienia. Polacy, Czesi, Słowacy w XX wieku*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyzszej szkoły pedagogicznej, pp. 109–127.

³³ Fundusz Kultury Narodowej.

³⁴ Kowalski, R. (2015). *Od očarenia k sklamaniu. František Hrušovský a jeho styky s Poľskom v rokoch 1924–1939...*, p. 61.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

nations to establish stronger ties. All problems came from the Czechs and Czechoslovakism.³⁶

New Slovak students came to the Jagiellonian University every year thanks to Professor Semkowicz, who paid the bursaries directly. Their number gradually increased. While just 3³⁷ came in 1930, 4 years later there were 6³⁸ and in 1935 the number had already doubled.³⁹ The interest of Slovak students in residence in Krakow naturally attracted the interest of the Czechoslovak authorities. They noticed the first bursary recipient, František Hrušovský, and as a result his return home was not the most pleasant. They searched his home on December 5, 1923. A variety of notes and documents were confiscated. He was also instructed to attend court on 31 December 1923 to give a more detailed explanation.⁴⁰ Mikuláš Stano also experienced complications when, without any explanation, the ministry of education refused to recognise his studies at the Jagiellonian University.⁴¹ The students who participated in the bursary programme in 1934 were also investigated by the police. They were also threatened with the loss of their exemption from boarding fees because of their stay in Poland.⁴² Jozef Kirschbaum (1913–2001), who participated in the programme in Krakow in 1935, experienced similar complications. He also had problems getting credit for the semester.⁴³

The Czechoslovak Consulate in Krakow closely monitored the situation. Although they thought it was senseless to take action against the Slovak participants in the programme, they saw Professor Semkowicz as potentially hostile to Czechoslovakia. In the opinion of the consul, Artur Maixner (1899–1971), since Semkowicz worked in the academic environment, he was surely aware of rules of study and that full-time students must not put off seminar and pre-seminar work without the consent of the university authorities or else be at risk of losing the semester. Instead of recruiting programme participants through the rector's office of Comenius University, Semkowicz recruited them privately, mainly through Władysław Bobek (1902–1942), a teacher of Polish in Bratislava. Semkowicz explained this practice in his own words as being designed "to stop any spies getting in", by which he may have meant a Czech or a pro-Czechoslovak Slovak. According to Maixner, he made no outward expression of

³⁶ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko..., pp. 284–285.

³⁷ The Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, Prague (AMZV), f. Politické zprávy, Krakov 1931–1937 (PZ), Report for October 1930, p. 14.

³⁸ AMZV-PZ, Report for 2nd quarter 1934, p. 31.

³⁹ AMZV-PZ, Report for 1st quarter 1935, p. 32.

⁴⁰ BJ-CR, sig. 9582 III, F. Hrušovský's letter to W. Semkowicz, December 21, 1923, pp. 204–205.

⁴¹ BJ-CR, sig. 9584 III, Mikuláš Stano's letter to W. Semkowicz, February 26, 1925, pp. 53–54.

⁴² AMZV-PZ, Report for 4th quarter 1935, pp. 27–28.

⁴³ BJ – CR, sign. 9583 III, J. M. Kirschbaum's letter to W. Semkowicz, November 1, 1935, p. 30.

hostility to Czechoslovakia, but he was good at exploiting disagreements between Czechs and Slovaks.⁴⁴

Semkowicz's efforts to support Slovak students and closer Slovak-Polish relations gradually bore fruit, though perhaps not in such a strong form as he had hoped. Many of the programme participants promoted Polish literature, art and history after their return home. They translated Polish works into Slovak, set up cooperation with Slovak societies and institutions and organised school trips, lectures and discussions. This Polonophilia was not limited to the cultural sphere but also had an effect on politics, as members or supporters the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSLP) looked for support in Poland for their struggles with Prague. The HSLP had a Polonophile faction led by the journalist and parliamentarian Karol Sidor (1901–1953), who maintained contacts with Polish politicians. In 1933 the HSLP even adopted a resolution calling for close cooperation with Poland.⁴⁵ Shortly before the Munich Agreement was signed the deputies of the HSLP Karol Sidor and Jozef Tiso (1863–1947) presented on September 29, 1938 "The Declaration of a Union Between Slovakia and Poland" at the Polish legation in Prague. In case of disintegration of Czechoslovakia Slovak autonomist leaders looked to Poland for guarantees of Slovakia's integrity and security and opted for a union between Slovakia and Poland.⁴⁶ At the end of 1938, the pro-Polish Slovak cultural elite was exposed to difficult trials and dilemmas. The Polish territorial claims against Slovakia severely disappointed the Polonophiles and stirred up hostility in Slovak society against their northern neighbour. In some, a pro-Polish passion transformed into strong anti-Polish sentiment (e.g. Karol Murgaš)⁴⁷ or coldness (František Hrušovský)⁴⁸, while others kept a critical distance (Jozef Kirschbaum).⁴⁹ Semkowicz's Slovakophilia also entered a critical stage in the late 1930s. The failure to agree with the Slovaks on

⁴⁴ The Slovak National Archives, f. Krajinský úrad – prez., k. no. 263, Report of Czechoslovak consul in Krakow A. Maixner to Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, May 24, 1935, p. 10.

⁴⁵ *Slovák*, Vol. 15, no. 114, 19 May 1933, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Jesenský, M. (2014). *The Slovak-Polish Border 1918–1947*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 85; Segeš, D. – Hertel, M. – Bystrický, V. (eds.), *Slovensko a slovenská otázka v poľských a maďarských diplomatických dokumentoch v rokoch 1938–1939*. Bratislava: Pro Historia, p. 320.

⁴⁷ Karol Murgaš (1899–1972) was a representative of a radical fraction in the HSLP, see Čarnogurský, P. (1992). *14. marec 1939*. Bratislava: VEDA, p. 160; Murgaš, Karol. In *Biografický lexikón Slovenska VI, M–N*. Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2017, pp. 631–632.

⁴⁸ Šimončík, J. (2003). Denník dr. Františka Hrušovského, predsedu Delimitačnej komisie československo-poľskej roku 1938. In *Studia Historica Tyrnaviensia III*, p. 328.

⁴⁹ Matula, P. (2019). Jozef M. Kirschbaum a jeho vzťah k Poľsku. In *Verbum historiae*, Vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 88–99.

changes to the border in Spiš, Orava and Kysuce was a great disappointment for him and his Polish followers.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, there were a number of Slovaks who kept their contacts in Polish cultural circles and continued to have pro-Polish sentiments even after the country's defeat in September 1939 (e.g. Karol Sidor, Pavol Čarnogurský⁵¹, Stanislav Mečiar⁵², Mikuláš Stano and others). Many of the Slovak Polonophiles had connections to the people's party regime and therefore went into exile after the Second World War. The post-war international system in which Czechoslovakia and Poland were under the influence of the Soviet Union created a completely different socio-political situation from what had existed in the interwar period, which had been so favourable for the development of Polonophilia in Slovakia.

⁵⁰ Trajdos, M. T. (2001). Władysław Semkowicz a Slovensko..., p. 300.

⁵¹ Pavol Čarnogurský (1908–1992) was a Slovak politician and a member of the Slovak Parliament (1938–1945), see Čarnogurský, Pavol. In *Biografický lexikón Slovenska II, C–F*. Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2004. pp. 107–108.

⁵² Stanislav Mečiar (1910–1971) was a literary historian and a representative of Slovak scientific and cultural institution Matica Slovenska, see Mečiar, Stanislav. In *Biografický lexikón Slovenska VI, M–N*. Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2017, pp. 319–320.

Czechoslovak Assistance with the Development of Military Technical College in Cairo (1959–1977)

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Vyhřlidal, M. (2020). Czechoslovak Assistance with the Development of Military Technical College in Cairo (1959–1977). *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12/1, 134–141. <https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2020-012>

The paper presents Czechoslovak-Egyptian cooperation in the field of military education in years 1958–1977. The article deals mainly with the assistance of the Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký in Brno in establishing and building Military Technical College in Cairo with regard to important events of that period (for example Arab-Israeli Wars and occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968). The article is based on sources from Czech military archives.

Key words: Czechoslovakia; Egypt; Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký in Brno; Military Technical College in Cairo; military education

In April of 1958, the Czechoslovak Minister of Defense turned to his Egyptian counterpart with the following request: “Your Excellency, I would be very thankful to Your Excellency for submitting the UAR¹ application to the Czechoslovak Government of the Republic with regard to the assistance in the organization and establishment of the Academy of Military Sciences in Egypt, which will include sections for armaments, electronics and tanks.” Since the following year, Czechoslovakia began building a military college for the needs of the Egyptian army. The broadly focused and all-around complicated process came to an end in 1977.

Communist Czechoslovakia played a specific role as the arms exporter to various states politically close to the Soviet Union. In 1948, Czechoslovak arms supplies essentially saved Israel from the invading armies of its Arab neighbors. However, the hopes of turning Israel into a new Soviet satellite were not met, so the interest of the USSR turned to its Arab adversaries in the region. Another possible ally for the expansive efforts of the Soviet bloc was Nasser’s Egypt. On the basis of a positive decision from Moscow, the Czechoslovak authorities in October of 1955 decided to supply arms to Egypt and, under Soviet patronage, began extensive military-technical assistance to the Nasser regime.

¹ United Arab Republic