

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL časopisu / URL of the journal: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Autor(i) / Author(s): Marek Vrbinčík
Článok / Article: Political Parties' Collaboration on Public Administration Reform in 1920
Vydavateľ / Publisher: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica

Odporúčaná forma citácie článku / Recommended form for quotation of the article:

VRBINČÍK, M. 2016. Political Parties' Collaboration on Public Administration Reform in 1920. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Roč. 19, č. 2, 2016. ISSN 1335 – 2741, s. 90-111. Dostupné na internete: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/archiv-vydani/2016/2-2016/marek-vrbincik.html>.

Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu *Politické vedy*. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author's / authors' permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

POLITICAL PARTIES' COLLABORATION ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN 1920

Marek Vrbinčík*

ABSTRACT

After the establishment of inter-war Czechoslovakia, the idea of consistent public administration reform had strong support. The need for a uniform administrative organisation was recognised across the full political spectrum. Despite this common goal, when there was a codification of a so-called County Act, there was not a consensus of all political parties. Based on the content analysis of archival documents and the evaluation of defined indicators: participation in the final form of administrative reform, votes for or against the bill, status of the entity (coalition / opposition), speeches in parliament and official / unofficial opinion, this is an attempt to clarify the attitudes of political parties to public administration reform. Presented results show that final version of administration organisation came from political approaches and we have created a new insight into pre-Munich Czechoslovakia in the context of the promotion of party interests.

Key words: Czechoslovakia, public administration reform, the County Act, political parties, political discourse

Introduction

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, one of the basic tasks of the political elite was stabilisation of the country. A unified system of administration would serve this purpose. Initial acceptance of monarchist administration was only a temporary solution. The political leaders were aware of the importance of a comprehensive public reform and a so-called County Act (Act no. 126/1920 Coll.) was adopted with a "definitive" text of the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic. This happened on February 29th, 1920. The negotiation process was lengthy and difficult. The way in which different political parties came to accept the reform of the public administration is the subject of this research.

* PhDr. Marek Vrbinčík is a PhD. student of the Department of Public Policy and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Bučianska 4/A, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic, e-mail: marek.vrbincik@gmail.com.

The aim of the study is to clarify the political parties' approaches on the reform of public administration in 1920. The ambition is to determine which of the actors in the reporting process was able to fulfil the own vision for a uniform administrative organisation of the country. To fulfil this objective, there were used content analyses of archive documents, especially stenographic reports from the sessions of Revolutionary National Assembly¹. Through detailed analysis of the political discourse, this work will provide an interpretation of cooperation between the political parties. Evaluation of the selected indicators: participation in the final stages of administrative reform, votes for or against the bill, the status of the party (coalition or opposition), analysis of speeches in parliament - official and / unofficial opinion², will describe the position of the key actors in public administration reform.

1 The reform of public administration in 1920

Government priorities in the post-revolutionary period were focused on successfully building the new state and public administration. The tasks involved in the establishment of the Republic can be identified in the statements of the individual ministers concerned. Minister of the Interior and Secretary of State for the Home Department **Antonín Švehla**³, the Agrarian, described the most direct path aimed at building the "new national administrative bodies", as follows (Národní listy, Volume 59 / No. 1, 1919):

- Administrative representative council;
- Increasing the proportion of self-governance;
- A new division of administrative districts;
- Rapprochement with Slovak administrative system;

¹ *Revolutionary National Assembly* (RNA) - Act no. 37/1918 Coll. (interim constitution), and in particular § 4 he confessed "to exercise its power to legislate for the whole state and its individual parts and supervisory powers, and the executive power until the time when the final Constitution states by the Chamber of veering off the elections" (Act no. 37/1918 Coll.). RNA was the legislative body of Czechoslovakia until a National Assembly was formed, whose composition was based on the results of the first parliamentary elections in 1920.

² The term unofficial opinion is a reference to the County act form, which often meant a real partisan attitude.

³ Antonín Švehla (1873-1933): leading representative of the Agrarian (Republican) party. From 1918 to 1920 he held the post of Minister of the Interior. He was chairmen of the Czechoslovak government in the period from 7. October 1922 - 9. December 1925 (first Švehla's Government); December 9, 1925 - March 18, 1926 (second Švehla's government) and October 12, 1926 - February 1, 1929.

- That the process is a rapid and efficient one.

All these objectives should have been achieved by the forthcoming reform. However, the initial adoption of Succession Law (the law by which a new state retains the still valid laws of its predecessor), and the existence of two different models of administration associated with this, was deemed the best way of transforming public administration. The transient nature of this solution is obvious, not only in terms of political leaders' statements cited above, but also due to the fact that the Hungarian administration would not suit all aspects of the new state. Lack of time and knowledge required such approach in this situation. Although succession law did not mothball this form of administrative organisation, a comprehensive reform of political governance came into existence by adopting the so-called County Act in 1920.

The aim was a public administration that would be "organised in such a way that it is readily accessible to the people - so that the public can actively participate in internal administration, easy to use by Government, not disproportionately expensive, and modern" (Laštovka, 1925, p. 10). The ambition was "to simplify and unite" Republic administration and was "to be cleared of all existing defects, from the outset of the new bill negotiations". This was declared by the Agrarian, **Jan Malypetr**⁴, the correspondent of the Constitutional Committee (AP⁵, fund RNA, carton 32, from stenograph protocol of 120th Meeting of the Constitutional Committee on 21st January 1920, n. 1244). These attributes could not be achieved without extensive reforms which included the unification of administrative organisation across the country. The question, therefore, was not whether to reform, but how.

Responsibility for preparing the new form of public administration fell to the Ministry of the Interior. The aim was to achieve a broad consensus between the competent authorities and officials. A survey conducted on this issue asked the following questions (Lipscher, 1966):

1. Is it appropriate to establish new administrative counties or regions to achieve unified internal administration, and if so by which methods?
2. How many counties should be established? What should be the average size and population of these counties?

⁴ Jan Malypetr (1873-1947) was an important representative of the Republican/Agrarian party in the interwar period. As a member of the National Assembly he held the position of President of the Chamber of Deputies after the election of 1925 and then from 1932 to 1935 he was Prime Minister.

⁵ AP – Parliament Archive of Chamber of deputies.

3. What should be the administrative scope of these regions, in relation to both offices of political administration and autonomous corporations? What changes should be made in these offices and corporations?

4. What should regional authority look like? What matters should be decided by the county representatives? How should the representatives be chosen and what form should their participation take?

5. Should the county representatives be granted legislative powers or power to enact laws? If so, within what limits and for what issues?

Presentation of this law outlining the establishment of county and district offices was a necessary step towards consistent reform of public administration. The name of the document indicates that the administrative units did not become districts⁶, as originally intended, but counties. This approach was reportedly taken so that the outcome was "keeping with Slovak history and tradition" (Hoetzel 1928, p76). The author of this constitutional document claims that the motive was, however, in stark contrast to other developments. The move towards establishment of counties can be explained by the pragmatic attitude of the government, which was to "dissolve Slovakia in counties like a sugar cube in a glass of water", with the effect of repressing individuality and the associated demands arising from independent administration (Peroutka, 1936, p1588). Although respect for tradition and history was paid lip service, this respect was not shown in reality, even with the intended territorial and administrative divisions. Although similar county units existed at the time of the monarchy, the proposed model of six administrative districts in Slovakia was not used at any stage of the development of the administrative organisations. The creation of the new counties was actually the "dissolution" of the natural boundaries of regions. They were fundamentally violated, triggering a negative response⁷.

Political debates and interviews on the floor of the Revolutionary National Assembly reflected the ideological tensions between supporters and opponents of the proposed reform. The positions that the various players defended,

⁶ A Region as an administrative unit was in the above-mentioned Commission questionnaire of the Ministry of Interior.

⁷ At the meeting of the Club of Slovak Representatives on February 28th, 1920, a requirement was proposed by Orava county officials who were for "a separate County but against connection to the region," (Minutes of the meeting of the Club of Slovak Representatives, 28th February, 1920) While negative responses did not ultimately have a real impact on the government's proposal, their existence suggests dissatisfaction with the planned form of territorial and administrative division.

represented a comprehensive summary of issues relating to the negotiation process of County Act adoption. The Act was ultimately discussed at two meetings of the Revolutionary National Assembly (125. and 126.) from February 27 to February 29, 1920.

1.1 Ruling coalition political parties' position on the County Act draft

Members of the ruling coalition⁸ were central to the adoption of the County Act. A leading representative of the *Social Democratic Party*⁹ and Prime Minister **Vlastimil Tusar**¹⁰ considered rejection of the historical legacy a more serious objection against the County Act on which, in the past, constitutional requirements had relied. In his speech, however, he said that "they had these constitutional requirements until they had their state. However, now we not only have a historic state law, but we have a body of law, we have our state and that is more effective and stronger for the future" (AP, stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920).

The official position of the government coalition on public administration reform, as well as the response to the objections raised, was contained in a speech of **Jan Malypetr**. As a representative of the *Republican Party*¹¹ he was a correspondent at the hearing of the Constitutional Committee. The need to "build a public administration on new foundations" he justified by saying that it was necessary "to eliminate discrepancies arising from errors of the past, but most of all to ensure that internal decisions are based on different law"¹². The

⁸ The so-called government of "red-green" coalition was made up of representatives of the Agrarian Party, Cs. Social democracy, Cs. Socialist Party and the Club of Slovak Representatives.

⁹ *Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party* was established by renaming the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party in December 1918. In 1938, the party was dissolved. In the elections in 1920 it gained 25.7% of votes, 1925 it dropped to 8.9%; in 1929-13%, 1935 - 12.55% of votes (Malíř-Marek, 2005).

¹⁰ Vlastimil Tusar (1880-1924) was a Czech Social Democratic politician and second Czechoslovak Prime Minister (July 8, 1919 - April 1, 1920). After the elections in April 1920 Tusar formed a new government (so-called Red-Green government coalition). After his resignation in 1921 until his death in the year 1924 he held the post of ambassador in Berlin.

¹¹ *Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants (Agrarian Party)* - initially the Czech Agrarian Party. From 1919 this party existed under the name, the Republican Party of Czechoslovakia's Countryside. After a merger with the Slovak and Carpathian Agrarian Party in 1922 it became the Republican Party of Agricultural and Farming People. In the elections in 1920 it gained 9.7% of votes, 1925- 13.7%, 1929-15% and 1935 - 14.3% of the votes.(Malíř-Marek, 2005).

¹² Dualism caused by the acceptance of the Austrian and Hungarian administration.

main shortcomings of the regional administration were cited as its two-tier and centralisation of political administration, which had become "cumbersome and slow". He also saw drawbacks in the size and diversity of territorial administrative units, which resulted in a failure to perform municipal functions and subsequent alienation of the public. In the case of the administrative organisation in Slovakia he defined the main problem as obsolescence, due to the length of time it had been in place and its lack of relevance to the current needs of both the Republic and citizens. **Jan Malypetr** repeatedly identified the principles of public administration reform as central to the unity of the Administrative system for the whole country and its democratic nature, aiming to give people "easy access to the office and ensure the necessary impact on the administrative system itself". It must therefore be adjusted so that "it becomes a means to an end and not the end itself". In his speech, he also commented on the higher status of clerical workers in the new system, he advocated it by saying that "public administration reserves some influence on the conduct of the body via the chairman and his officials" to avoid exceeding the force by adopting the resolution or damaging the state's interests. He then added that the suspension of a resolution cannot be arbitrary and that the Ministry of Interior should have the final decision. Another mechanism for protection of the body or council's powers was to be interpellation law, and the possibility would exist to appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court. On the issue of territorial and administrative division he argued in favour of counties that represented "reasonable" decentralisation and integrity of the state. His opinion was that it was necessary to proceed to the construction of territorial units on new foundations and eliminate everything that could cause "individual centres of our country becoming arranged on special, self-governing units". He clarified the compromise inherent in the decision to include county unions in the law, the extent of which would become apparent with further developments. His opinion was that zoning and establishing counties must be "long and careful work" without "bias" and admitted the possibility that the border counties may be altered in the period ahead (all quotes from the AP, the stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February, 1920). The above claim is based on §2 County Act that altered the power of government to change districts and established counties for five years. The representatives of the Republican Party were among the most fervent in adopting the fundamental reform of the political

administration. In a way, it could have been affected by the absence of the Agrarian Minister of the Interior **Antonín Švehla**¹³. As previously mentioned, it was under the auspices of his ministry that the final bill was created. Agrarians' hegemony helped to promote this version of the reform according to their wishes.

From the ranks of the ruling parties, **Bohumil Fišer**¹⁴, the representative of *Czechoslovak Socialist Party*¹⁵ supported the outline of the Act. He stated that although this was not definitely the final form of the proposed reform of public administration, he saw in it the continuity of the previous developments in terms of "democracy and progress". On the issue of opposition to rigid centralisation he said that the proposal was in his opinion rather a healthy decentralisation, as "a considerable part of public responsibility is transferred into smaller administrative districts in which the general population can directly participate in the management of public administration". According to him, the establishment of counties would widen the scope of these new bodies, especially in an economic, social and cultural context. Closer contact with the population was also deemed beneficial, as was the case in the previous provincial administration. He also declared a unifying goal of the reform, which was most easily attainable through acceptance of the county establishment. His argument was based on the historical background of administration in Slovakia and stated that the establishment of counties constituted a completely new approach to regional administration. He saw drawbacks in the compromises inherent in the proposal, which occurred mainly in the establishment of county unions, stating that these could be a "germ of something that may have a tendency to cause a divergence of state power" and ultimately threaten the unity of the state (all quotes from the AP, the stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920). His contradictory attitude to the law was also related to his inability to have his own amendments accepted; these had already failed in the constitutional committee. Despite several complaints, the Socialists were quite

¹³ Minister of the Interior A. Švehla was not present for the discussions of the Constitutional Affairs Committee on a draft law on the establishment of county and district offices print no. 2422, due to illness (AP stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920).

¹⁴ Bohumil Fišer (1882-1928) was a member of the Revolutionary National Assembly for the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (later Czechoslovak National Socialist Party).

¹⁵ *Czechoslovak Socialist Party* – from the time of the foundation of the Republic until 1926 the party was called the Czechoslovak Socialist Party. It was subsequently renamed the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party. During the election of 1920 they gained 8.1% of votes, 1925 - 8.5%; 1929 - 10.4% and 1935 - 9.2% of votes (Malíř-Marek, 2005).

reconciled with the destiny of the County Act. They were aware that the issue of adoption of the County Act was a crucial prerequisite for the viability of the so-called red-green coalition.

In the plenary session to the National Assembly, the deputy **Ivan Markovič**¹⁶ talked on behalf of "all the representatives of Slovakia, who are associated in the *Club of Slovak Representatives*¹⁷ and the entire Slovak people". He expressed the unanimous support of the Slovak MPs for the Constitution as well as other laws being discussed. On the issue of the County Act, he spoke for the governing coalition. He justified the fact that "for the time-being, Slovak MPs see a requirement for self-governance of Slovakia, in those institutions to which these laws of the Constitution apply, namely the law on the establishment of a County". The acceptance of the Slovak representatives of this proposal for the establishment of the county was also supported by the fact that "county and the county unions provide Slovakia with everything that it needs". The decision not to accept the extension of administrative units to include counties, lies in the words of **Ivan Markovič** that "regional Slovak autonomy cannot be decided under pressure from the recent past and the representatives of the Slovak people will be able to objectively decide only when that pressure is removed and they can look at things in a more calm and objective way, and when they have experienced, the extent to which the administrative changes, based on these laws, suit Slovakia". Opposition to the regional administration can be explained by the concerns regarding the integrity of the state. It was suggested by the statement of deputy **Markovič**, who said that "We have not yet reached a time in Slovakia where we can establish a broad autonomy within regional divisions among the different lands of the Czechoslovak Republic". Despite the lack of consensus amongst the Party-members, resulting from the heterogeneity of the Club of Slovak Representatives, they took a uniform attitude to the issue of administrative organisation. The complacency regarding strict limits being

¹⁶ Ivan Markovič (1888-1944): in 1918 he was a Member of the National Assembly. In Tusarov's government in 1920 he was Defence Minister. During the years 1922 – 1925 he was the Minister of Unification and from 1935 - 1938 the Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies of the National Assembly.

¹⁷ *The Club of Slovak Representatives* (KSP) was heterogeneous Slovak political group within the Revolutionary National Assembly. KSP heterogeneity was not only due to the fact that they included representatives from different political supporters, but also due to the fact that, overall, "from the 70 representatives from Slovakia, appointed by Srobár or additionally selected by the Revolutionary National Assembly during the office term were 62 Slovaks and 8 Czechs " (Liptak et al., 2004, p. 550).

placed on self-government can be explained by the fear of missing out on this historical opportunity to complete the modern-day struggle for statehood of the Slovak nation¹⁸. Statements from the speech prove that: "Slovak people today have the opportunity to build the constitution with their representatives, this is the best proof that a will towards self-determination already exists". **Ivan Markovič** added that "the representatives of Slovakia shall build the Czechoslovak Republic with one mind, with one will. And what is important here, respected National Assembly, is that while building these foundations, all Slovak parties are united, class, religion and other differences cease to exist, and there is only one important direction: Czechoslovak state unity" (all quotes from the AP, the stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920). The stabilisation of the Czechoslovak Republic was the primary moving force for the Club of Slovak Representatives while supporting the proposed reform of public administration. Through prioritising hard-earned statehood they managed to accept a questionable form of the County Act with no regard to Party inclination. Concerns over potential divergent tendencies were also in the minds of Slovak MPs in the constitutional committee. These concerns developed along with the agrarian counterweight to the proposals of socialist parties. Refusal of democratic elements must be seen in the context of contemporary developments, not only during the existence of Czechoslovakia, but also in pre-revolutionary years. Slovak representatives did not want to sacrifice the fragile state to gain a greater degree of self-governance since the establishment of the county was definitely a step forward compared to the administration of the monarchical regime. Despite a lack of agreement on the wording of the law, KSP voted unanimously "for" this government template.

1.2 The position of opposing political parties on the County Act draft

The *Czechoslovak People's Party*¹⁹ was opposed to the establishment of

¹⁸ Stated by deputy Ivan Markovic in his speech on recent national-political programs of Slovaks, however, during the time of monarchy these were not met (AP stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920).

¹⁹ *Czechoslovak People's Party* - was founded in September 1918 by merging the Moravian Political Party, the Christian Social and the National Catholic-Christian Social party in Czechia country. From 1925 the Party worked in Slovakia under the name Czechoslovak People's Party. In the elections in 1920 it gained 11.3% of votes, 1925 - 9.7% , 1929 - 8.4% and 1935 - 7.5% of votes. In

regions. In his speech, the chief representative, Dr. **Jan Šrámek**²⁰, cited the popularity among the 'non-Slovak government parties', of the autonomy model of individual countries. The defence of the establishment of regions consisted mainly in the historical role and position of Moravian land during the existence of the monarchy. Therefore, "instead of Austrian autonomy, he called for a much broader one, as from times of Czech national independence". He declared that even if the government managed to "bury" the autonomy of countries it would be "fearlessly proclaimed and sought with even stronger force". To achieve this objective, agitation would also work in favour of Slovakia, when he argued that "they want the same autonomy for Moravia as well as for Bohemia, Silesia and Slovakia." In the extension of the establishment of regions, the Czechoslovak People's Party saw a way of overcoming duality. Allegations against Slovak representatives of "autonomist tendencies" raised a heated debate in the plenary session of the National Assembly. Minister **Vavro Šrobár**²¹, who held a governmental centralist approach in the issue of public administration reform protested against such a claim. Dissenting opinions amongst Slovak representatives were illustrated in the response of the President of the Club of Slovak Representatives when **Matuš Dula**²² agreed with **J. Šrámek** (all quotes from the AP, the stenographic report of the 62nd session of RNA, 10th July 1919). Despite blurring the reality of the existence of autonomist undercurrents, it is clear that **Šrobár** not only knew about them, but that he was against them²³. The effort to promote the establishment of regions by the

autumn 1938 it ceased to exist when they joined with the Party of National Unity (Malíř-Marek, 2005).

- ²⁰ Jan Šrámek (1870-1956): after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, he became a member of the Revolutionary National Assembly in January 1919. He united the Czech Christian Parties and founded the Czechoslovak People's Party. He was its chairman between 1919-1938 and 1945-1948. From September 1921 until the Munich events in 1938, he worked, with the exception of the second government of Jan Černý, as minister in all the governments.
- ²¹ Vavro Šrobár (1867-1950): one of the central figures of Slovak politics in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia. He was the first minister with power of administration of Slovakia in the years 1921-1922, the Minister of Education and Culture. In the years 1925-1935 he was a senator of the National Assembly for the Agrarian Party. Among other things, he was signatory of the Act on the establishment of Czechoslovakia.
- ²² Matuš Dula (1846-1926): in 1914 he became chairman of the Slovak National Party and on October 30, 1918 he was elected President of the Slovak National Council. From 1918 to 1920 he was a Member of the National Assembly and, after the election in 1920, the Senator.
- ²³ V. Šrobár's attitude can be deduced from the answer to question asked by Dr. I. Dérer about the importance and role of the Pittsburgh Agreement in pursuit of autonomy for Slovakia. According to Šrobár, the word autonomy had two meanings: "one is a vague keyword and the other is a well

Czechoslovak People's Party also lies undoubtedly in the desire to have a real influence on the regional bodies. **Jan Šrámek** not only protested against the composition of the new governing coalition, but also downplayed these motives²⁴. Proclaiming that "the autonomist program is not only an ambition to have power in the Land Committee", he himself was power-hungry, (as he only denied their uniqueness). However, he was attempting to hide ulterior motives by speaking of the "historical development of Moravia and not only in the Austrian period" (all quotes from AP, stenographic record of the 62nd meeting of RNA, 10th July, 1919).

In the "battle" against County establishment, however, the Czechoslovak People's Party was not alone. The common goal set out on other grounds, was associated with the *Czechoslovak national democracy*²⁵. "We are for the regions' autonomy," was the official opinion of the party, which was published by the press. In *Národní listy*, on January 25, 1920 an article was published entitled "The National Institute for Democracy". In the subtitle of the County establishment, the National Democratic Party expressed opposition to the government's proposal. The principle of retaining a regional administration was

thought out program. As a keyword it is a signal for the opposition in Slovakia, as a program it is a means for secession of Slovakia ". It further states that "autonomy for Slovakia, as a political and constitutional program, did not grow from the Slovak soil, but was grown outdoors -abroad by our arch-enemies, the Hungarians". Based on this consideration, it was considered only as a means of breaking the Czechoslovak Republic. Its implementation was not possible due to the lack of human resources that were felt in each and every area of public life (administration, education, etc.). He considered the justification of autonomy by the Pittsburgh Agreement "unjustified and wrong". He explained it with its origin, having been signed by the American League and left "detailed statute in the establishment of the Czechoslovak State, unbound Czechs and Slovaks and their legitimate representatives" (AP, stenographic record of the 73rd meeting of RNA, 18th September 1919).

²⁴ In a speech to the government, J. Sramek said that "he regrets that the coalition was not left generally ..." and conditions in the coalition could have been provided in other ways- not only by forming a new government. The ruling coalition should remain as originally constituted, he said, until "state independence is fully secured". He denied that the real reason was reconstruction of the government, which resulted from the general elections (held June 15th 1919 on the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia). In his opinion, it was not possible with the results of the "general elections that the whole leadership of the Czech nation in the National Assembly and the government itself would change" (AP, stenographic record of the 62nd meeting of RNA, 10th July 1919).

²⁵ *Czechoslovak National Democratic Party* was a conservative and nationalist party. Its founder and chairman was K. Kramar. In 1919 the party was renamed the Czechoslovak National Democracy. In the elections in 1920 it gained 6.3% of votes, 1925 - 4%, 1929 - 4.9% ; 1935 - 5.6% of the votes. In 1935, together with the National League and the National Front, it ran for National Unification) (Malíř-Marek, 2005).

justified with the argument that "the new regions would burden the budget and also there would not be enough officials". However, the real reasons can be found in the objection to the proposed territorial and administrative divisions. Concerns regarding the formation of a German "state within a state" were the prime reasons for establishing Counties (all quotes from the *Národní listy*, Volume 60 / No. 25, 1920). The National Democrats advocated the preservation of the establishment of regions in the plenary session of the National Assembly. Deputy **Jaroslav Brabec**²⁶ was against the formation of individual counties as separate constituencies. He saw the greatest risk of "Germanisation", and subsequent acquisition of a majority in the elective bodies in Karlovarská and Českolipská county. He addressed objections in particular to Annex A of the Act, which set out territorial divisions. He urged the government "to revise it in a way with meaningful division of the counties and the appropriate placement of settlements in counties so that the Czechoslovak element will be protected in the future from denationalisation by expansive elements" (all quotations from the AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February, 1920). Even **Ludvík Vaněk**²⁷, of the National Democrats rejected "the counties as they were designed," in his speech and demanded that "Provincial authorities are retained". Not in their current form, but as "new mixed offices"²⁸. Similar to the Czech People's Party, the National Democrats used the argument for the prevention of "rigid centralisation," which would be achieved mainly by applying stages of appeal²⁹, and also that the County Act "tears and destroys what was hundreds of years in the making". One of the most contentious issues of the proposal was the extent of participation in the practice of administration,

²⁶ Jaroslav Brabec (1869-1930): between 1918-1920 he was a member of the Revolutionary National Assembly as MP for National Democracy (formerly the Czech constitutional democracy). In the period 1920-1929 he was a Senator of the National Assembly.

²⁷ Ludvík Vaněk (1860-1926): in the period 1918-1920 he was a member of the Revolutionary National Assembly for National Democracy (formerly the Czech constitutional democracy).

²⁸ Under the introduction of mixed authorities efforts to eliminate a two tier system of administration which would represent the civil element (elected) and the collar element (appointed).

²⁹ Stages of appeal were already covered by Article no. 7 of the Act. Its centralist nature lies in the stratification of administration; the last instance/appeal in this case is the Ministry of the Interior. L. Vanek stated this in his speech, although the article was ultimately omitted for unknown reasons and the mere reflection of its existence raised concerns about its reactivation in any form and at any time (AP stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920). But the Ministry of Interior remained the authoritative body in several provisions of the new regulations governing political administration, e.g. § 8, and adapted it to intervene in the running of the lower offices; or § 7, which speaks of the official responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior.

thus fulfilling the principle of democratisation. Disagreement with that model of "laymanship" administration was based on government intervention or, according to the Ministry of Interior, on political administration, in such a fundamental way that only "a fiction of democracy" was created. The exact words of deputy **Vaněk** were: "District and county or citizenship of the district and county may act as autonomous authority only to the extent that the government allows, and no more. In support of that argument was the central issue of financing counties, which was fully dependent on government decisions³⁰. National Democrats saw self-absorption and negation in a bureaucratic structure within county and district authorities, those citizens could not oppose or criticize (all quotes from AP, stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February, 1920).

In the final phase of county law preparations, however, the National Democrats were willing to accept the counties if "in the region of Bohemia there was no purely German land" (Národní listy, Volume 60 / No. 25, 1920). **Karel Kramář**³¹ offered a compromise, the production of "small" counties that would be far more appropriate for the purpose of internal management (AP stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA 27th February 1920). However, in this case he sought regional districts of the counties to be formed in a way that they would not be "nationally dangerous" (AP, fund RNA, carton 33, stenographic report of 153rd Constitutional Affairs Committee meeting of 19th February 1920, no. 1277). Regional government would in this case "constitute a special form of regional government political administration". However, **K. Kramář's** proposal was rejected by the Minister of Interior **A. Švehla** and by other political parties and the idea of regional legislation was condemned (Lidové noviny, Volume 28 / No. 91, 1920).

Despite the fact that most of the amendments³² submitted by the opposition

³⁰ E.g. § 43, under which the council act determines the validity of the adopted resolutions approved by the Ministry of Interior especially in matters of immovable property or the issue of loans, budget, corporate governance.

³¹ Karel Kramář (1860-1937): Representative of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party and a prominent politician of the interwar period. He was Chairman of the National Committee and the first Prime Minister of the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia (14th November 1918 - 8th July 1919).

³² One of them was a proposal by J. Brabec: "Officials of the cancelled autonomous corporations, their institutions, funds and companies will be taken to the civil service. Terms of this takeover are also set down in law. To assess the legal and material conditions on day 1, March 1920 is a decisive move." (AP, stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920) These were particulars of minor importance, including changing the terms etc.

parties were not accepted supporters of the establishment of regions achieved partial success. In the Government bill this can be identified in the provisions of the county association. Even interpreting § 63 of the Act no. 126/1920 Coll. quite generally, the idea of the existence of the county association can be seen as a concession to seek continuity of regional authorities. The term "partial" is also used by Deputy **Vaněk**. The National Democrats had adopted the establishment of the county association quite reservedly. Even if they were willing to accept that it's "competence is to be determined by government regulation", they questioned the absence of the Institute of Regional Office, since the law "refers only to the district and county office" (all quotations from the AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920).

2 Adoption and implementation of the County Act

The opponents acted more homogeneously in the debate on a County Act. Czechoslovak People's Party and Czechoslovak National Democratic Party had a common goal that was to maintain and expand provincial establishment to whole area of Czechoslovakia. Same goal didn't mean same reasons of following, too. People's Party's main motive was power ambitions that were supposed to be fulfilled by possible dominant position of party in provincial organs. National democrats were inspired mostly by nationalist motives. Strong "anti-German" moods were significant for national democracy. In the context of contemporary development and historical experience, it would be possible to consider their worries valid, but the crucial role of public administrators suggested by law and helplessness of elected corps did not allow any threat of interest of the republic. On the issue of a County Act, they didn't follow their own motto: "Who wanted freedom and independence of our nation, couldn't be afraid of three million Germans" (*Národní listy*, Volume 60 / No. 29, 1920). That was published as a reaction to process of adoption of a constitutional laws package³³.

Considerably more complicated and diverse, when it comes either to composition or confrontation of political representatives, was the camp of the

³³ National democrats protested against discussion on the County Act and specifically J. Brabec spoke in plenum who thought that his reform of administration does not meet its importance of constitutional law (AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920).

governing coalition that was promoting county establishment as a tool of democratisation and secularism of public administration. The attitude of many social democrats was one of personal disappointment such as that expressed by **Edmund Burian**³⁴. In his speech he clearly suggested dissatisfaction with the appearance of legal norms. Moreover, as a member of Constitutional committee and representative of the social-democratic party he stated that "we will vote for them, but we have numerous objections against them". He defined Constitution itself as a "work against compromise". But mostly he objected against not achieving ideal of democracy saying that compared to its previous state, its condition is a progress. He associated not respecting both personal and party attitudes with version of a County Act, that was again supported by members of parliament although with "self-renunciation and because political situation and party discipline requires it" (all quotations from the AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920). In the question of democracy, coalition bond was stronger than ideological overlap. Agrarian party and particularly the Minister of Interior **A. Švehla** used the fragile political situation and managed to enforce the outline of the law about county establishment without major change.

In spite of many objections to Act no. 126/1920 Coll. on the establishment of county and district offices in the Czechoslovak Republic it was ratified on 29th February 1920. Although guaranteeing democratic principles, a new kind of political governance remained at the top of agrarian politicians' statements. It is not possible to deform self-governed component³⁵ as much as the County Act did and kept proclaiming democratic intentions. Its supporters were sure aware of that, but their political and personal interests stood above interests of the state. It's also suggested by necessity, providing the impact on selected state organs. In addition to the composition and scope of newly created state organs, the government retained the option to decide about the time of realisation of the County Act as stipulated by wording of paragraph 22 that determined that "government's regulation will establish what day will offices begin their activity" (Act no. 126/1920 Coll.) In this act, it is easy to identify the attempt to influence

³⁴ Edmund Burian (1880-1924): was in sessions in the National revolutionary assembly from 1918 to 1920 for the party Social Democracy.

³⁵ We are thinking especially about allowing interferences of government to composition of elected organs, position of state administration being dominant above county administration (chosen chairmen of the offices) or de-politisation of administration in the form of paragraph 30, which stated that "County council is not supposed to deal about political issues" (Act no. 126/1920 Coll).

final impact of the reform. Excluding responsibility was supposed to avoid possible political consequences.

J. Brabec predicted delays in implementation of the adopted act. He considered new territorial and administrative division a basis of the problem. In his parliament speech he came to the conclusion, that "division of the counties as suggested by constitutional committee, even if approved, won't be realised, we won't see it render, but it will be necessary for it to be amended or fundamentally changed" (AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920). His words gained seriousness and urgency during the following period. Failure to solve the situation forced members of parliament to act. Social Democrat **Alfred Meissner**³⁶ submitted a resolution on 16th March 1921 saying that: "Government is being challenged to promptly bring county and district establishments to life and to announce elections to county representation and district committees", putting pressure on governing coalition (AP, the stenographic report of the 65th session of National Assembly, 16th March 1921). Despite this initiative, a question of the County Act was narrowed specifically to the territory of Slovakia. This idea was presented in plenum of Chamber of Deputies of National Assembly by Prime Minister **Edvard Beneš**³⁷ on the 18th October 1921. **Beneš** stated that in the government plan, it is "necessary to implement certain right reforms" as one of the priorities he set "establishing of counties till the end of year 1922". A Slovak MP, **Ferdinand Juriga**³⁸ expressed the government's intention by saying: "Slovakia will be a guinea pig!" (all quotations from AP, the stenographic report of 86th session of National Assembly, 18th October 1921).

Slovak representatives were also active in the negotiation process over the

³⁶ Alfréd Meissner (1871-1950) was a member of the Supreme Legislature in 1918-1939 for the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Worker's Party. In this period he also was a Minister in multiple governments (for example during the second government of Vlastimil Tusar, Meissner was Minister of Justice).

³⁷ Edvard Beneš (1884-1948) was second Czechoslovak president in 1935-1938 and 1945-1948, long-time Minister of Foreign Affairs, one term Prime Minister (26th September 1924 - 7th October 1922). He was a member and a Vice Chairman of Czechoslovak National Socialist Party he left in 1935.

³⁸ Ferdinand Juriga (1874-1950): in 1910 elected to the Hungarian parliament, where he presented well known speech in Slovak language (19th October 1918) in which he required and defended right of self-determination of the Slovak nation. Since 1918 he was a Member of Parliament and Vice Chairman of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in Slovak Parliament. In 1929 he was expelled from the party and he founded his own party, that didn't succeed in elections and then he withdrew from public life.

County Act. Agrarian MP **Milan Hodža**³⁹ spoke multiple times in parliament. It's possible to assume even from Slovak political parties' representatives that from the beginning he expressed requirements of Slovaks on the version of the report⁴⁰. As to the submitted concept of self-government, "Slovak[s] should manage by himself in issues that involves him" found a solution which "we found and is included in Act about county and to establish land committee for mutual issues of all counties" (all quotations from AP, the stenographic report of 3rd session of National Assembly, 2nd June 1920). He followed up stated requirements in reaction to the government plan of Prime Minister **Beneš**. In his speech, he repeatedly required implementation of "county establishment with competent executive organ of democratic self-government". According to his words, it was supposed to be county association with "sufficient administrative competence" (all quotations from AP, the stenographic report of 86th of National Assembly, 18th October 1921). This model completely corresponded with his idea of administrative autonomy. **Hodža** saw the scope of cooperation of Slovak parties in this proposition. Overcoming their differences was supposed to lead to creating of "joint political committee that would act together on the issues of political administration" (Hodža 1934, s. 42). He conditioned achieving such a goal with rejecting legislative autonomy, because **Hodža** assumed that administration of self-government bodies would be accelerated and more accurate (Hodža, 1934). However, penetration of opinions couldn't be and wasn't stable in this case. Slovak People's Party was against settling with self-governed administration and 25th January submitted official proposal to amend Constitutional Charter. It suggested creation of "special provincial self-government" that would correspond to the concept of legislative (national-political) autonomy (AP, print National Assembly, no. 3403, 1922).

Calculations of governing coalitions, effort of Slovak representatives, but also fear of growing support of autonomic tendencies of People's Party helped to fulfil Beneš's words. Government's Decree no. 310/1922 Coll., which was issued on 26th October 1922 led to the County Act being implemented in Slovak

³⁹ Milan Hodža (1878-1944) was leading figure of Slovak agrarian movement in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia. He was a member of National Assembly during the first Czechoslovak Republic and a Minister of various resorts in multiple governments. Since 5th November till 22nd September 1938 he was a very first Slovak to ever hold a position of Prime Minister of Czechoslovak government.

⁴⁰ Members of Slovak People's Party also reacted positively, especially F. Juriga (AP, the stenographic report of 3rd session of National Assembly, 2nd June 1920).

territory. It happened on 1st January 1923. It meant not fulfilling fundamental goals, as the partial enforcement of the Act strengthened administrative dualism in the Czechoslovak Republic.

3 The character of political parties' collaboration

Evaluation of the selected indicators: participation in the final stages of administrative reform, votes for or against the bill, the status of the party (coalition or opposition), analysis of speeches in parliament - official and unofficial opinion⁴¹, describe the position of the key actors in public administration reform. The Club of Slovak Representatives was defined as a Slovak political assembly based in the Revolutionary National Assembly. In spite of its heterogeneity, it was considered as one political party. In this spirit it performed when considering and approving the County Act that was accepted together with the Constitution on the 29th of February 1920.

Table 1: Values of chosen indicators

SUBJECT	INDICATORS				
	Participation	Voting	C/O	P	O/N opinion
Agrarian Party	Yes	for	C	4	Yes/yes
KSP	No	for	C	3	Yes/yes
Czechoslovak Social Democrats	No	for	C	4	Yes/yes (reproaches)
Czechoslovak Socialist Party	No	for	C	6	Yes/yes (reproaches)
Cs. National Democratic Party	partial	against	O	6	No/no
Czechoslovak People's Party	partial	against	O	1	No/no

Source: based on author's compilation

⁴¹ The term unofficial opinion is a reference to the County Act form, which often meant a real partisan attitude.

Acquired results of stakeholders accepting the County Act indicate several important facts. Creating a County Act draft was mainly the domain of the Ministry of Interior. Ministry of Interior was in the hands of Agrarians, and crucial determinants of final form of government model were their political interests. Apart from the compromising establishment of County Act (partial participation of opposition parties), the design of the act copies the idea of Agrarians on form of administrating organisation. Ministry of Interior was supposed to execute the County Act (Act no.126/1920 Coll., pt. 9). Focusing on the mentioned facts, the role of the Club of Slovak Representatives was narrowed to discussing respectively approving government outline which they accepted in the constitutional committee unreservedly.

Political debate on a draft of the County Act was mainly marked by the fact that singular speakers were also expressing opinions on other issues, particularly the constitutional charter, and it eventually influenced interest of representatives of political parties. For this reason, the number of speeches was not focused on the issue of future administrative organisation of the Czechoslovak state; rather the focus was on various elements. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that all speakers helped to create a complete and accurate image of activity of various party members. Of the governing coalition, 17 political representatives delivered their speeches⁴². For the opposition parties⁴³, seven members spoke, one of them from Czechoslovak People's Party. The opposition was not against the Act per se; the reservations were rather focused on the existence of county unions. In the case of representatives of the coalition parties their performance can be seen on two levels. When leaders of the Agrarian party are focused on defending the singular establishments of the Act, members of the Club of Socialists "justified" the ruling party's support of the government's proposal in its initial text with the possibility of improvement. Although only two opposition parties were strongly against the

⁴² Coalition speakers (alphabetical order):

1. Agrarian party – F. Hnídek, J. Malypetr, O. Srdínko, K. Viškovsky.
2. KSP – M. Dula, M. Ivanka, I. Markovič.
3. Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party – I. Dérer, A. Meissner, J. Stivín, V. Tusar.
4. Czechoslovak Socialist Party – T. Bartošek, V. Bouček, B. Fišer, V. Freiman, L. Landová-Štýchová, F. Veselý.

⁴³ Opposition speakers (alphabetical order):

1. Czechoslovak National Democratic Party – J. Brabec, V. Dyka, J. Herben, J. Koloušek, K. Kramář, L. Vaněk.
2. Czechoslovak People's Party – J. Šrámek.

proposal their speakers primary focused on administrative organisation. However, as in the case of the People's Party, support for the enforcement of provincialism was mostly a question of power, a national principle that was supposed to prevent building of specific German counties that played a decisive role in the case of National Democrats.

Conclusion

The interwar period in Czechoslovakia is still subject to scientific research. The most discussed issue is the relationship of two state-creating nations, but partial problems of the political and party system are also interesting motive of examination. Creation of Czechoslovakia was connected with more determining circumstances. In addition to a complicated foreign political situation the character of national development was important. Dynamic progress of political representatives was transferred to the management of the state. Relatively early indication of primary tasks was reflected to the singular sectoral areas. Reform of public administration was the key question of Ministry of Interior.

Results of the research presented above should contribute to clarifying cooperation on the County Act. Evaluation of given indicators should help to accomplish the primary goal. Similarity of reform of public administration in 1920 was the work of the Agrarian Party, whose representative was Minister of Interior at the time. Coalition partners helped codify the act. However, legislative support wasn't primarily secured by accepting plurality of present suggestions, but through appealing to political motivation or position. Motive for the support of reform of public administration was not fulfilling the party postulates, but an ambition to share executive power. The Club of Slovak Representatives which adopted the county establishment with an intention to stabilise without jeopardizing newly acquired statehood is the exception. Although opposition parties as mentioned above disagreed with accepting the County Act, they achieved partial success with correcting the governing pattern, particularly implementation of county unions.

In spite of the fact that realisation of the County Act only within Slovak territory couldn't fulfil the goals of the reform of the public administration, antagonistic statements of political parties ushered permanent actuality of the issue throughout the whole pre-Munich period of Czechoslovakia.

References:

- Act no. 126/1920 Coll.. [online] [Accessed on 25.11.2015] Available at: <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html>
- Act no. 121/1920 Coll.. [online] [Accessed on 26.11.2015] Available at: <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html>
- Act no. 210/1920 Coll.. [online], [Accessed on 26.11.2015] Available at: <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html>
- AP, fund RNA, carton 32, from stenograph protocol 120th meeting of the Constitutional Committee of 21st January 1920, n. 1244
- AP, fund RNA, carton 33, stenographic report of 153. Constitutional Affairs Committee meeting of 19th February 1920, no. 1277
- AP, the stenographic report of the 126th session of RNA, 28th and 29th February 1920. [online] [Accessed on 22.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/126schuz/index.htm>
- AP, the stenographic report of the 125th session of RNA, 27th February 1920. [online] [cit Accessed on 24.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/125schuz/index.htm>
- AP, the stenographic report of the 62nd session of RNA, 10th July 1919. [online] [Accessed on 25.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/stenprot/062schuz/index.htm>
- AP, the stenographic report of the 65th session of National Assembly, 16th March 1921. [online] [Accessed on 25.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/stenprot/065schuz/index.htm>
- AP, the stenographic report of 86th session of National Assembly, 18th October 1921. [online] [Accessed on 25.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/stenprot/086schuz/index.htm>
- AP, the stenographic report of 3rd session of National Assembly, 2nd June 1920. [online] [Accessed on 26.10.2015] Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/stenprot/003schuz/index.htm>
- AP, print National Assembly, no. 3403, 1922. [online] [Accessed on 02.11.2014] Available at: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/tisky/t3403_00.htm
- Government's Decree no. 310/1922 Coll. [online] [Accessed on 22.11.2015] Available at: <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1922.html>
- HODŽA, M. 1934. Články, řeči, štúdie. Slovensko a republika. Zväzok VII. NOVINA, 1934. 434 p.
- HOETZEL, J. 1928. Župy - země. Několik vzpomínek a poznámek, čas. Bratislava, II 1928, 76 p.

- LAŠTOVKA, K. 1925. Zákon župní (Zákon ze dne 29. února 1920 č. 126 Sb. zák. a nař. o zřízení župních a okresních úřadův v republice Československé). Bratislava: Slovenská kníhtlačiareň v Bratislave, 1925. 223 p.
- LIPSCHER, L. 1966. K vývinu politickej správy na Slovensku v rokoch 1918 – 1938. Bratislava: SAV, 244 p.
- LIPTÁK, Ľ. A kol. 2004. Slovensko v Československu (1918 - 1939). Bratislava: SAV, 2008. 687 p. ISBN 80-224-0795-X
- LIDOVÉ NOVINY. 1920. [online] [Accessed on 13.11.2015] Available at: <<http://kramerius.mzk.cz/>>
- MALÍŘ, J. – MAREK, P. a kol. 2005. Politické strany: vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004. Brno: Doplněk, 2005. 1021 p. ISBN 8072391801
- MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLUB OF SLOVAK REPRESENTATIVES, 28th February 1920. [online] [Accessed on 15.11.2015] Available at: <<http://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Default?legId=8&termNr=1918>>
- NÁRODNÍ LISTY. Július Grégr. [online], [Accessed on 13.11.2015] ISSN: 1214 – 1240. Available at: <<http://kramerius.mzk.cz/>>
- PEROUTKA, F. 1936. Budování státu: československá politika v letech popřevratových, část 3. Fr. Borový, 1936. p. 2469