



# “To Work–To Sacrifice–To Die”: The Cult of Military Martyrs and its Manifestation in Slovakia during the years 1938–1945

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The Slovak Republic of 1939–1945 was established on the doorstep of the deadliest war in history. It almost immediately became an active participant in the war as an ally of Nazi Germany. Moreover, already in March 1939, Slovakia, just after its foundation, found itself in a military conflict with Hungary. These facts were naturally reflected in all spheres of society, including urban spaces. This study aims to analyze interventions in the public spaces of Slovak towns related to a cult of martyrs. There was strong need to justify the new Slovak Republic’s participation in the war. This need became increasingly pressing, especially after the invasion of the Soviet Union, which met with the disapproval of the majority of the population. I therefore ask how the regime responded to this. I am especially interested in following questions: how were public spaces transformed change in an effort to build a martyr cult before and after the attack on the Soviet Union? Were there significant interventions in connection with this event (the declaration of war against the USSR)? Had the symbol of a martyr or a soldier changed, and if so, how? The study is organized chronologically. I analyze interventions in public spaces during the so-called Little War in March 1939, at the moment of entry into the war against Poland in September 1939, and at the moment of entry into the war against the USSR in June 1941. I examine interventions on architecture-material level which involved the renaming streets and the creation of memorials. I also focus on perceptions of the street as a “stage” for military parades or ceremonies in the course of which soldiers were awarded decorations.

Keywords: interventions, military, nation, politics, public space, Slovak Republic 1939–1945

## *Introduction*

In this article, I aim to analyze efforts by the state to create symbolic embodiments of martyrs and heroes in the period between 1938 and 1945 in Slovakia. With this analysis, I seek to contribute to the discussion of the authoritarian regimes and their propaganda uses of the concepts of martyrdom and heroism in the urban public spaces. I also consider how the participation of the Slovak army in the war

as an ally of Nazi Germany affected the public urban spaces. Chronologically, I follow events and interventions in public spaces in Slovak cities in connection with the conflict also known as the Little War with Hungary, the entry into the war against Poland, and the entry into the war against the USSR. The latter (Slovakia's participation in the war against the USSR) is often cited in Slovak historiography as an important milestone which significantly influenced the moods and attitudes of the majority of Slovak society towards the regime of the Slovak Republic. The regime enjoyed the support of the majority for the first years of its existence, but with its decision to go into war against the USSR, it lost this support. Thus, the following question arises: with its involvement in the war against the Soviet Union, did the regime attempt to make propaganda elements parts of the public urban space, and if so, how? The interventions on which I focus are not limited to the placement of statues and monuments and the renaming of streets, but also include state organized festivities in public spaces, especially military parades and celebrations which involved awarding soldiers decorations.

### *Historiography and Methodology*

In the last few years, public space as a topic of historical research has enjoyed considerable popularity in the region of Central Europe.<sup>1</sup> Particular attention has been paid to works dedicated to the creation of historical memory.<sup>2</sup> Some of these works also deal with research on public space understood through the perceptions of streets and squares as “stages” or “scenes.”<sup>3</sup>

In the case of non-democratic regimes, which dominated Central Europe twentieth century (though by no means exclusively), one can speak of the significant impact of politics on public space. According to the hypothesis

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1 Welch-Guerra et al., *Urbanism and dictatorship*, 248; Palárik et al., *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*, 280; Pekár, “Politics and Public Space”; Bírešová, “Prezentácia štátnej ideológie,” 51–64; Hořejš, *Protectorátní Praha*, 320; Lipták, “Kolektívne identity,” 117–31; Pokludová, “V září miliónů”; Hristova and Czepcynski, *Public Space between reimagination and occupation*, 188; Lupienko, “Some remarks on the birth of modern city planning in the Polish territories,” 1834.

2 Mannová, “Pomníková kultura v Bratislave”; Švorc, “Gedenktafeln und Denkmäler in der Slowakei”; Pokludová, “Pomníky: místa kolektivní paměti, zapomnění i smíření s minulostí”; Hojda and Pokorný, *Pomníky a zapomnění*, 280. Hlavačka et al., *Paměť míst, události a osobnosti: historie jako identita a manipulace*, 685. Skoczyas, *Pamięć społeczna miasta – jej liderzy i odbiorcy*, 292; Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji*, 470.

3 Hájková et al., *Sláva republičky*, 536; Kušnieráková et al. *Vyjdeme v noci vo fackľovom sprievode a rozsvietime svet*, 245.

suggested by urban planners, the development of urban public space was one of the main priorities of nondemocratic regimes.<sup>4</sup> The architecture and other symbolic uses of urban spaces in the Third Reich offer ample illustrations of this political practice, as do the symbolic uses of urban space in Soviet Russia at the time.<sup>5</sup>

The case of Slovak towns in the mid-twentieth century also fits this trend. One finds several works reflecting the relationship between politics and the symbolic uses of public space in Slovak towns during the war, although many of these towns saw only comparatively minor war-related interventions in the human geography of their urban spaces.<sup>6</sup> However, there is no comprehensive study which focuses on the relationship between militarization of society and the transformation of public spaces. With this paper, I contribute to the discussion of this topic.

For purpose of my inquiry, I interpret public spaces as sites which can be understood as the opposite of private spaces. They are managed by public institutions and laws, and they are usually accessible to all citizens. They have four metaphorical dimensions: legal, functional, social, and material-symbolic.<sup>7</sup>

Political regimes are unquestionably aware of the value of public space as visible and accessible sites, and there is clear connection between the ideologies on the basis of which political regimes make their claims to power and the ways in which they use public spaces. The uses of public space are often closely connected to propaganda, a term which I understand as referring to the efforts of the state to shape people's opinions and manipulate them by disseminating potentially misleading information, presenting arguments, and crafting a symbolic language.<sup>8</sup> As Jowett and O'Donnell have noted, propaganda is systematic in its efforts to shape public opinion, and it serves the aims of those who craft it.<sup>9</sup>

According the Cambridge dictionary, the word martyr means a person who suffers or is killed because of his or her religious or political beliefs and is often admired for having adhered to these beliefs in the face of persecution.<sup>10</sup> By this

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4 Bodenschatz, "Urbanism and dictatorship," 20.

5 Hagen and Ostergren, *Building Nazi Germany*, 496; Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*; Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform*; Filtzer, *The Hazard of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia*, 379.

6 Palárik et al., *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*, 280; Pekár, "Political and Public Space"; Fogelová and Pekár, *Disciplinované mesto*, 198; Szalay et al., *Vojnová Bratislava 1939–1945*, 336.

7 Siebel and Werheim, "Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit in der überwachten Stadt."

8 *Oxfordský slovník světových dějin*, 479.

9 Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*, 7–8.

10 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/martyr>

definition, a person can become a martyr (and usually does) immediately after his or her death, but this can also happen later, and a person can be transformed into a martyr by regime and then used as an instrument of political propaganda.<sup>11</sup> Research into the relationship between the political regime, the nation, and the martyrdom draws on a rich tradition. In his book *Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon*, Jay W. Baird focuses on several strategies that were used to create a cult of martyrs in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. This cult evolved from a unique tradition, nurtured by ancient stories and medieval legends, and the heroic death was perceived as a form of redemption at the time. Through death, the sins of the fathers were to be washed away. Death was cast as the promise of national resurrection. The collective trauma which Germany suffered after World War I was a breeding ground for similar considerations. Finally, as Baird emphasizes, the development of similar notions of heroism in nationalist debates has often stemmed from the a nation's perceived inferiority and a concomitant feeling of despair.<sup>12</sup>

Similar parallels are found in Slovak society in this regard. An alleged thousand-year period of Hungarian oppression was one of the key motifs used by Slovak nationalists and historians since the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The feeling of belonging to an oppressed nation persisted in part of Slovak society even in the interwar period. As Adam Hudek points out, the construction of the Slovak national story (not yet fully developed in the interwar period) also contained elements connected to the personification of history through the personalities of the nation's heroes and martyrs. Of course, this is not unique to the Slovak national narrative. Notions of martyrdom are integral parts of the national stories and national mythologies which spread across Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>14</sup>

Public spaces provided a stage where these images could be physically depicted. before the establishment of Czechoslovakia, Hungarian cities were full of urban spaces that were used as sites for the expression and glorification of elements of the various (often competing) national narratives.<sup>15</sup>

However, as Anton Hruboň points out, the roots of the narratives of martyrdom used by Andrej Hlinka's Slovak People's Party can be found in

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11 Macho, "Martýrium ako heroizačný instrument."

12 Baird, *Die for Germany*, 243–44.

13 Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda*, 15–34.

14 *Ibid.*, 17–18.

15 Lipták, "Kolektívne identity a verejné priestory."

connection with Rodobrana.<sup>16</sup> Rodobrana was a paramilitary organization of the Slovak People's Party (later renamed Hlinka's Slovak People's Party). It was established in January 1923. The organization's role was to ensure the safety of party members, especially during public gatherings. It was established in January 1923. was known for its catholic and anti-socialist attitudes.

A guide *Rodobranecký katechizmus* written by Vojtech Tuka<sup>17</sup> proclaimed as martyrs e. g. victims of tragedy in Černová,<sup>18</sup> fallen Slovak volunteers in the revolution of 1848/1849<sup>19</sup> or members of the group around Jánošík.<sup>20</sup> Hruboň also refers to the relationship between Rodobrana and the cult of martyrdom of Vojtech Tuka, which was related to his imprisonment during the existence of Czechoslovakia.<sup>21</sup>

### *Short Preview*

The Slovak Republic 1939–1945 was established in March 1939, just a few months before the outbreak of World War II, after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. The secondary literature contains ample materials on the circumstances of its formation.<sup>22</sup> In addition to domestic political reasons, its main engine was Germany's foreign policy ambitions to redraw the map of Europe, which had been established by the Versailles peace treaties after the World War I. The non-democratic regime in Slovakia was essentially created immediately after the

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16 Hruboň, "Budovanie kultu Jozefa Tisa," 215.

17 Vojtech Tuka (1880–1946) served as prime minister in 1939–1944. He was a member of the radical pro-Nazi wing of Hlinka Slovak People's Party. He was also the founder of the paramilitary organization Rodobrana. In 1920s and 1930s, he was arrested on charges of treason and espionage in favor of Hungary. His person is also closely connected with the persecution of Jews and anti-Jewish laws.

18 The tragedy in Černová took place on October 27, 1907. During a dispute over the consecration of the church (the inhabitants of Černová demanded that the church be consecrated by Hlinka), the gendarmes began shooting at the crowd. 15 people died in the shooting. The tragedy is considered one of the peaks of the violent Magyarization of Slovaks.

19 Slovak volunteer expeditions were organized by the Slovak National Council during the uprising in 1848 and 1849.

20 Juraj Jánošík (1688–1713) was a legendary "early rebel." He was a member of the insurgent troops in the uprising against the Habsburgs by Francis II Rákóczi, and he later was a member of the imperial troops. His life as a highwayman lasted less than two years. In 1713, he was executed. Representatives of the Slovak national movement romanticized his character in the middle of the nineteenth century and his story is part of Slovak legends.

21 Fedorčák, *Tuka proti republike*, 269.

22 Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, 365; Baka, *Politický systém a režim*, 322. Summary for non-Slovak readers: Teich, Kováč and Brown. Slovakia in History, 413.

Munich Agreement and Vienna Award, in the autumn of 1938, as a consequence of which Czechoslovakia suffered territorial losses. The Munich Agreement, which made clear the willingness of the Allies to give in to Germany's territorial demands, transformed the social atmosphere in Slovakia. The destabilization of Czechoslovakia led to the decline of democracy in the country. Authoritarian elements began to come to the fore and remained even after the establishment of an independent Slovakia. This period was characterized by the elimination of political opponents, persecution of minorities, and the introduction of a one-party government.<sup>23</sup>

Those changes also affected the creation of an autonomous Slovakia. The autonomous Land of Slovakia was formally established by Constitutional Act No. 299/1938 on November 22, 1938. However, the declaration of independence had already been made on October 6, 1938. From the outset, one sees the transformation of the government into an authoritarian regime, as Zuzana Tokárová has argued persuasively in her book.<sup>24</sup> The regime can be characterized as authoritarian with limited political pluralism, a vague ideology, and a lack of political mobilization. However, it gradually took on several totalitarian tendencies. Propaganda played an important role in the strategies used by the emerging regime, for example a propaganda office was established in October, only a few days after declaration of independence. The head of this office was Alexander Mach.<sup>25</sup> As Igor Baka mentions, the central aim of the propaganda was to cast the birth of the Slovak state as the result of the efforts of the Slovak nation.<sup>26</sup>

I argue that the symbol of the martyr was an important part of wartime propaganda in Slovakia, and public spaces provided ideal sites for this propaganda because of their visibility for the inhabitants of and visitors to the cities. The symbol of the martyr, I argue, was used as a motif in narratives intended to prove the oppressive nature of the regimes which, until the creation of an independent Slovakia, had controlled Slovak territory and also to help the regime legitimize its existence and its involvement in the war against Poland and the Soviet Union alongside Germany. If I consider the cult of martyrs as part of propaganda at

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23 Baka, *Politický systém a režim*, 13–30.

24 Tokárová, *Slovenský štát: Režim medzi teóriou a politickou praxou*, 272.

25 Alexander Mach (1902–1980) was the head of Hlinka Guard (1939–1940, 1940–1944) as well, and also served as Minister of Interior (1940–1944). Alexander Mach belonged to the pro-Nazi wing of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, and he was also responsible for persecution of the Jewish community of Slovakia. After the war, he was sentenced to 30 years in prison (he was released after having served 23 years).

26 Baka, "Mechanizmus, ciele a metódy pôsobenia ľudáckej propagandy v rokoch 1938–1939," 285.

the time, it should be understood as one element of the systematic attempt to shape public opinion. The cult of the martyr, which was addressed to Slovakia's Catholic majority, would win support for Slovakia's involvement in the war as a German ally. I claim these propagandistic interventions in public spaces related to the cult of martyrs can be seen mainly in the social dimension (in the form of celebrations and holidays, military parades, and festivities) and the material-symbolic dimension (the erection of statues and monuments and the renaming of streets). I focus on these two dimensions. As mentioned above, I proceed chronologically, primarily concentrating on county centers (cities where the bureaucratic apparatus of the regime was concentrated).

### *Slovak Cities and the Rise of the Authoritarian Regime*

The authoritarian regime largely determined what was happening in Slovak society, including Slovak cities. After the events of the autumn of 1938, the cities found themselves under new rule and facing new pressures. The liquidation of political opponents was followed by the construction of a new, mostly Slovak urban elite in many towns. The representatives of this elite had the support of the governing Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. Although it is possible to speak of a certain degree of continuity in the cases of some cities,<sup>27</sup> there were significant changes to the ways in which power was exercised. The cities were no longer headed by elected representatives from the democratic elections, but by appointed party representatives. The mayors were replaced by government commissioners, and the city councils were replaced by advisory boards.

The fates of the members of the previous urban councils differed from town to town. Jewish Parties were banned and their members were excluded from the elite.<sup>28</sup> Some members of the Christian elite started to cooperate with Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, while others lived in seclusion or retired. Some of them (for example Bernard Rolfesz, who had served as the mayor deputy in Nitra) ended up in internment camp in Ilava.<sup>29</sup> These changes all pointed in the same direction: a more authoritative way of managing the cities.<sup>30</sup>

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27 We can talk about continuity in the case of Ružomberok. One can find more on interventions to the legal dimension in Fogelová and Pekár, *Disciplinované mesto*.

28 See Tokárová, "Social Status of the Interwar Jewish Political Elite in Prešov."

29 Bernard Rolfesz was of Hungarian nationality, as was Karol Sefcsík, another member of the city administration). See Palárik et al., *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*, 135. See also: Pekár, "Replacement of Municipal Political Elite."

30 Pekár, "Replacement of Municipal Political Elite."

These changes significantly affected the nature of interventions to all four aforementioned dimensions of public urban spaces. From the perspective of the legal dimension, public spaces were used and controlled in accordance with the interests of new political actors, which meant the government and the relevant ministries and the new or old-new urban elite. The ideas of these actors were transferred to other dimensions of public space. The interventions also concerned the functional dimension (changes in the uses of public spaces, e. g. the change of a given site from a leisure zone to a zone with a political purpose), the social dimension (political rituals and celebrations), and the material-symbolic dimension (interventions related to ideological motivation, political propaganda, and actual construction activities).<sup>31</sup>

### *Building the Regime, Searching for Martyrs, and Intervening in the Public Space*

The emerging regime made its first interventions in public spaces immediately at the end of October 1938, when a mass and sudden renaming of streets took place in all major cities.<sup>32</sup> Such an intervention was a means of furthering a change in the political and social paradigm in Slovakia in the public arena. Personalities and events connected with the autonomist movement came to the fore, while personalities connected to the Czech or Czechoslovak social and political visual language had to be erased.<sup>33</sup> Personalities who had become significantly involved in the Slovak autonomist movement or who had suffered or been killed because of their national beliefs<sup>34</sup> gained importance.

This trend was most pronounced in the city of Prešov in eastern Slovakia. In November 1938, Prešov became the biggest city in eastern Slovakia, taking

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31 For the categorization of dimensions of public space applied to the example of the Slovak Republic of 1939–1945, see Fogelová and Pekár, *Disciplinované mesto*, 26–33 or in general Siebel and Wehrheim, “Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit in der überwachten Stadt,” 4–13.

32 Palárik et al, *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*, 280.

33 The first changes in the public space were aimed against Czechs. The changes were closely related to the declaration of Slovak autonomy on October 6, 1938. The changes against Jews followed later, affecting mainly the legal dimension (for instance the introduction of a curfew in the night and the expulsion of Jews from public spaces and the centers of the towns) and the social dimension (antisemitism during the ceremonial speeches in towns). Anti-Semitism has found expression in the city streets on the level of graffiti paintings of pejorative symbols. Later, Law nr. 177/1940 Sl. Coll. was adopted. The regime used this law, called the “Sanitation Law,” in relation to new construction projects, which in many cases affected property which had been owned by Jews.

34 The interpretation of the deaths of selected martyrs is questionable. As is clear in the discussion below, the deaths of some martyrs were more or less accidental.



over the position of Košice.<sup>35</sup> The whole region (historically known as Šariš and Zemplín) belonged to the poorest parts of the Czechoslovakia and had only weak historical and cultural ties to the Czechs. Therefore, during the whole interwar period, the city and region had been frequent targets of propaganda in both directions: of propaganda - Pro-Hungarian and anti-Hungarian. This continued after the Vienna Award.<sup>36</sup>

The new advisory board and its head, government commissioner Alexander Chrappa, decided to rename several streets after the martyrs connected with the region. The streets of martyr Hula, martyr Hanušovský, martyrs Tomášovci, and martyr František Majoch were created here. The nominees were killed either in connection with the activities of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party or in connection with activities identified by the regime as "national."

This use, in the renaming of the streets, of the names of local personalities who had been killed during previous period was part of the propaganda effort aimed against Hungarian oppression and Czech oppression, and it was also intended to prove the loyalty of the new political elite of the city to the autonomous government.

The choice of the martyrs, I would argue, was not accidental. Two streets were renamed after people who had been killed by Hungarian Bolsheviks. Ján and Ondrej Tomášovci (father and son) were killed in 1919 by Hungarian Bolsheviks. František Majoch,<sup>37</sup> who served as a Catholic priest in the village of Hermanovce near Prešov, was also killed by Hungarian Bolsheviks in August 1919.<sup>38</sup> The other two streets were renamed after young peasants. Ján Hanušovský died in September 1923 during the assembly of the Slovak People's Party in Košice. The assembly took place in the presence of Andrej Hlinka. The accidental death of Hanušovský was caused by a quarrel between the supporters of Hlinka (members of Rodobrana) and supporters of socialist parties in Košice. Matej Hula died in

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35 Košice (until that time the second biggest city in Slovakia) became part of Hungary due to the First Vienna Award on November 2, 1938. Košice belonged to Hungary until the liberation of the city by the Red Army in January 1945.

36 Pekár, *Východné Slovensko 1939–1945*, 46–55.

37 František Majoch worked together with priests Štefan Onderčo (a close associate of Andrej Hlinka and also a leading supporter of the People's Party in eastern Slovakia) and Jozef Čárský (a Catholic priest in Široké near Prešov). Later, he became a bishop in Košice. He held this position until 1939, and again after 1946. He organized an assembly against the Hungarian Bolsheviks in December 1918, and he belonged to the leaders of the Slovak national activities in the eastern Slovak region at the time.

38 Harčar, *Žil som v Košiciach*, 28–33.

July 1925 in the village Nižný Šebeš near Prešov. He died accidentally in a fight between villagers and Czech gendarmes.

### *The Cult of Andrej Hlinka in Ružomberok*

In addition to cults of local martyrs, such as the abovementioned cult of martyrs in Prešov (which did not cross the city limits), a cult of Andrej Hlinka was also nurtured. Hlinka was the leading figure in the interwar autonomist movement, and he died less than two months before the “Tudácky” regime came to power. The new regime adored the personality of Hlinka and his political career. He was depicted by the state organs as a suffering martyr, and the image of Hlinka as a martyr became an important element of state propaganda.<sup>39</sup> This cult of Hlinka as a martyr was fully developed even before 1918, and as Roman Holec states, Hlinka consciously built this aura of the martyr and let it built by others.<sup>40</sup> The image of Hlinka as someone who had suffered, which was an image shared by a large part of the Slovak public, grew more intense after his death. Autonomous government which took power in Slovakia from in 1938 only continued to build on this legacy. Streets, squares, statues, and memorial plaques dedicated to Andrej Hlinka began to appear in large numbers in public spaces in Slovak cities. The use of in public spaces of depictions of Hlinka as a martyr took place against a background of massive agitation.<sup>41</sup> The propaganda, led by Mach, emphasized the importance of remembering Hlinka’s martyrdom in every municipal council in every town and village. According to Mach, “[we should] always have this name in front of our eyes and in our squares and streets ..., so in time, there must be a monument to Andrej Hlinka in every city.”<sup>42</sup>

While the first commitment was easy to fulfill for the cities (especially without financial costs) and perhaps each city had its own Hlinka Street (located mostly in the central part of the city), there were not many monuments dedicated to Hlinka. The propaganda was replaced by the reality of war, and many cities did not have the funds to erect costly monuments.

A monumental building dedicated to Hlinka was created only in Ružomberok, a town in central Slovakia where Hlinka had worked and where he was also buried in August 1938. His mausoleum was built there in 1938–1939. The magnificently

39 Letz and Mulik, *Pohlady na osobnost' Andreja Hlinku*, 277.

40 Holec, *Andrej Hlinka*, 115.

41 “Duch Andreja Hlinku vládne Slovenskom.” *Slovák*, October 28, 1938, 2.

42 Ibid.

conceived building replaced a more modest project. At the initiative of the mayor of Ružomberok, the city took over the financial burden and the technical design of the building.<sup>43</sup> Construction was financed using city monies in the amount of 1.5 million Slovak crowns.<sup>44</sup> An important message during its construction was that only Slovaks would be employed to erect the building. The designers of the project were city architects and engineers. The local construction company from Ružomberok took care of the construction. Other projects were also launched under Slovak direction. The press did not forget to emphasize that the marble used was also Slovak.<sup>45</sup> By publishing the list of local and regional companies in the press in detail, city officials presumably sought to demonstrate that they could provide a fitting place for Hlinka to rest in peace themselves, without the help of the state.

*Creating an Idea of Martyrdom for the Slovak State in March 1939:  
The Cult of Anton Kopal in Bratislava*

“The first martyr of the nascent independent state, brother, guard, Slovak young man.”<sup>46</sup> These are some of the names used by the Slovak press immediately after the establishment of the Slovak state in March 1939 to refer to the 27-year-old member of the Hlinka Guard, Anton Kopal. Kopal, who came from the village of Veľké Uherce near Nitra, worked in Bratislava as a laborer. When he was killed on March 10, 1939 in street fighting between military and gendarmerie units and the Hlinka Guard and Freiwillige schutzstaffel<sup>47</sup> units, the propaganda machine immediately took advantage of his death. The press presented Kopal as a man who was fired from a factory in Prague after the events of October 6, 1938. From the outset, the stereotype of an honest working Slovak who had suffered in “foreign” because of his attachment to his national identity was presented to the public.

Immediately after Kopal’s death, a demonstration farewell took place in the public space in front of the Slovak National Theater in Bratislava. Members

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43 State Archive in Bytča, Department in Liptovský Mikuláš, Municipal notary office, no. 17–20, box. 8, Minutes of the Municipal council, June, 10 1939.

44 “Ojedinele zrealizovaná povďačnosť.” *Liptov*, September 29, 1939, 1.

45 Ibid.

46 “Spi sladko, brat Anton.” *Slovák*, March 15, 1939, 2.

47 Freiwillige Schutzstaffel, founded in the late 1938, was a paramilitary wing of the German Party (Deutsche Partei) in the Slovak Republic: 1939–1945. It organized members of the German community in Slovakia.

of Hlinka Guard, Hlinka Youth, and Freiwillige Schutzstaffel took a part in the demonstration too. Kopal's death has been presented as a sacrifice for the freedom of the Slovak nation against Czech centralism. The autonomous flag and the Slovak double cross (symbols connected with the new regime) were part of the whole ritual, which took place in front of a crowd of several thousands. The ritual was completed by the Slovak anthem and guard songs. The Hlinka Guard naturally played an important role in the whole procession. During the march through the city streets, one of the main stops was the Hlinka Guard headquarters. The whole ritual was intended to amplify feelings of support for Slovak independence and to reinforce the image of the Hlinka Guard as one of the main pillars of the new state. The place of Anton Kopal in the "pantheon" of martyrs for Slovak freedom, along Hlinka, was also confirmed a few days later by Alexander Mach during a speech at the Hlinka Guard demonstration's meeting on Hviezdoslav Square in Bratislava.<sup>48</sup>

Kopal's affiliation with the Hlinka Guard was one of the main factors that made him the first martyr after March 1939. As Mach often repeated, Kopal's heroism offer eloquent testimony that "the guards would rather fall than betray the nation."<sup>49</sup> At the same time, Mach used his death to strengthen the image of the Hlinka Guard as the organization which was equivalent to a proper army. The army itself also added to this narrative on the outside. This was already evident on the first anniversary of Kopal's death. On this occasion, a monument was unveiled in Kopal's birthplace during the festivities. Ferdinand Čatloš, serving as Minister of Defense, took a part in the ceremony.<sup>50</sup> In his speech, he assured the audience that the "Hlinka Guard is one with the army and the army is one with the Hlinka Guard."<sup>51</sup>

Immediately after the establishment of the Slovak Republic on March 14, 1939, a conflict erupted between Slovakia and Hungary in eastern Slovakia which lasted a few days.<sup>52</sup> It came to a tragic end with the bombing of Spišská Nová Ves on March 24, 1939, which claimed a total of twelve victims. In connection

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48 Do boja za náš vznešený ideál. *Slovák*, March 21, 1939, 4.

49 "Cesta nemecko-slovenského kamarátstva znamená: nový život, nový svet, spravodlivosť a slobodu." *Slovák*, March 12, 1940, 3.

50 On the relationship between the Hlinka Guard and the army, see: Sokolovič, *Hlinkova garda 1938–1945*, 236–40.

51 "Cesta nemecko-slovenského kamarátstva znamená: nový život, nový svet, spravodlivosť a slobodu." *Slovák*, March 12, 1940, 3.

52 On the conflict known as the Little War, see: Cséfalvay, "Predohra a priebeh maďarsko-slovenského ozbrojeného konfliktu v marci 1939."

with this unfortunate event, a funeral demonstration was held in the city which was interpreted by the regime in similar way to Kopal's death. The deaths of inhabitants of the city were considered a sacrifice made for the newly emerging state.<sup>53</sup> Alexander Mach and Karol Murgaš attended the funeral as distinguished guests.<sup>54</sup> As in the case of the farewell to Anton Kopal in Bratislava, the Hlinka Guard and the Freiwillige Schutzstaffel played an important role in the funeral ritual in Spišská Nová Ves.

### *The Outbreak of World War II and Propaganda against Poland in Public Spaces*

In September, when Germany launched an attack on Poland, the Slovak state had existed for only a few months. In connection with the beginning of the war, the changes affected mainly the territory of western and northern Slovakia. In preparation for the war, the relevant military infrastructure was built in this area, including the construction of military warehouses, trenches, and anti-aircraft shelters and repairs were made to roads and bridges.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the public space became mainly a stage for propaganda. This propaganda sharpened against Poland in August 1939 and was undoubtedly part of Germany's preparations for war.<sup>56</sup> Demonstrations in the squares were an integral part of it. The largest of these demonstrations took place in Bratislava on August 22, 1939. The unplanned arrival of Hlinka Guard members took place in Slobody Square in the early evening. The organizer of this demonstration was the guard itself, and according to the press, up to 100,000 people took part, including 50,000 civilians.<sup>57</sup> Given the spontaneity of the whole demonstration, I regard these estimates as exaggerations. It is clear from the archival reports that the whole event aimed to prepare the Slovak population for the impending conflict with Poland. The demonstration was therefore in the spirit of the motto "We want ours, we want ours, we want everything that is ours!"<sup>58</sup> Karol

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53 "Krv nevinných privedie k víťazstvu našu pravdu!" *Slovák*, March 29, 1939, 4.

54 Alexander Mach represented the government, and he was also the commander of the Hlinka Guard. Karol Murgaš was at that time the chief of the political staff of the Hlinka Guard.

55 Baka, "Slovensko vo vojne proti Poľsku v roku 1939," 27.

56 Baka, "Návrat odtrhnutých bratov."

57 "HG v Bratislave v pohotovosti," *Slovák*, August 24, 1939, 2.

58 In the autumn of 1938, Slovakia lost an area of 221 square kilometers in northern Slovakia, which fell to Poland. The agreement between the Czechoslovak and Polish governments was based on the Munich Agreement, signed on September 30, 1938.

Danihel's<sup>59</sup> speech to the guards and the civilian population was intended not simply to incite anti-Polish sentiment, but also to defend Slovakia's cooperation with Germany and, above all, to motivate Hlinka Guard members to obey any orders they might receive in the coming days.

The end of summer in the Slovak countryside was traditionally marked by harvest festivities.<sup>60</sup> In the Slovak agrarian environment, these festivities are of special importance. They are milestones in which harvesting and field work symbolically come to an end. For the regime, this holiday was an important propaganda tool. The festivities were primarily used to highlight the regime's social efforts, but the content changed significantly depending on domestic political developments. Throughout the existence of the Slovak state, in all major cities politicians performed on stage as part of harvest festivities and filled the celebrations with their own content.<sup>61</sup>

At the time of the attack on Poland in September 1939, one of the main points of the harvest celebrations in Zvolen was the performance of Jozef Kirschbaum.<sup>62</sup> He replaced Jozef Tiso on the stage, who did not take part in the celebration, even though according to the original plans, he would have participated. In his speech, Kirschbaum emphasized that Slovaks, in cooperation with Germany in the attack on Poland, were only pursuing the correction of an old injustice, and thus the return of territories that had been taken away from Slovakia. Unity with Germany was also symbolically underlined by the decoration on the square where the celebration took place. Slovak and German flags flew on the sides of the square.<sup>63</sup> A similar speech was held a few days later in the small town of Topoľčany, where the Minister of Economy Gejza Medrický spoke in the same spirit.<sup>64</sup> The politicians were trying to convince their audiences that it was the duty of every brave individual to fight for the nation and that the performance of military duty is equivalent to work in the field or in the factory.

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59 Karol Danihel was a politician and notary. He was district commander of the Hlinka Guard in Malacky, and from May 1942 until September 1944 he served as the chief of staff of the guard. Danihel was a supporter of Tiso and of the conservative wing of the Party.

60 The harvest festival was one of the traditional festivities in the rural environment associated with the annual agricultural cycle.

61 Fogelová and Pekár, *Disciplinované mesto*, 123.

62 Jozef Kirschbaum (1913–2001) was a politician and diplomat. He was secretary-general of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party in 1939–1940, and beginning in 1942, he served as a diplomat in Switzerland.

63 "Ešte o sviatku Zvolena," *Slovák*, September 8, 1939, 7.

64 "Jednotný hlas znie Slovensko: Už nikdy viac nebudeme otrokmi!" *Slovák*, September 5, 1939, 5.

Constant persuasion of the audience of the necessity of a military attack on Poland suggests that massive support from the population was crucial for the regime. The propaganda campaign, also conducted through demonstrations in public, eventually proved effective. As stated by Zuzana Tokárová, who examined the shows of loyalty by the population in the city of Prešov, even though military aggression was accepted with reluctance by many residents, in practical terms, there was no great resistance to the idea of going to war with Poland.<sup>65</sup> In addition to gaining support, the regime pursued another goal by organizing various demonstrations and celebrations. Through the speeches, the political elite sought to create a national collective identity that would be connected to a picture of the peaceful character of a Slovak who wants nothing but what belongs to him.<sup>66</sup> The cult of the heroism of the martyr for the homeland began to thrive in these months (it had also appeared in hints in the previous period), because with the onset of the war, the regime had an ever more pressing need for this cult.<sup>67</sup>

Further militarization of Slovak society<sup>68</sup> in the public space took place mainly through the organization of celebrations associated with the honor of soldiers. The soldier as a symbol was closely tied to discipline and obedience slogans that were often used in the contemporary propaganda. According to a speech held by Jozef Tiso in June 1939 in Prešov,

The whole Slovak nation lives in its military determination to live, work, and die for its nation and state, and even the most independent soldier is determined to do the same. The Slovak soldier will always be a model for every Slovak. The nation gives the army its tradition. A soldier gives a nation his qualities: military modesty, unity, unpretentiousness, toughness, and perseverance.<sup>69</sup>

In the propaganda of the time, these qualities were contrasted with “decadent” capitalist society. Tiso imagined the typical Slovak as a humble, hard-working, unassuming man, and it was in these points that the propaganda sought parallels with the symbol of a soldier who was to become a model of civic virtues.<sup>70</sup>

65 Tokárová, “Od lojaloty k apatii,” 67.

66 “Jednotný hlas znie Slovensko: Už nikdy viac nebudeme otrokmi!” *Slovák*, September 5, 1939, 5.

67 Baka, “Návrat odrhnutých bratov,” 136–39.

68 On the militarization of Slovak society, see: Baka, *Slovenská republika a nacistická agresia proti Poľsku*, 132–40.

69 “Armáda budovateľkou štátu a lepšej budúcnosti,” *Slovenská sloboda*, July 1, 1939, 1.

70 Also see: Pejs, “Jozef Tiso jako hlava štátu a nejvyšší vojenský velitel,” 16.

From the point of view of political leaders, it was important to make shows of Slovak-German unity in front of the local audiences. In the public space, there was an opportunity to do so during the military festivities in Piešťany, which took place in mid-October. Both Ferdinand Čatloš<sup>71</sup> and Jozef Tiso took part in them. On Hlinka Square, in the central area of the city, Slovak and German pilots were honored and decorated. Tiso himself presented the award of the victorious cross<sup>72</sup> to the General of Antiaircraft Artillery Fritz Hirschauer. In addition to Tiso and Čatloš, the ceremony was also attended by the Minister of Transport Július Stano and the Commander-in-Chief of the Hlinka Guard Alexander Mach. The Hlinka Guard also had a role at the ceremony, and a guard parade was part of the performance for the Piešťany audience. In Tiso's speech, the words devotion, courage, and perseverance were repeated many times as the virtues to adorn every soldier. The celebrations included military music, and the Slovak and German national anthems were also played.

The offensive militarization of Slovak society which began in August 1939 also affected the cult of Andrej Hlinka. When, at the end of October 1939, his remains were ceremoniously transferred to the newly built mausoleum, the propaganda took the opportunity to connect Hlinka's personality with the symbol of a warrior. According to Ferdinand Čatloš, Hlinka was no longer just a martyr and the founder of the state. He also became a warrior with military virtues.<sup>73</sup> In an editorial printed in a Slovak newspaper, Čatloš did not forget to highlight Hlinka's masculinity and authority, which were aspects of his personality that were highly valued in the contemporary propaganda.

After the end of the fighting in Poland, the war agitation in the propaganda weakened. In the subsequent period, the symbol of the martyr-soldier-hero appeared in public space mainly in connection with the celebration of public holidays and various anniversaries. The army played an important role in the celebrations of the first anniversary of state independence in March 1940. The national holiday of March 14 was celebrated in all major cities and culminated in

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71 Ferdinand Čatloš (1895–1972) served as minister of defense and general. He organized and commanded the Slovak army campaign in Poland.

72 The Slovak Victorious Military Cross went through several developmental stages. In the period between 1939 and 1942, from its establishment until the first modification, its insignia was divided into three classes and the award was given to persons who showed personal bravery, dedication, and presence of mind on the battlefield or performed an important act with the entrusted unit to contribute to a favorable outcome or military operation, as well as to those who had made outstanding contributions to the Republic. For more information, see: Purdek, "Vojenská symbolika."

73 "Hlinka – bojovník!" *Slovák*, October 29, 1939, 1.



a military parade. These ceremonies were intended to evoke the strength of the Slovak army and the determination to defend its country among the audience. The speeches again addressed the need to cultivate military virtues, and they emphasized the need for discipline and unity.<sup>74</sup> In the capital, where the entire government took part in the military parade, an army order was issued by Jozef Tiso.<sup>75</sup> The army presented itself on the streets of the city as the greatest source of support for the young state. After a military parade on Slobody Square, the army moved through the streets of the city to Vajanského nábrežie. Here, the army had to show the audience its strength, discipline, and unity. At the head of the parade was General Alexander Čunderlík, followed by his aides, military music, and the honor guard. The propaganda did not forget to emphasize that the infantry, which formed the largest part, drowned out the sounds of the military music with its thundering footfalls.<sup>76</sup> Undoubtedly, the greatest response was evoked by motorized units, including panzers, which had to make an extraordinary impact on the audience of the time. In terms of reflections on the army's traditions, references to the past of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak troops were out of the question. According to the periodical press, "There was no Slovak army and it was born."<sup>77</sup> Only the connection between the legend of the army from Sitno and the army of that time came into consideration.

Sitno is the mountain near Banská Štiavnica, where according to a folk story, a sleeping army is waiting to help the Slovaks in bad times. The story about the knights of Sitno is found in the work *List of Slovak fairy tales* published in 1931. It was written by Jirí Polívka (a Czech philologist and Slavist).<sup>78</sup> According to propaganda, like the mythical army under Sitno, the Slovak army should have been prepared to defend itself.<sup>79</sup>

The propaganda also highlighted the "building" aspect<sup>80</sup> in the army, especially on the occasion of the May 1 celebrations. According to the ideas of Jozef Tiso, the army was to become a builder of the nation. This included the

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74 "Oslavovali sme najväčší slovenský sviatok," *Slovenská sloboda*, March 16, 1940, 2.

75 "Duch 14. marca vládne nad Slovenskom," *Slovák*, March 16, 1940, 3–4.

76 "Slovenské vojsko defiluje," *Slovák*, March 16, 1940, 5.

77 *Ibid.*

78 The similar story is also known in the case of Mountain Blaník in the central part of the Czech Republic.

79 "Slovenské vojsko defiluje," *Slovák*, March 16, 1940, 5.

80 Metaphorical uses of the term "building" (*budovateľský*) were common in the communist era, but this term was often used by the Slovak wartime regime too. For example, Jozef Tiso was described in the contemporary propaganda as president-builder.

involvement of the military in politics. Tiso also stressed that the military should primarily protect the nation, not the individual.<sup>81</sup>

### *War against the Soviet Union, Militarization of Slovak Society, and Public Space as a “Stage”*

Slovakia's involvement in the war against the Soviet Union in June 1941 marked a new wave of militarization of Slovak society. This trend affected public spaces, especially in connection with the staging of celebrations and shows of loyalty. These rituals included a ceremonial welcome of frontline soldiers. In the city of Prešov, which was a strategically exposed city with a large military garrison, ceremonial welcomes were held regularly either in the area near the Church of St. Nicholas or in a less solemn spirit directly at the train station.<sup>82</sup> Representatives of not only military but also civilian authorities took part, including representatives of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, the Hlinka Guards, the Hlinka Youth (Hlinkova mládež), and the Slovak Red Cross (Slovenský červený kríž). There were also pupils from all the schools in Prešov. The welcomes that were held for soldiers from the front contained several recurring elements: a strict organization and hierarchy in the central area near the Church of St. Nicholas, the presence of the most important personalities of the regime from the region. The space was dominated by a ceremonial tribune with a place of honor for a mayor, a government commissioner, and German officials. In June 1942, the ceremony was attended by the mayor Andrej Dudáš, the government commissioner Vojtech Raslavský, the German consul Peter von Woinovich, and the chairman of the DP Franz Karmasin. Representatives of church and cultural institutions were also present.<sup>83</sup> The most distinguished guest was the Minister of Defense Ferdinand Čatloš.

More urgent for the regime was the need to associate the symbol of the soldier with the very existence of an independent state. The celebrations of state independence, which took place on March 14, were ideally suited to this. With the start of war operations against the USSR, the army came to the forefront of the celebrations. Its members occupied places of honor during ceremonial parades alongside the main representatives of cities and counties. During the

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81 “Armáda je budovateľským činiteľom národa,” *Slovák*, May 4, 1940, 3.

82 “Hold vlasti vojakom,” *Slovenská sloboda*, June 14, 1942, 1. See also: “Ďalší oddiel frontových vojakov v Prešove,” *Slovenská sloboda*, June 19, 1942, 3.

83 “Hold vlasti vojakom,” *Slovenská sloboda*, June 14, 1942, 1.

celebrations, the audience was presented with an image of Slovak independence and freedom closely connected with the symbol of a soldier ready to lay down his life for his homeland.<sup>84</sup> The regime purposefully linked the preservation of the state's independence with its involvement in the war alongside Nazi Germany. The celebrations of state independence stretched over two days. The city's public space was properly decorated for the celebrations with Slovak, German, and Hlinka Guard flags. Illuminated shop windows in the city center were decorated with busts of Hlinka. The two days of celebrations culminated in a military parade.

### *The Cult of the Unknown Soldier*

Initially, the regime used the symbol of an unknown soldier, who was also depicted as a hero. The only exceptions were articles published in the newspaper *Slovák* with short biographies of those who had fallen at the beginning of the war. However, the regime did not initially create any specific cult of the personality of a fallen soldier. The soldier was an anonymous hero with no specific destiny and no name.

In this spirit, a monumental statue was planned as a tribute to of the Slovak Air Force. It was to be erected in the small village of Liptovský Peter in the north of Slovakia. The initiator of this event was Minister Ferdinand Čatloš, who planned to build a modern airport near the village.<sup>85</sup> In October 1942, when Čatloš discussed the monument with the well-known Slovak sculptor Majerský,<sup>86</sup> the Slovak political scene had already become considerably radicalized. That month, a law on leadership was passed<sup>87</sup> which marked a significant attempt towards a totalitarian establishment. A few months earlier, in May 1942, Act no. 70/1942 Sl. Coll. on the Slovak working community had been passed, which was an attempt to establish a corporative society. The reflection of these changes can be seen to some extent in the design of the monument. The design of the monumental sculpture, authored by the sculptor Ladislav Róbert Ján Majerský, contained ideological elements that radicals sought to promote in Slovak society.

84 "Slovenská sloboda," *Slovák*, March 14, 1942, 1.

85 Šumichrast, "Keď rinčali zbrane, múzy nemlčali."

86 Ladislav Róbert Ján Majerský (1900–1965) was an important Slovak sculptor. He was one of the founders of modern Slovak sculpture. He devoted himself to the creation of sculptures, memorial plaques, and reliefs. His work is still part of several Slovak cities. See Šumichrast, "Keď rinčali zbrane, múzy nemlčali," 152.

87 Law no. 215/1942 Sl. Coll. on Hlinka's Slovak People's Party.

However, these elements were given legitimacy in the internal political struggle by the wing grouped around president Tiso.

The dominant element of the monument which had been envisioned was the symbol of the pilot with the airport revolving around his figure. Below it, the Slovak soil was depicted on a pedestal, on which the Slovak working community awaits the arrival of Slovak eagles with joy.<sup>88</sup> The design worked ingeniously with contemporary ideological concepts such as land or the notion of the working community. Part of the design was to emphasize that Slovak sandstone would be used in the creation of the statue. The monument was to be bold in size. It was planned to be 12 meters tall. However, Čatloš assessed the costs as too high and the creation of the monument was postponed indefinitely.

As the war continued, the need to explain Slovak participation grew. In Slovak historiography, there is a perception that, despite the efforts of government, the population of Slovakia had not been persuaded of the need to wage war against the USSR. Less attention is already paid to the tools that were used by the regime to do this. I noted above that the cult of the martyr for the homeland was fostered (quite naturally) immediately in connection with direct participation in the war. The regime's efforts to foster this cult were undoubtedly visible in September 1939. It is noteworthy that these efforts were less visible in the case of the attack on the USSR. Of course, the welcome shown to frontline soldiers and the importance of the army in state celebrations of independence were among the pillars of the presentation of military (and political) power in public spaces. On the other hand, the cult of the martyr for the homeland did not seem to be at the forefront of the agitation speeches delivered at the celebrations for a while.

### *The Cult of Eugen Budinský*

The most significant attempt to build a cult of personal sacrifice for the homeland among the soldiers in the Slovak army can be considered the cult associated with the person of Eugen Budinský. Budinský<sup>89</sup> came from a middle class family in Ružomberok. Part of his family became Hungarian under the influence of

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88 Šumichrast, "Keď rinčali zbrane, múzy nemlčali," 155.

89 Originally named Budaváry. He changed the surname in 1940 because of its connotation, which were suggestive of Hungarian ancestry.

Magyarization at the beginning of the twentieth century and part of the family saw themselves as Slovaks.<sup>90</sup>

After the establishment of the Slovak Republic, Eugen Budinsky, who was an excellent athlete, was chosen by the Minister of Defense Ferdinand Čatloš as his aide charged with the responsibility of organizing military sports.<sup>91</sup> After the invasion of the Soviet Union, Budinsky joined the Slovak Rapid Division, which in late July and early August 1942 participated in the fighting in the Caucasus. He died in action on August 4, 1942 near the town of Kropotkin. According to the recollections of several soldiers, Budinský was one of the most popular Slovak officers on the Eastern Front.<sup>92</sup>

Budinský became the prototype of a perfect Slovak for the regime. He had been a “manly,” capable athlete who had shown protective concern for his subordinates. He was exactly the man that the propaganda machine needed. In Budinsky’s personality, the people who crafted the propaganda found the missing piece they needed to build an image of a disciplined army and sacrifice for the benefit of the nation. The representatives of the regime decided to replace the hitherto vague cult of an unknown soldier with a cult of a particular personality. It was no secret that the fate of a particular personality would serve well “as a sign of early and fresh commemoration of Slovak victims for the idea of state independence.”<sup>93</sup> Čatloš, who initiated the whole event, was extremely involved in honoring (or manipulatively crafting and using) the memory of Budinský.

Budinský’s remains were transported from the Caucasus to Ružomberok, where a reverential celebration was organized on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death. The importance of this event for the regime was underlined by the personal participation of Tiso and Čatloš. Other prominent guests also sat in the audience, such as Minister of Transport Július Stano and Minister of Finance Mikuláš Pružinský.<sup>94</sup> Part of the celebration was the unveiling of the mound dedicated to Budinský, set in the central area of the city, between the manor house of St. Sophia and the entrance to the barracks.<sup>95</sup> The monument was three meters high, and at the top was mounted a sculpture depicting Budinský and his soldiers in the fight against the enemy. The author

90 Jašek, “Důstojník v prvej línii,” 40.

91 Ibid., 43.

92 Ibid., 49.

93 “Pietna slávnosť v Ružomberku,” *Slovák*, August 8, 1943, 3.

94 “Odhalenie mohyly pplk. Budinského,” *Tatranský Slovák*, August 14, 1943, 2.

95 State Archive in Bytča, Department in Liptovský Mikuláš, Architect Jozef Švidroň - Kucbel in Ružomberok, 1928-1949, Construction of the Monument to Lt. Col. Budinsky in Ružomberok, 1943.

of the project was the well-known Ružomberok architect Jozef Švidroň, and the construction was financed by the Ministry of Defense. At the initiative of the ministry, the Ružomberok barracks were also named after Budinský.

The unveiling of the monument to Budinský was one of the important propaganda acts of the regime. The idea of erecting a Budinský monument in that spot stemmed from the regime's efforts to develop the martyr cult associated with the personality of Andrej Hlinka. On a practical level, this was offered as a logical solution, as Budinský was a native of Ružomberok. Although Hlinka was a key figure in the regime's propaganda and the regime's decisions were based on the narrative of his martyrdom, a need had arisen to present new examples to the public of self-sacrificing heroes who would follow Hlinka's legacy and fight for the independent state. This intention clear in the speech held by Tiso, who during the unveiling of the monument emphasized the spirit of the national hero and his commitment "to work – to sacrifice – to die."<sup>96</sup> Almost immediately after its ceremonial unveiling, the mound was included among the regime's pilgrimage sites. In addition to Hlinka's mausoleum, Budinský's resting place has become part of the program of every major visit to the city. As early as August 14, 1943, a Bulgarian envoy stopped at the site during his visit.<sup>97</sup> The last resting place of Hlinka, as a politically and culturally active personality and national martyr, thus found a parallel in the monument to Budinský, a war hero who had sacrificed his life to defend his homeland. The installation of this monument in the public space of the town of Ružomberok meant a further strengthening of the town's image as an official pilgrimage site of the regime.

However, the efforts to build the cult of the martyr for the homeland associated with the figure of Budinský cannot be described as successful on a national scale. The spread of the narrative of Eugene Budinský's fall in battle as a national martyr and hero came to a halt in the following months, and his cult never really developed. The events of the following months and, in particular, the emergence of resistance to the government at the turn of 1943 and 1944, which culminated in the events of the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944, did not offer the regime much space to cultivate the martyrdom cult.

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96 "Najväčšie národné cnosti: Pracovať – obetovať – zomierať," *Slovák*, August 10, 1943, 1.

97 "Oficiálna návšteva bulharského vyslanca v Ružomberku," *Tatranský Slovák*, August 14, 1943, 1.

## *Conclusion*

From the outset, the Slovak Republic of 1939–1945 connected its existence with Nazi Germany. The sudden emergence of the state under the pressure of German aggression meant that government officials were forced to explain to the Slovak population the ambitions of the new state and the traditions on which it built its claims to legitimacy and power. Therefore, the rapid sequence of events and the entry into the war alongside Germany largely determined the propaganda. Government officials grabbed swift, populist solutions. Propaganda was adapted to this situation. One of its most important stages was the urban spaces of the country, which provided useful backdrops for the authoritarian regime because they were under state control. From the outset, the regime continued the almost 20-year tradition of the autonomist movement, and in the first months, it drew on this tradition in its interventions in public spaces. This was especially reflected in the renaming of the streets. The symbol of martyrdom, connected from the beginning with Andrej Hlinka in particular, became an important factor in the formation of the national identity created by state. In some cities, attempts were also made to foster local cults of martyrs. The city of Prešov offers one example, where the martyrdom cult represented by local personalities was a part of anti-Hungarian propaganda.

Later, in connection with the conflict with the central Czech government and the military conflict with Hungary in March 1939, the importance of defending the establishment of an independent state came to the fore. The symbol of martyrdom for the homeland was represented in this case by the victims who emerged from both conflicts. In honor of the fallen heroes, reverential festivities were held. These festivities were used to nurture the idea in Slovak society that independence is not free and, if necessary, one may well need to lay down one's life for it. These ideas were then used by political representatives when the state joined the war against Poland. Slovak propaganda in August 1939 significantly contributed to the militarization of Slovak society, and urban spaces again played an important role. They became sites of demonstrations and military parades to prepare society for an attack alongside Germany. The regime militarized society by creating an image of a peaceful Slovak who was just defending himself. According to this propaganda, the typical Slovak did not want expansion. He wanted only what rightfully belonged to him.

As part of the militarization of society, the regime also used the symbol of military discipline as a model of civic obedience. The highest state officials,

including Tiso, imagined the typical Slovak as a humble, hard-working, undemanding man, and it was at these points that propaganda sought parallels with the symbol of a soldier who was to become a model of civic virtues. The army was to serve as a model for the citizens also in the work of construction, which was contracted mainly in connection with the celebration of Labor Day. As in the case of the military, discipline and obedience played an important role in the establishment of labor camps, and they were qualities that were seen as (or depicted as) key to the regime's leaders.

Slovak society was further militarized in connection with the attack on the Soviet Union. Welcoming frontline soldiers in the city center became a standard part of events in public spaces. These events were attended by a wide urban audience, including school students and representatives of the army and the city. The symbol of the soldier as hero was an increasingly prominent part of the celebrations of state independence. The culmination of efforts to promote the martyrdom cult in public spaces came with plans for and the erection of monuments dedicated to specific personalities. From the outset, visual narratives of martyrdom in public spaces were connected mainly with the personality of Andrej Hlinka. Later, Eugen Budinský's was added. Both personalities came from Ružomberok, so the cult of martyrs was strongest in this city. Their last resting served as an official pilgrimage site for the regime.

In conclusion, the discussion above shows that the notion of martyrdom as a narrative trope was an integral part of propaganda at the time. This notion was used, largely successfully, in the regime's attempts to gain the consent of the Slovak Christian majority to join the war against Poland and the Soviet Union. The martyrdom cult was implemented every time the regime needed to explain the demands of militarization. Public spaces were important sites for martyrdom propaganda, and this propaganda mostly affected the social dimension of these spaces (for instance in celebrations dedicated to martyrs) and their material-symbolic dimension (for instance with the renaming of streets and the creation of memorials).

The cult of sacrifice for the homeland was fostered with particularly fervency in the time immediately before or during the outbreak of a specific conflict involving Slovak society. However, the regime reacted mainly to the war situation at the given moment, and the narratives of martyrdom were used systematically and with clear purposes as part of the propaganda.

The symbol of the martyr, and the soldier as hero underwent process of evolution during the period under discussion. Initially, the regime used



personalities who sacrificed themselves for the cause of an independent Slovak state. Undoubtedly, the most prominent figure from this perspective was Andrej Hlinka, who became a symbol of the authoritarian regime and after whom a square or street was named in each city. His vocation as a priest also played an important role. Later, it was necessary to rely on new personalities. Guardsman Anton Kopal, who became a symbol of resistance against the Czechs, was tied to radical circles, including Alexander Mach. In addition, his death could be questioned as having merely been a matter of coincidence. A more acceptable personality was Eugen Budinský, an officer of the Slovak army and a capable, masculine athlete who could be portrayed as having been determined and committed to his homeland. However, due to the rapid fall of the Slovak state, this cult could no longer develop. Andrej Hlinka thus remained the most prominent figure of the Slovak martyrdom cult during World War, and this cult has survived in a large part of Slovak society to the present day. The continuity of the martyrdom cult can also be seen in the form of the martyrdom of Jozef Tiso, who is considered as a martyr today mainly—but not only—by radical right-wing groups in Slovakia.

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