

## The policy of the Czechoslovak government aimed at neutralizing the German threat during 1935 – 1938 with a focus on the situation in Slovakia

Milan Olejník, Institute of Social Sciences, Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of SAS, Košice, [olejnik@saske.sk](mailto:olejnik@saske.sk)

**OLEJNÍK, Milan. The policy of the Czechoslovak government aimed at neutralizing the German threat during 1935 – 1938 with a focus on the situation in Slovakia. Človek a spoločnosť, 2018, roč. 21, č. 3, s. 1-24.**

### Abstract:

The second half of 1930s was a period of dramatic political changes in Europe. The stability established by peace agreements concluded after World War I underwent gradual but continual erosion. The main reason for the transforming political landscape was the political developments in Germany which resulted in the collapse of the democratic parliamentary system. In the spring of 1933 The Nazi Party assumed power in Germany and over the span of a few years succeeded in remaking Germany into a totalitarian state. The German dictator Adolf Hitler openly declared his intention to destroy the system of peace treaties, which had formed the basis of peaceful relations amongst states in Europe after World War I. Keeping to this declaration, he openly pursued a provocative policy of step-by-step destruction of the Versailles Treaty. In the context of Hitler's political aims, the growing economic and military power of Germany constituted a clear threat to Central European states.

The Czechoslovak government concluded that it had to apply all possible means to reinforce the defense ability of the state, and consequently a policy of rapid fortification on the border with Germany was initiated. Military maneuvers aimed at enhancing the defense capabilities of the Czechoslovak Army were enacted throughout Czechoslovakia (CSR). State propaganda on the radio and in the press portrayed the Czechoslovak Republic as a state capable of repelling any invasion and re-assuring the population. However, despite such propaganda, it was continually emphasized that Czechoslovakia could only resist Germany with the added protection of its allies France and the Soviet Union.

In 1938 Hitler began a policy of territorial expansion under the pretense of Germany's right to unify all Germans in one state. The primary targets of this strategy were Austria and Czechoslovakia. He was helped in his intention by a sizeable segment of Nazi sympathizers in Austria and the large minority of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia. In regards to Austria, through a mixture of subterfuge, threats and ruthless pressure, Hitler succeeded. On March 13th 1938 the German army occupied Austria without any resistance. It was clear that France and Great Britain, who were principal guarantors of the Versailles Treaty, were not able to mount any meaningful resistance. France, which was plagued by a prolonged political crisis, was on the day of German invasion without government. Great Britain expressed solely a verbal protest. It became clear that there was no power in Europe capable of effectively resisting Germany. Emboldened by the generally positive reaction of the German public, Hitler set his next goal – to "liberate" Sudeten Germans from the Czechoslovak "yoke". Despite this meaning a fundamental violation of Czechoslovak integrity and rendering Czechoslovakia militarily exposed to Germany, the German dictator threatened military action if his demands were not met. The Czechoslovak government desperately tried to find a solution. Sudeten Germans were offered minority rights, and a form of autonomy, named the National Statute, was prepared. However, this was flatly refused by representatives of Sudeten Germans led by Konrad Henlein. It was clear that the leadership of Sudeten Germans was not interested in any form of accommodation with the Czechoslovak government and was an obedient tool of Hitler. The Czechoslovaks hoped that the Western powers (namely France, who had a defense treaty with the CSR and had on numerous occasions professed a determination to come to Czechoslovak defense in case of German aggression) would fulfill its obligation. Another ally was the Soviet Union, but according

to an agreement the Soviet Army would engage in conflict only in the case of France entering military operations with Germany. France and Great Britain instead pressurized the Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš to peacefully accommodate Hitler. However, the situation in the Sudetenland worsened after Hitler's speech at the Nazi Party Congress on September 11th 1938. A number of clashes occurred in the Sudetenland, but Czechoslovak security forces successfully suppressed the revolt. It was becoming clear that to reach accommodation by peaceful means was becoming increasingly unlikely. The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, with the aim of averting war with Germany, in an unprecedented move offered to travel to Germany and meet Hitler. During the meeting on September 15th Hitler declared that if Czechoslovakia would agree with the German annexation of Sudeten territory, he was willing to abstain from an invasion, to which Chamberlain agreed. France and Great Britain then began to coerce the Czechoslovak government into accepting the annexation of Sudetenland by Germany. Aware that in the case of refusal Czechoslovakia would face German aggression alone, the Czechoslovak government accepted the ultimatum. However, the next meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler at Bad Godesberg ended in disarray as a result of Hitler's increased demands. Chamberlain refused to accept the new demands and only agreed to let the Czechoslovak government know about them. The Czechoslovak representatives rejected Hitler's latest demands as unacceptable. On September 24th the Czechoslovak government declared mobilization, with war appearing inevitable. But again Chamberlain, in an attempt to find accommodation with Hitler, arranged a conference with the French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier, the Italian leader Mussolini and Hitler. Despite the fact that the fate of Czechoslovakia was about to be decided, no representative of the Czechoslovak Republic was invited. The signatories of the conference accepted Germany's demands. The outcome of the conference, The Munich Agreement, resulted in the end of Czechoslovakia as a sovereign, democratic state. The loss of the heavily fortified Western frontier fatally weakened the CSR and opened the way to German further expansion. The hopes of the British and French political leaders by abandoning the CSR to save peace in Europe were unrealistic. On the contrary, the reluctance of Western democracies to stand up to Hitler encouraged Nazi Germany to initiate further aggression.

This paper maps the steps taken by the Czechoslovak government to implement measures aimed at protecting the Republic against German aggression.

**Key words:**

Versailles Treaty. Defensive measures taken by CSR. Strategy of Nazi Germany. The Anschluss. The Munich Agreement.

**Introduction**

The aim of the paper is to summarize the most relevant reactions of the Czechoslovak government to the growing danger of Nazi Germany during the period 1935-1938. Besides the military build-up and construction of defensive works capable of thwarting or at least slowing down the attack of the German Army, the focus is placed upon mapping the intricate web of international relations which had a vital importance for Czechoslovakia. In that regard France and the Soviet Union were extremely important for Czechoslovakia's political representation. The Czechoslovak defensive measures accelerated after the occupation of Austria in March 1938 and the growing passivity of the Western Powers. The narrative also contains the reactions of the Czechoslovak public and the role of media in mobilizing resistance to the threat of military aggression. Space is also given to events as they unfold which were hidden from the general public; namely the reluctance of certain prominent European politicians to act decisively in their struggle to preserve peace in Europe at any price. In our judgment the use of till now unpublished archive materials has also helped to broaden the understanding of the various angles of this dramatic and in the final outcome tragic event. In that we see the main contribution of the paper.

The ascent of Adolf Hitler to power ushered a rapid transformation of Germany from a democracy into a totalitarian state. This change resulted in a number of consequences affecting

Germany as well as Europe. Besides the transformation of the economy, the destruction of political plurality and the imposition of National Socialism as the only admissible ideology, the most alarming development was the rapid militarization of Germany. On October 1<sup>st</sup> 1934, in direct breach of the Treaty of Versailles, the German Army increased from 100 000 to 300 000 soldiers. This, however, was only the beginning of the Nazi regime's policy aim at changing the existing geopolitical situation in Europe. On January 13<sup>th</sup> 1935 a plebiscite was held in the region of Saar, in which inhabitants of this territory decided to unify with Germany. Almost 90% of inhabitants (477, 000 to 48, 000) of the Saar region voted for unification. On March 16<sup>th</sup> 1935 universal military service in Germany was decreed. Great Britain and France protested<sup>1</sup>, but abstained from interference in German internal affairs. It was becoming clear that the Western Powers were lacking the resolution to stop Germany from becoming an imminent danger to peace in Europe.

Aware of the growing danger caused by the militarization of Germany, France decided to make an alliance with the Soviet Union. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1935 the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Laval signed the Franco – Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance. However, France refused to agree to a complementary agreement with the military convention demanded by the SSSR.<sup>2</sup> Czechoslovakia, a strong ally of France, signed the Treaty of Mutual Assistance between the ZSSR and Czechoslovakia on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1935 (the Treaty). But the Treaty contained one important condition – the Soviet Union was obliged to assist Czechoslovakia in the case of a hostile attack only if France would assist the CSR in its defense.<sup>3</sup>

The defense strategy of the CSR was primarily based on an alliance with France and possibly with the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the Czechoslovak government prized the Treaty as a great achievement, which would increase the security of the Republic. Edward Beneš, a signatory of the Treaty, wrote in his memoirs that he supported a build-up of good relations and military cooperation between the CSR and the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> As proof of the superior quality of the Red Army, Beneš cited a report of a general Ludvík Krejčí, the head of the headquarters of the

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the Czechoslovak diplomat Kamil Krofta, „*Western Powers...could not quietly accept one-sided decision of Germany. During the Conference at Stresse, which was enacted to solve this issue on April 1935, representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy sharply condemned one-sided decision of Germany and a resolution prepared by them later (April 17) was approved by the Council of United Nations in Geneva.*” KROFTA, Kamil. *Z dob naší první republiky*. Praha : Jan Láter, 1939, pp. 102-103.

<sup>2</sup> JANIŠOVÁ, Milena. Francouzská zahraniční politika a Československo v období příprav Mnichova. In *Československý časopis historický*, 1963, Volume XI, Issue 5, p. 576.

<sup>3</sup> „*Both parties accept that obligations in regard to mutual assistance will be affected only if conditions assumed by this treaty will be realized and if the victim of aggression will be helped by France.*” This condition was included in the Treaty, under name „signature protocol“.

<sup>4</sup> Historian M. Čaplovič wrote: „*Defense concept of Czechoslovakia since second half of third decade of 20 century was based on the supposition of so-called active strategic defense. The highest military circle always perceived defense of state of rapid engagement from allied France and military and material (air force) assistance of Soviet Union.* ČAPLOVIČ, Miloslav. *Československá armáda mezi Mnichovom 1938 a marcom 1939 a dôrazom na Slovensko*. In BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián et al. *Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Historické reflexie zániku Česko-Slovenska*. Bratislava : VEDA, 2010, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> „*With the Soviet Union our cooperation after the signing of the Treaty from 1935 was generally good, lasting and consequential...Already in May 1935, with my consent, visited the Soviet Union a military delegation...and established the first air force cooperation with Moscow. In December of the same year a delegation of the Soviet Army, led by general Šapošnikov, took part on our first large military exercises, inspected our whole military industry and prepared our first significant delivery for Soviet Army.*” BENEŠ, Edward. *Paměti. Od Mnichova k nové válce a k novému vítězství*. Praha : NAŠE VOJSKO, 2004, p. 65.

Czechoslovak Army, who after his return from the Soviet Union declared that “*The Red Army, its discipline, its high moral level and its technical armament...must raise admiration of every military expert.*”<sup>6</sup> Beneš even admitted that Czechoslovakia was supplying the Soviet Union with special arms.<sup>7</sup> However, not every politician was positively inclined to openly advocating friendship with the Soviet Union and admiration of the Red Army.<sup>8</sup>

Beneš's positive attitude to the Soviet Union was crowned by his visit to the ZSSR between June 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 1935. He exhorted the achievements of the ZSSR, its technical advancement and its army. His admiration was shared also by many leading publicists and writers such as F. Peroutka and K. Čapek, who perceived the ZSSR as a country which established “a new type of democracy”.<sup>9</sup>

The signing of three-way pact between France, the ZSSR and Czechoslovakia did not dissuade Hitler from pursuing an aggressive policy. On the contrary, encouraged by the timidity of Great Britain and France, on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1936 Hitler committed an act of unprecedented provocation with grave consequences for French security. At 10 a. m. a relatively small detachment of the German Army, approximately 35,000 soldiers, crossed the river Rhine and entered the demilitarized Rhineland. Despite this relatively small military force, which indicated that Hitler at that time was not determined to start a full scale war and most likely would retreat, there was not a resolute response from the Western Powers. The Prime Minister of Great Britain, Stanley Baldwin refused to support France in the case of possible military intervention and without British support the French government hesitated in attacking the German troops. The decision to abstain from military action was made certain after the French general Maurice Gamelin, as a precondition for military intervention against Germany, requested full mobilization of the French Army. Even if hostilities would end in Hitler's defeat, the possibility of a communist takeover of Germany was in Baldwin's judgment far worse than the Nazi regime. According to Baldwin, this would most likely lead to communist proliferation throughout the whole of Western Europe and cause mortal danger to the England itself.<sup>10</sup>

This latest and most serious breach of the Versailles Treaty committed by Germany was perceived by the Czechoslovak government as a grave development dangerous to security of the CSR. The Czechoslovak political establishment therefore adopted several legal norms and regulations aimed at the enhancement of the CSR's defense ability. In October 1933 “the Highest Council of State Defense” was established. It was authorized to manage preparations of the whole national economy for defense. A momentous decision was adopted to construct a line of defense

---

<sup>6</sup> BENEŠ, E. *Paměti...*, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> “An agreement was concluded to...export a sizeable amount of special arms, which the Soviet Army especially needed and which could not be sent from France or from other places.” BENEŠ, E. *Paměti...*, p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> According to J. Cesar „In the following period began endeavors to change Czechoslovak politics in regard to Soviet Union. These opinions were finding fairly a strong reflection also at the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had support of significant segment of Czechoslovak ambassadors, for example Mastný in Berlin, Chvalkovský in Roma and Osuský in Paris. Only after management of this ministry assumed adherent of so called Castle Group K. Krofta, this tendency, at least temporary, was suppressed.“ CESAR, Jaroslav. *Mnichov 1938*. Praha : Melantrich, 1978, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> KLÍMEK, Antonín. *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, Svazek XIV. 1929 – 1938. Praha – Litomyšl : Paseka, 2002, pp. 298-299.

<sup>10</sup> KLÍMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, p. 404.

fortifications along the boundary lines.<sup>11</sup> On April 30<sup>th</sup> 1936 the Chamber of Deputies adopted Law no. 131 “For Protection of the State.” In rare consent, all political parties, with the exception of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC), voted for it.<sup>12</sup> To raise money needed to finance the needed expense, the Chamber of Deputies adopted Law no. 142 “*In Regard to the Loan for the Defense of State.*”<sup>13</sup> The importance of Law no. 142 was emphasized by Beneš<sup>14</sup>, who characterized it as a crucial public commitment to make financial contribution to defense of the Republic.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the majority of political parties, the CPC abstained from the vote and was sharply critical of the adopted legal norm. The Communists criticized Law no. 142 because it allegedly would enrich the richest segment of Czechoslovak society. The communist Václav Kopecký, in his speech on floor of the Chamber of Deputies, argued that the loan should be imposed only on the rich.<sup>16</sup>

Facing the growing military power of Nazi Germany, the Czechoslovak authorities initiated a systematic policy aimed at enhancing the military build-up of the Army. The following years, till the Munich Agreement, were spent on increasing the defense abilities of the CSR.

The press portrayed the Czechoslovak Army positively as a force capable of maintaining peace and in the case of an unprovoked attack of defending the country. In their public appearances politicians and representatives of the military establishment created an impression of optimism to try to convince the general public that thanks to the armed forces Czechoslovakia had nothing to fear.<sup>17</sup>

Among the favored topics to which the press gave its attention were military manoeuvres. Manoeuvres offered the opportunity not only to illustrate the prowess of the Army, but served as a good occasion for President Beneš and members of government, especially the Minister of National Defense František Machník, to demonstrate their commitment to the Czechoslovak military forces.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> 1936 in the region of the Eastern Czechlands began the largest manoeuvres of the Czechoslovak Army in the existence of the CSR. The total number of soldiers exceeded 100, 000. The military exercises were observed by President Beneš, members of the government and military representatives of the allied armies.<sup>18</sup> At the conclusion of the manoeuvres President Beneš declared that all objectives of manoeuvres were achieved and expressed his complete satisfaction with the “*moral and physical condition of soldiers*”.<sup>19</sup> In his “*Army Order*” the

---

<sup>11</sup> PURDEK, Imrich. *Československá vojenská symbolika v letech 1914 – 1939*. Bratislava : Vojenský historický ústav, 2013, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Zákon 131/1936 Sb ze dne 13. května 1936 o obraně státu. (The Law No. 131/1936, on May 13, 1936, in regard to the defense of state)

<sup>13</sup> Zákon 142/1936 Sb ze dne 29. května 1936 o půjčce na obranu státu. (The Law No. 142/1936, on May 29, 1936, in regard to loan to the defense of state).

<sup>14</sup> E. Beneš was elected President of the Czechoslovak Republic on December 18 1935.

<sup>15</sup> According to E. Beneš “...to write out this loan is for all of us... primarily a moral imperative... Preparations for defense of country is the best work for peace...To this work, that is to work for peace I call all citizens of the Republic.” *České Slovo*, June 5, 1936, Volume (Vol.) XXVIII, Issue 131. Pan President o půjčce obrany státu Mobilisace peněz a lidí do práce.

<sup>16</sup> *Slovenské zvesti*, May 20, 1936, Vol. I, Issue 10. Kto dá a pre koho dá pôžičku na obranu štátu?

<sup>17</sup> Frequently these commentaries were exceedingly optimistic and corresponded only partially to real situation.

<sup>18</sup> *České Slovo*, August 21, 1936, Vol. XXVIII, Issue 194. Největší manévry naši branné moci zahájeny.

<sup>19</sup> *Slovenský východ*, August 25, 1936, Vol. XVIII, Issue 196. Odtrúbené! Prezident republiky: Hlavnou vecou je duch armády.

President praised the coordination of all military units, and the preciseness with which all tasks were realized. Beneš also expressed his gratitude to the civilians who exhibited a “*burning adherence to the Army, understanding its significance in the present time.*”<sup>20</sup> A few months later, at the beginning of September, manoeuvres in Slovakia were held. Approximately 45,000 soldiers simulated a battle in the rugged terrain of Western Slovakia. In a typical positive tone of that time the daily *Venkov*.<sup>21</sup> Periodical *Slovenský východ* in its report characterized the fighting spirit of soldiers as “*excellent*” and wrote that “*the population living in the area of the manoeuvres warmly welcomed the army, giving to soldiers fruit, and is fulfilling all their needs*”.<sup>22</sup>

Signing the Czechoslovak – Soviet treaty resulted in the growing tolerance of the authorities to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Communist newspapers were allowed to write articles describing the strength of the Red Army in an admiring style, which would not have been possible in earlier years. In Slovakia, the communist *Slovenské Zvesti* published articles intended to convince readers that the Soviet armed forces were capable of protecting the CSR.<sup>23</sup> Despite the great purges which Stalin unleashed in the second half of 1930s which had a catastrophic impact upon the Red Army, *Slovenské Zvesti* asserted that the Red Army is united and actually stronger.<sup>24</sup> A radically different attitude to the purges of the armed forces in the Soviet Union was expressed in *Slovak*, the official periodical of the Slovak autonomist Hlinka’s Slovak People Party (HSPP).<sup>25</sup> In spite of the political and ideological abhorrence toward the CPC felt by the overwhelming majority of Czechoslovak political parties, the Communists, who were obedient followers of Soviet Union, were capitalizing on the growing importance of the ZSSR as an ally and protector of Czechoslovakia against Nazi Germany. On their part, they toned down their anti-establishment rhetoric and frequently professed their determination to defend the CSR.<sup>26</sup>

Beneš expended a great amount of energy reassuring the public that the Czechoslovak Army was capable of defending the Republic against any aggression. In his “*Army Order*” issued on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1936, the President defined the duty of the Czechoslovak Army as a task “*to raise to the highest degree the firm determination, tenacity and responsibility in fulfillment of its duty.*”<sup>27</sup> Six months later, at the close of first three days of the already mentioned manoeuvres in the

<sup>20</sup> *České Slovo*, August 27, 1936, Vol. XXVIII, Issue 199. President oceňuje výkon v závěrečných cvičeních. Armádní rozkaz presidenta republiky.

<sup>21</sup> *Venkov*, September 3, 1936, Vol. XXXI, Issue 205. Na východě státu stojí proti sobě naše armády: Rušný průběh slovenských manévřů.

<sup>22</sup> *Slovenský východ*, September 3, 1936, Vol. XVIII, Issue 206. Manévry na Slovensku a Podkarpatskej Rusi.

<sup>23</sup> According to *Slovenské Zvesti*, the Red Army belonged to the most technically advanced armies in the world. *Slovenské zvesti*, February 25, 1937, Vol. II, Issue 39. Cífy, ktoré nás upokojujú a útočníkov vystrihajú.

<sup>24</sup> *Slovenské zvesti*, June 15, 1937, Vol. II, Issue 114. Po poprave Tuchačevského a siedmych hodnostárov: “Červená armáda je a bude jednotná”.

<sup>25</sup> The development of the situation in the Soviet Union, according to *Slovak*, was indicating that execution of top military officers was only a prelude to a whole series of executions and it was impossible to foretell when this massacre will end. *Slovák* wrote, that a political system of ZSSR, was heading to „Red Czarism“ and was more evil variant of Nazi regime in Germany. *Slovák*, June 19, 1937, Vol. XIX, Issue 107. Už 4 000 zatknutých.

<sup>26</sup> In his work *Mnichovské dny* (Munich days) E. Beneš wrote that „*Our Communism was till 1935 very radical and extremely oppositional, but since signing our agreement with Soviet Union in 1935 and as a consequence of milder Soviet policy toward the Western Powers since 1934, also Communists moderated their internal policy. An expression of this was their active cooperation on preparations for sufficient military defense of the Republic against Nazi aggression*“. BENEŠ, Edvard. *Mnichovské dny. Paměti*. Praha : Svoboda, 1968, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Slovenský východ*, January 10, 1936, Vol. XVIII, Issue 16. Prezident dr. Beneš k armáde: Prekonáme všetky ťažkosti.

Eastern Czechlands, during a meeting with media representatives, Beneš exhorted the technical, professional and moral advancement of the Army.<sup>28</sup> At a meeting with members of the Army he praised the quality of the military forces and expressed his conviction that soldiers were imbued with a *“high spirit of determination and indomitable will to defend the homeland and resist no matter what”*.<sup>29</sup>

Czechoslovak political leaders also endeavored to utilize historical events to support the patriotic sentiments of the population. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Zborov, ostentatious celebrations were held. The significance of the commemoration was underlined by the attendance of President Beneš, the Prime Minister Milan Hodža, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamil Krofta, and the Minister of Defense František Machník.<sup>30</sup> F. Machník asserted that *“It is our task to preserve and to defend what we learn from the example of Zborov in how to be victorious, firm, relentless and perseverant regardless of circumstances, so we can achieve the biggest success.”*<sup>31</sup>

Periodicals representing government political parties created an image of security and excluded any negative information in regard to the geo-political situation.<sup>32</sup> This was exemplified by *Slovenské Zvesti* – *“We can say that our soldiers with ardor are utterly responsible to fulfill the most precise mathematical calculations and the most courageous plans. Their relation to the defense of the Republic, similarly as in case of the Red Army, allow them...to crush the enemy, to disorganize its system and to uproot its morale.”*<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to the general optimistic assertions regarding the strength of the Czechoslovak Army, V. Bystrický struck a more considered tone: *“...the concept of passive defense was based on the irrefutable fact that the defense of a surrounded Czechoslovakia was against Germany and its allies impossible for longer period of time.”*<sup>34</sup>

Since the establishment of the CSR, the most revered ally and a mainstay of Czechoslovak security was France. Agreements between the CSR and France, signed in 1924, 1925 and 1935, were presented by the political leadership as the bedrock of Czechoslovak security. Another political alliance significant to the security of the Republic, the Little Entente, was formed at the beginning of the 1920s. The Little Entente, an alliance of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia, was a pact aimed at preventing any hostile action by Hungary. Until Hitler's rise to power these alliances were rightfully judged as capable of securing the independence of the Republic.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Slovenský východ*, August 23, 1936, Vol. XVIII, Issue 195. Naša armáda pracuje nadšene Pán prezident dr. Beneš o vzťahu armády k občianstvu.

<sup>29</sup> *České Slovo*, February, 23, 1937, Vol. XXIX, Issue 49. Naše armáda musí být bezvadný stroj.

<sup>30</sup> Ministerstvo národní obrany, č. j. 25.557 pres./1 odděl. 1917. Věc : Celostátní zborovské oslavy – pokyny pro městské a obecní úřady. Praha, July 9, 1937. Ministry of the National Defense, unit No. 25.557 pres./1, division 1917. Topic: Wholestate „Zborov“ celebrations – Instructions for city and general administrations.

<sup>31</sup> *Venkov*, July 2, 1936, Vol. XXXI, Issue 137. Ministr národní obrany Machník: Zborov sjednocuje celý národ.

<sup>32</sup> For example: *České Slovo*, December 16, 1937, Vol. XIX, Issue 296. Den zrození českoslovenké armády; *Robotnické noviny*, April, 26, 1938, Vol. 35, Issue 95. Naša armáda odstraňuje dôvod k malomyseľnosti; *Venkov*, April 29, 1938, Vol. 35, Issue 101. Ministr Machník o obraně státu.

<sup>33</sup> *Slovenské zvesti*, September 30, 1938, Vol. III, Issue 191. Výhody našej armády, ktoré prevyšujú ich početnú prevahu.

<sup>34</sup> BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián. *Od autonómie k vzniku Slovenského štátu*. Bratislava : Prodama, 2008, s. 17.

However, the growing military and economic power of Germany enabled the Nazi regime to increase its political influence in Romania and Yugoslavia and weaken their ties with Czechoslovakia. The first cracks in the unity of the Little Entente occurred as consequence of the increasing economic dependence of Romania and Yugoslavia on Germany. Whereas the commitment of these states to act in firm unity with Czechoslovakia against Hungary did not change, their determination to stay on the side of the CSR if in conflict with Germany was increasingly questionable. In spite of this troubling development, Czechoslovak propaganda portrayed the Little Entente as an unbreakable monolith and a firm wall capable of stopping German expansion.<sup>35</sup> In reality, the changing geopolitical situation in Europe resulted in the strengthening of ties between Yugoslavia, Romania and Germany.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the Little Entente, which served primarily as a regional alliance, the most important ally was France. With the growing threat by Germany, the importance of France to Czechoslovakia was gradually increasing. Czechoslovak politicians were continually expressing the fundamental significance of France to the security of the Republic, and reassured that France was determined to stand by the CSR in case of German aggression. These optimistic expectations were based on the frequent declarations of French politicians to defend the Czechoslovak Republic.

Unlike Yugoslavia and Romania, whose determination to go to war against Germany in the case of aggression against CSR was highly debatable, France frequently expressed its determination to fulfill its alliance obligation to Czechoslovakia; even if meant war with Germany. Since her establishment, the CSR had been a loyal ally of France and close ties with France had become for the CSR even more vital as the political situation in Europe was deteriorating.

However, the value of France as an ally was weakened by her political instability. In stark contrast to the unity forged by the Nazi Party in Germany, France was politically divided between leftist parties on one side and rightist political agitators on the other, which was weakening France's strength to act as a military power.

The political chasm in France deepened after the 1935 elections, when a political caucus called "*People's Front*", composed of Communists, Socialists and Radicals, was established in May of the same year. The program of nationalization initiated by the socialist Leon Blum, who became

---

<sup>35</sup> In a final communique Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović and Rumanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ion Antonescu avoided any concrete declaration of support for Czechoslovakia in possible conflict with Germany and expressed their desire to pursue a policy of "a general peace" and of "a peaceful cooperation". Despite the vague position of both officials to deepen an alliance with Czechoslovakia, the daily *Novosti* emphasized a "growing unity" of the Little Entente. *Novosti*, September, 15, 1937, Vol. XXXIII, Issue 34. Výsledok bratislavskej konferencie: Ešte tesnejšie zomknutie Malej dohody. Not knowing or ignoring a reluctance of Yugoslavia and Romania to unequivocally declare support for Czechoslovakia, *Robotnícke noviny* declared an unshakable unity of the Little Entente. *Robotnícke noviny*, June 19, 1937, Vol. XXXV, Issue 117. Niet sily na svete, ktorá by oslabila Malú dohodu. However, the policy of building close relations with Germany, pursued by the Yugoslav Prime Minister Stojadinović, made Yugoslavia hardly a trustful ally of Czechoslovakia in potential conflict with Germany. In a report describing the visit of Stojadinović in Germany at the beginning of 1938, *Lidové noviny* wrote that "*Göring and Stojadinović exchanged words of extraordinary strong friendship pointing to mutual trustful understanding of these two men.*" *Lidové noviny*, January 23, 1938, Vol. XLVI, Issue 39. Stojadinović v Nemecku Ujistiť Hitlera obdivem.

<sup>36</sup> According to historian A. Garajová: „*Yugoslavia, which viewed with growing anger French support for Italy, was attracted especially by its economy to Germany...the advent of the government of M. Stojadinović v June 1935 led to worsening Czechoslovak – Yugoslav relations.*” GARAJOVÁ, Alena. *ČSR a stredoevropská politika velmocí (1918 – 1938)*. Praha : ACADEMIA, 1967, p. 344.



the Prime Minister, had a negative impact upon the economy and resulted in deep social tensions which pushed France to the brink of civil war. On March 16<sup>th</sup> 1937 violent clashes erupted, which resulted in some deaths.<sup>37</sup> Resistance against the Peoples Front eventually led to its demise, but political turmoil in France persisted.

Regardless of the political and economic difficulties, the leaders of France frequently confirmed their obligation to the CSR, and Czech and Slovak periodicals used every opportunity to emphasize declarations made by French politicians as proof of the firmness of the alliance with France.<sup>38</sup>

There is strong evidence that state authorities were engaging in an increasing control of the periodical press. On January 17<sup>th</sup> 1938 the Provincial Office in Bratislava (POB) issued an instruction to all state institutions in Slovakia prohibiting propaganda from Germany.<sup>39</sup> But with the aim not to worsen relations with Germany, the POB On February 21<sup>st</sup> 1938 instructed government authorities in Slovakia which were authorized to control the periodical press “*to pay the utmost attention to all news about Germany and make sure that no caricatures of Adolph Hitler and of all leading personalities in Germany will be published*”. Also derogatory reports in regard to Germany were to be eliminated. In regard to situation in Germany, only information released by the Czechoslovak Press Agency was allowed to be published.<sup>40</sup>

Those especially subjected to control by state authorities were the periodicals of opposition political parties such as HSPP, the CPC and newspapers of ethnic minorities, which had criticized government policies. After a speech given by the Prime Minister Hodža on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1938 the POB informed the state authorities controlling press that “*It is necessary to thoroughly monitor writing of periodicals Slovak and Slovenska Pravda, § to make sure that their comments of speech made by M. Hodža will be not critical and serve in any way to anti state propaganda.*”<sup>41</sup> On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1938 the Provincial Office in Bratislava informed the security authorities about instructions issued by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of National Defense and other state agencies about the elimination of information related to military activities. According to the aforementioned instructions, all information of a military nature was to be suppressed, as well as information about movement of military units, reports about preparations against attacks of enemy air force and any other type of hostilities.<sup>42</sup> Also reports about ethnic clashes, articles

---

<sup>37</sup> *Slovenský východ*, March 18, 1937, Vol. XIX, Issue 64. Barikády a strel'ba na uliciach. Úradné miest potvrdzujú o 2. hodine 6 mŕtvych.

<sup>38</sup> For example *Lidové noviny*, February 2 1938, Vol. XLVI, Issue 97. Francie věrná spojencům; *České Slovo*, February 27, 1938, Issue 49. Delbos: Francie věrna; *Slovenské zvesti*, March 27 1938, Vol. III, Issue 61. Francúzsko opakuje: Pomôže nám; *České Slovo*, April 7, 1938, Vol. XXX, Issue 82. Francie upevňuje bezpečnost Československa; *Robotnícké noviny*, July 15, 1938, Vol. XXXV. Z reči francúzskeho ministerského predsedu Daladiera “Závazky voči Československu sú pre nás posvätné”

<sup>39</sup> Štátny archív Košice (The State Archives Košice, hereinafter referred to only as SA K), pracovisko Rožňava (hereinafter referred to only as section (s.) R, fund (f.) Okresný úrad Rožňava (The District Office in Rožňava, hereinafter referred to only as DO R), carton (c.) 42, no. 1244/1938 prez.

<sup>40</sup> Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives; hereinafter referred to only as SNA, fund (f.). Policajné riaditeľstvo Bratislava (Police Directory Bratislava – hereinafter referred to only as PD B), c. 335, no. 11.180/38 prez.

<sup>41</sup> SNA, f. PD B, c. 335, no. 14.061/38 prez. March, 7, 1938.

<sup>42</sup> Štátny archív Banská Bystrica (State Archives Banská Bystrica; hereinafter referred to only as SA BB), pracovisko Rimavská Sobota; hereinafter referred to only as section (s.) RS, f. Okresný úrad Rimavská Sobota (District Office Rimavská Sobota; hereinafter referred to only as DO RS), c. 19, no. 69.384 prez.

criticizing political leaders, the foreign policy of the CSR and commentaries which could encourage ethnic violence were to be eliminated.<sup>43</sup>

To increase the defense abilities of the CSR, government agencies issued in 1938 a series of circulars dealing with various issues relevant to security.<sup>44</sup>

The high level of anxiety during the final periods of the existence of the Republic was illustrated by a rather undemocratic measure enacted by the Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment (MSNE), which demanded that clerics of all churches signed an attestation of their loyalty to Czechoslovakia. State authorities had to make lists of all persons who refused to sign these attestations and send it to the MSNE.<sup>45</sup>

With the aim of preparing the young generation for military duty, the School Authority (SA) in February 1934 issued instructions dealing with issues of defense training at middle schools and pedagogical institutes. Ivan Dérer, the Minister of Schools and National Enlightenment, declared defense training to be “*an organic part of educational worth for these schools.*” A year later the SA issued an edict which established defense training in elementary schools also.<sup>46</sup>

On July 1st 1937 the National Assembly adopted Law no. 184 “In Regard to Defense Education”, which in detailed fashion defined the significance and all aspects of this measure. The general purpose of Law no. 184 was “*...to raise in the population of the Czechoslovak Republic...moral values, physical endurance, faculties and abilities needed for defense of state.*”<sup>47</sup> According to Law 184, defense education was compulsory for pupils and students of all schools, also for women and men who were not exempted without relevant reasons.<sup>48</sup> On May 13<sup>th</sup> 1938 the Government Ordinance no. 109 was issued which defined the general rules of defense education implementation. Ordinance no. 109 in detail defined the duties of schools, associations, economic enterprises and civil authorities in securing the realization of defense training.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> SNA, f. PD B, c. 333, no. 31. 963/38 prez.

<sup>44</sup> The Provincial Office in Bratislava, in accordance with a request of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense, instructed all security offices in Slovakia to make sure that public and security offices “*in case of need could smoothly and without hindrance perform activities related to extraordinary measures of military nature (mobilization, evacuation etc.) if they will assist on such activities.*” SA K, s. R, f. DO R, c. 42, no. 1084 prez. May 23, 1938. On September 10 1938 the Provincial Office in Bratislava issued a circular recalling all employees from vacation and prohibited persons dealing with “military agenda” to be absent from their place of employment. SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 23, no. 58.348/1938/ prez. To prevent activities which would lead to further destabilization of situation, on September 14 1938 Czechoslovak government prohibited all political public gatherings. SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 23, No. 58. 845/1938 prez.

<sup>45</sup> SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 23, no. 134.888/38-VI/1.

<sup>46</sup> ČAPLOVIČ, Miloslav. *Branné organizácie v Československu 1918 – 1939 (so zreteľom na Slovensko)*. Bratislava : Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 2001, pp. 62-63.

<sup>47</sup> *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého*. Ročník 1937. Částka 45. Vydána dne 15. července 1937, p. 817. (Abbridgement of Laws and Instructions of Czechoslovak State. Year 1937. Part 45. Published on July 15, 1937, p. 817).

<sup>48</sup> *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého*. Ročník 1937. Částka 45. Vydána dne 15. července 1937, pp. 820, 821. (Abbridgement of Laws and Instructions of Czechoslovak State. Year 1937. Part 45. Published on July 15, 1937, pp. 820, 821).

<sup>49</sup> *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého*. Ročník 1937. Částka 37. Vydána dne 30. května 1937, p. 623. (Abbridgement of Laws and Instructions of Czechoslovak State. Year 1937. Part 37. Published on May 30, 1937, p. 623).

Another type of defensive preparations was “Civil Air Protection” (CAP) established on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1935. Local authorities were obliged to prepare shelters and gas masks in case of air attacks. During following years several instructions regulating issues connected with the CAP were published by government authorities.<sup>50</sup>

An important place in the defense system of the state had so-called “*State Defense Guards*”, established on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1936. Their tasks was to guard state borders, preserve peace in frontiers and assist custom offices in occurrences of “*extraordinary circumstances*”. In war their task was the temporary defense of the front line and suppression all acts of sedition against the state. The State Defense Guards were composed of gendarmerie units, financial guards, police and reservists. These military forces were manned exclusively by volunteers. State authorities were trying to keep these forces secret and their training, which commenced in 1937, was held in remote regions.<sup>51</sup>

A dramatic political change which would have incalculable consequences upon the security of Czechoslovakia occurred during the first months of 1938. On February 20<sup>th</sup> 1938, in his speech in the German Parliament, Hitler openly declared that Germany had the right and duty to “free” millions of Germans from “servitude” in which they lived in foreign countries. Hitler declared that, “*Over ten million Germans live in two states adjoining our frontiers... In the long run it is intolerable for a self-respecting World Power to know that across the frontier are kinsmen who have to suffer severe persecution because of their feeling of unity with Germany, because of their common fate, their common point of view*”.<sup>52</sup> There was no doubt, Hitler’s speech was a direct warning to Austria and Czechoslovakia. This aggressive assertion by Hitler roused a response from the French Prime Minister Camille Chautemps and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yves Delbos, who declared that France would honor the Alliance with Czechoslovakia.<sup>53</sup> Czechoslovak Prime Minister Hodža reacted to the diatribe of Hitler in his speech in the Czechoslovak Parliament on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1938. Hodža refuted Hitler’s claim that Germany had the right to annex regions inhabited by German population outside Germany and classified it as an interference in internal affairs of sovereign states. Hodža ended his speech with the assurance that “*We haven’t been worried for a thousand years and we are not worried today, certain of unity of our hearts and minds of all parts of our nation and cooperation with Europe which as well as we doesn’t want aggressions, but wants peace*”.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> For example, instructions how to organize brigades established as a part of CAP were issued by the Provincial Office in Bratislava (PO B) on March 5 1936, no. 12702/1936 prez. Sh. Examinations of readiness of CAP issued by PO B on March 31 1937, Issue 250/1937 prez., Ordinance no. 250/292/1937 prez. CAP, issued by PO B on April 26 1938 In Regard to Obligation to Cooperate with Private Enterprises, Ordinance of PO B, Issue 46.572/38-III/B, dated May 9 1938, Instructions to distribution of gas masks, Instruction no. 250/729/38 prez. CPO, issued by PO B on August 4 1938, publishing lists of approved types of gas masks.

<sup>51</sup> JOHN, Miloslav. *Září 1938. II. Díl. Možnosti obrany Československa*. Brno : Nakladatelství Bonus A, 1997, pp. 155-156.

<sup>52</sup> LAFFAN, R. G. D. *Survey of international affairs 1938. Volume II. The Crisis over Czechoslovakia January to September 1938*. London – New York – Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1951, pp. 53-54.

<sup>53</sup> KROFTA, K. *Z dob naší...*, pp. 253-255.

<sup>54</sup> Poslanecká sněmovna N. S. R. Č. 1938. IV. Volební období. 6. zasedání. Těsnopisecká zpráva o 135. schůzi poslanecké sněmovny Národního shromáždění republiky Československé v Praze v pátek dne 4. března 1938. (Chamber of Deputies 1938. IV. Election period. 6th session. Report on the 135th meeting of Parliament of The National Assembly of Czechoslovak Republic in Prague on Friday of March 4, 1938).

Unlike Czechoslovakia, which could count on support of contractual allies – France and the Soviet Union – there was no country in Europe which had a defense treaty with Austria. Mussolini, who had in previous years acted as a protector of Austrian independence, had as a consequence of his growing ties with Hitler accepted Germany's growing influence in the Central Europe, including Austria.

In February 1938 Hitler decided to act. He invited the Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg to Germany. Schuschnigg could not refuse the invitation, which in reality was only a veiled command. On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1938 he visited Hitler in his residence in Berghof. Schuschnigg was strongly pressurized into accepting Hitler's conditions in regard to the arrangement of German – Austrian relations, which would reduce Austria to a position of German satellite. Having no alternative, Schuschnigg agreed.<sup>55</sup>

After his return to Austria, Schuschnigg decided to stand-up to Hitler in a speech made on February 24<sup>th</sup> 1938. He proclaimed his readiness to fight for the independence of Austria. He declared that a plebiscite would be held on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1938 in which citizens could express their wish to uphold the independence of Austria. However, Hitler was determined not to allow that plebiscite to happen. In the early hours of March 12<sup>th</sup> 1938 the German Army entered Austria.

The occupation of Austria, known as the Anschluss, shocked the whole of Europe. Hitler's bold stroke definitively proved that the German Dictator was willing to use violence to take over sovereign countries. This was breach of the inviolable principle of relations among European states. He was also confident, and right, in thinking that no European country would try to stop him. There was no intervention from European Powers, except verbal protests. France, paralyzed by political turmoil, was not able to mount any meaningful reaction.<sup>56</sup> At the time of German invasion as consequence of political crisis France was without a government. Though the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain instructed the British Ambassador in Berlin to announce to the German acting Foreign Minister Konstatntin von Neurath, that "*His Majesty's Government feel bound to register a protest in the strongest terms*", no further measures were taken.<sup>57</sup> On March 14<sup>th</sup> 1938 Neville Chamberlain in his speech in the House of Commons stated: "*It seems to us that the method adopted throughout these events call for the severest condemnation and have administered a profound shock to all who are interested in the preservation of European peace*".<sup>58</sup> However, despite his indignation he admitted that "*The hard fact is that nothing could have arrested this action by Germany unless we, and others with us, had been prepared to use force against it*".<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Hitler threatened that if Austria would not concede to the suggested arrangement of mutual relations, the German Army would occupy Austria. Schuschnigg's objection that this would result in war Hitler refuted as unrealistic, and said that nobody would risk war for Austria. LUKES, Igor. *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler. The Diplomacy of Edward Beneš in the 1938*. London – New York – Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 121.

<sup>56</sup> E. Beneš opined that the situation in France became dismal: „*Occupation of Austria affected French generals very balefully. A mood of defeat passed through the whole of France, which the political Right used to split even more internal situation and weaken the Left*“. BENEŠ, E. *Mnichovské dny...*, p. 69.

<sup>57</sup> SHIRER, L. William. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1960, p. 261.

<sup>58</sup> BROOK-SHEPHERD, Gordon. *The Anschluss*. Philadelphia and New York : J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 207

<sup>59</sup> BROOK-SHEPHERD, G. *The Anschluss*, p. 207.

Despite the assurances of French politicians to protect Czechoslovak sovereignty, to which Czech and Slovak media, as usual, gave ample attention,<sup>60</sup> it was clear that the security of the Republic was seriously compromised. A glimpse of hope, which future events proved to be utterly unrealistic, was the assurance by Hermann Göring, the supreme commander of the German Air Force, given to Czechoslovak Ambassador Vojtěch Mastný, that Germany had no hostile intention toward Czechoslovakia, and the German invasion was strictly a “*family affair*” between Austria and Germany.<sup>61</sup>

The state authorities immediately reacted to the changed situation on the Czechoslovak borders with Austria. The Provincial Office in Bratislava on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1938 informed the Police Directory that “*as a consequence of events in Austria*” it was necessary to implement all necessary measures to assure that no public peace would be disturbed. At the same time the Police Directory was to make sure that no refugees from Austria would be allowed into Czechoslovak territory.<sup>62</sup> The next day the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior instructed the Financial Guard to prevent entry of Austrian citizens even if they had valid travel documents with the exception of persons “*who are permanent residents, own real estate in the CSR or travel to the Czechoslovak Republic for reasons important for Czechoslovak interests*”. Finally, the Ministry of Finance advised subordinate authorities that all measures must be realized “*inconspicuously*”.<sup>63</sup> On March 12<sup>th</sup> 1938 the Ministry of Interior imposed increased security along the whole Czechoslovak – Hungarian border. It also ordered that gendarmerie in frontier regions would be not permitted to leave their posts. All scheduled vacations were to be cancelled and members of staff who were vacationing were to be recalled.<sup>64</sup>

Many Austrian citizens, especially Jews and members of leftist political parties, were desperately trying to emigrate from Austria. However, the Czechoslovak government authorities were determined to stop a flood of refugees from Austria. The POB informed district offices in Slovakia that some people were trying enter Slovak territory with false Czechoslovak travel documents and ordered an increase of border controls.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the worsening situation of the Jewish population in Austria, the Provincial Office in Bratislava on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1938 instructed district offices in frontier regions to prevent illegal entry onto Czechoslovak territory. The frontier authorities were also required to search for Austrian

---

<sup>60</sup> Slovak and Czech periodical press quoted various French politicians who were creating the impression that it is impossible to doubt French commitment to security of Czechoslovakia. *Robotnicke noviny* informed that “*The new French government of Léon Blum hold as its foremost duty to clearly confirm French-Czechoslovak Alliance and not to anyone doubt that France will immediately help Czechoslovakia, if it was attacked. Among the first acts of government was instruction given to French Ambassador Corbin in London to inform the British Government that France would immediately act militarily, if Germany attack the Czechoslovak Republic*”. *Robotnicke noviny*, March 17 1938, Vol. 35, Issue 71. Francie připravuje pomoc Československu. According to periodical *Pražské noviny*, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yvon Debois explicitly confirmed the obligations of France to Czechoslovakia. *Pražské noviny*, February 24 1938, Vol. 259, Issue. 46. Francie věrná svým spojencům a úmluvě o Společnosti národů.

<sup>61</sup> JOHN, Miloslav. *Září 1938. II. díl Možnosti obrany Československa*. Brno : Nakladatelství Bonus A, 1997, p. 242.

<sup>62</sup> SNA, f. PD B, c. 777, no. 15.162/1938 prez.

<sup>63</sup> SNA, f. PD B, c. 777, no. 34.273/38-Pres.insp.a org.

<sup>64</sup> SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 20, without number.

<sup>65</sup> SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 21, no. 18.363/38 prez.

emigrants and deport them from Czechoslovakia.<sup>66</sup> The Provincial Office in Bratislava instructed district offices to ban entry of people from Austria, even if they had German passports.<sup>67</sup>

The annexation of Austria by Germany had not only a negative impact on the defense ability of the Republic, but also led to a destabilization of the internal political situation. Ethnic Germans and Hungarians, with increasing determination, demanded an improvement of their political, economic and civic status. Slovak autonomists were also exhibiting their growing dissatisfaction with the status quo. The most aggressive posture was taken by the Sudeten German Party (SGP), who became the uncontested leader of Germans living mainly in the Sudeten region. A majority of Sudeten Germans, who were incorporated into Czechoslovakia against their will, were supportive of Germany's ascent. After the Anschluss, the SGP attracted a growing number of ethnic Germans and became the largest political party in Czechoslovakia. The demands of rights for ethnic-Germans, including territorial autonomy, intensified and culminated during the Congress of the SGP in the Czech town Karlsbad. On April 24th 1938 the chairman of the SGP Konrad Henlein declared eight points, which constituted a political program for the Sudeten German Party. The implementation of these demands would result in the creation of an autonomous Sudetenland, which would in its practical consequences end Czechoslovakia as a centralized state. The impact of such change for the CSR would be catastrophic. Therefore the demands formulated by K. Henlein – the so-called “Karlsbad Program” – were refused by Czechoslovak political representation and by the overwhelming majority of public.

Consequently the negative attitude towards the SGP, especially from the Communists, hardened. Since the ascent of the Nazi Party to power in Germany, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia changed its policy toward the Republic. The CPC, as a loyal member of the Communist International, traditionally portrayed the CSR as a capitalist state which must be destroyed. However, the growing danger of a German invasion and the possibility that the Nazis would occupy Czechoslovakia, and end the CPC, led to a reverse of its policy – the condemnation of the CSR was superseded by the determination to fight for the protection of the Republic. Even though leaders of the CPC retained their criticism of the “bourgeois” regime, they supported government measures intended to increase the defense ability of the CSR. In November 1937 the CPC issued a circular letter to all Party organizations advising members of the CPC to join the Civil Air Defense. According to the Provincial Office in Bratislava, which became aware of this communist initiative, the aim of the CPC was to gain a significant position in local organizations of the CAP. The Provincial Office in Bratislava (POB) requested local state authorities to pay attention to communist initiatives and to report the activities of communists in organizations in the CAP.<sup>68</sup> As ardent protectors of the Republic acted, in Parliament a communist member of the House of Parliament (HP). Ján Šverma, in his rather more propagandist than pragmatic speech declared: *“We Communists, the most consistent defenders of democracy and the Republic against fascism, are appealing to all workers, anti-fascists, democrats and all those, to whom the destiny of the Republic and its independence is important. To all those people we are offering our hand to cooperate and we call on them for preparedness”*.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> SNA, f. PD B, c. 493, no. 21.020/1938 prez.

<sup>67</sup> SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 23, no. 55.331/38 prez.

<sup>68</sup> SA BB, s. Lučenec (L), f. Notary Office Poltár (NO P), c. 3, no. 21.040/1997 prez.

<sup>69</sup> Poslanecká sněmovna N. S. R. Č. IV Voleb. Obd. Zased. Těšnopisecké zprávy, 131. schůze posl. Sněmovny N.S.R.Č. dne 28. února 1938, p. 24. (Chamber of Deputies 1938. IV. Election period. Report on the 131st meeting of Parliament of The National Assembly of Czechoslovak Republic in Prague on February 28, 1938, p. 24).

The CPC intended also to assist in the defense of CSR. The POB informed the security authorities that the headquarters of the CPC instructed local organizations to monitor the activities of the Sudeten German Party in frontier regions and to create so called “*Fight-Actives*” able to intervene in the event of any conflict. The POB requested local authorities to pay the greatest attention to the CPC and report occurrences of such activities.<sup>70</sup>

The transformation of the CPC from an assumed enemy to a supporter of the government resulted in a more tolerant attitude from the state authorities. For example, the Provincial Office in Bratislava on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1938 revoked the prohibition of the public distribution of the Communist periodical *Rudé Právo*.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the leaders of the the CPC, who warned of the danger of German aggression, government officials stubbornly played down the possibility that Czechoslovakia could become a target of attack. On the occasion of twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Bachmač, F. Machník, the Minister of Defense, declared that there was no reason to be worried.<sup>72</sup> Government propaganda also made unceasing effort to convince public that the Czechoslovak Army was capable of defending the CSR and there was no need to be worried. The Commander in Chief of the Czechoslovak Army, F. Krejčí, during an interview given to representatives of the press declared that defense installations constructed at the frontiers were “perfect”. However, he admitted that in case of the commencement of military operations, during the first days the Czechoslovak Army would have to fight alone.<sup>73</sup>

The top army officials and politicians played great attention to the construction of chain of fortification in frontier regions with Germany and Hungary. Despite the fact that in 1938 a system of strongholds built on the border with Germany and after the Anschluss also on border with the former Austria was far from complete, it was presented as impenetrable. An over-optimistic assessment of the situation was given by F. Machník after an inspection of the defensive installations undertaken in June 1938. He declared that “*Our Army can be valued as one of the best armies*”.<sup>74</sup>

The drain on the state budget caused by military expenditure was partially solved by borrowing and by the organization of voluntary financial aid by government and public associations.<sup>75</sup> With the intention to organize financial support for military forces, on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1938 prominent members of political, financial, economic and cultural institutions decided to establish a collection for the defense of the Republic, and issued a proclamation addressed to “*All citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic*”. They appealed to the public with a request to contribute to the “*Fund for Defense of the CSR*”, “*Because it is extremely important that in this crucial moment*

<sup>70</sup> SA BB, s. RS, f. DO RS, c. 21.

<sup>71</sup> SA K, s. R, f. DO R, c. 42, no. 18.862/38 prez.

<sup>72</sup> F. Machník assured the gathered crowd, that „*Events of the recent days are raising among all people questions, in what situation we actually are. I am saying to you that the situation of our beloved Republic, for which we were fighting is in every aspect firm and by recent events not touched at all*“. *Venkov*, March 13, 1938, Vol. XXXIII, Issue 61. Ministr Machník: Na ohrožování naší samostatnosti nikdo nepomýšlí.

<sup>73</sup> *Národní politika*, February 24, 1938, Vol. LVI, Issue 54. Arm. Gen. Krejčí o vojenských opatřeních. Jsme dobře vojensky připraveni.

<sup>74</sup> *Slovenská politika*, June 3, 1938, Vol. XIX, Issue 129. Naša armáda dnes najlepšia.

<sup>75</sup> The sources of needed finances were the Loan for Defense of State and the Contribution to Defense of State. According to Z. Kárník, „*These measures enabled the state to cover substantially increased military budget, on the others side to engage public in preparations for defence*.“ KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk. *České země v éře První republiky (1918 – 1938) Díl třetí o přežití a o život (1935 – 1938)*. Praha : Libri, 2000, p. 482.

*they will display their solidarity, their will to life and their attitude to the Republic with this sacrifice, which will bring help to the Republic and which will have in the eyes of the whole world a great moral value and will document our inner power*".<sup>76</sup> These desperate measures were intended to keep the state solvent in the face of a rapid increase in defense expenditure, especially for the enormously expensive fortification works in frontier regions. In 1938 the economic situation of the state worsened with increasing capital flight from the CSR.<sup>77</sup> Government agencies also implemented involuntary defense measures, which in extraordinary situations were necessary to continue with military activities".<sup>78</sup>

In his aforementioned speech in February 1938, Hitler openly declared his determination to annex regions inhabited by Germans in states neighboring Nazi Germany. Though he did not name these countries directly, it was clear that it was Austria and Czechoslovakia. After occupation of Austria the possibility that Germany would also occupy Sudeten region became real. Therefore, it was essential for the Czechoslovak government to reform the status of ethnic minorities, especially the status of the German minority in such a way as to deflect criticism voiced by minority representatives. On March 29<sup>th</sup> 1938 the Prime Minister Hodža announced that a complex legislative regulating all aspects of the status of ethnic minorities would be prepared, known as "*the Minority Statute*". However, the systematization of the already existing legislative norms without an implementation of a radical increase in the political and economic rights of minorities was unacceptable to the SGP. Despite months of negotiations, which were characterized by a forthcoming approach from the Czechoslovak government, an agreement was not reached. A strong suspicion emerged that Hitler was behind the uncompromising position of the SGP. In July 1938 the chairman of the SGP, K. Henlein, visited Germany. In spite of the secrecy which shrouded Henlein's visit, suspicions that Henlein conferred with Hitler in regard to further strategy of SGP were widely held.<sup>79</sup> In the end this suspicion proved to be true. No matter how far was the Czechoslovak government was willing to go to fulfill the demands of the Sudeten German Party, their compromises were rejected.

In an atmosphere of nervousness induced by the incessant anti-Czechoslovak Nazi propaganda, an event occurred which could have resulted in an immediate outbreak of hostilities. On May 20<sup>th</sup> 1938 the Intelligence Service of the Czechoslovak Army received a report that German divisions were moving toward the Czechoslovak border. Though there was no positive proof, information was confirmed by the Headquarters of the First Army Corps.<sup>80</sup> Later the same day an emergency government session, in which Beneš also participated, was held and a decision was made to mobilize a limited number of reservists, numbering approximately 200,000 men.<sup>81</sup> However, rumors about the massing the German Army on the Czechoslovak border were false and resulted

<sup>76</sup> *Národní listy*, June 12, 1938, Vol. 78, Issue 160. Jubilejní dar pro fond na obranu státu: Občanstvo branné síle republiky.

<sup>77</sup> A. Klimek stated that government expenditure increased from 12,3 billion in 1934 to 18,5 billion crowns in 1937, internal indebtedness grew from 25,95 billion in 1929 to 36,61 billions of crowns in 1937. Process of capital escape from country intensified and after Anschluss of Austria changed into a panic exodus. KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, pp. 566-567.

<sup>78</sup> For example the right to use private motor vehicles, billet military personnel in private houses and confiscation of real estate for army use. KÁRNÍK, Z. *České země...*, p. 482.

<sup>79</sup> A communist periodical *Slovenské zvesti* argued that „It is more than probable that he (Henlein) was there to obtain further instructions for his advancement against Czechoslovakia.” *Slovenské zvesti*, July 19, 1938. Vol. III, Issue 107. Henlein bol v Berlíne.

<sup>80</sup> KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, pp. 557-558.

<sup>81</sup> KÁRNÍK, Z. *České země...*, p. 525.



in a negative reaction from Germany, France and Great Britain.<sup>82</sup> The French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet allegedly told the British Ambassador that “*If Czechoslovakia were really unreasonable the French Government might well declare that France is considering herself released from her bond.*”<sup>83</sup> Also Beneš admitted that partial mobilization, which is known under the name the “*Little Mobilization*”, was not a success at all because its consequences were more negative than the display of government decisiveness to defend the Republic.<sup>84</sup>

Immediately after the decision to mobilize was made, the Ministry of Interior prohibited publishing all reports about the concentration of armed forces on Czechoslovak borders.<sup>85</sup> Also all reports given by the SGP to press about mobilization were to be suppressed.<sup>86</sup> Periodicals were eventually permitted to inform about partial mobilization, but it was to be described only as “*training of reservists*”.<sup>87</sup>

Despite dissatisfaction with partial mobilization, which the CSR enacted without knowledge (and approval) of France, French representatives repeatedly confirmed the commitment of France to defend Czechoslovakia in the case of German aggression. The Czechoslovak press made great effort to draw an optimistic picture about the firmness of the alliance with France.<sup>88</sup> However, the reality was quite different. According to historian A. Klimek, Bonnet openly said to Štefan Osuský, the Czechoslovak Ambassador in France, that “*France will not wage a war on account of Sudeten. Publicly of course we confirm our solidarity according to wishes of Czechoslovak government...with an aim to achieve an honest, peaceful resolution*”.<sup>89</sup>

Besides assurances about the loyalty of France, the press ascribed the important role of the Soviet Union in providing help to Czechoslovakia against German aggression. The most reassuring, in regard to Soviet help, regardless of the reality, was the communist daily *Slovenské Zvesti*.<sup>90</sup> Also

---

<sup>82</sup> “*On the following day, the 21<sup>st</sup>, it seemed to be certain that the rumors were false. The German Army had not moved. Ribbentrop denounced Czech action as ‘provocative’. He was not alone. Britain and France were not pleased since the Czechs seemed deliberately to have jeopardized the work they had been doing for six weeks*”. ROBBINS, Keith. *Munich 1938*. London : Cassell, 1968, p. 224.

<sup>83</sup> LAFFAN, R. G. D. *Survey...*, p. 130.

<sup>84</sup> „*However, a success which was achieved during the May crisis, hasn’t been for us without bad portends for the future...Great Britain began seriously to contemplate that for Czechoslovak’s sake could be found a great European conflict*“. BENEŠ, E. *Mnichovské dny...*, p. 85.

<sup>85</sup> SNA, f. PD, c. 335, no. 31.153/1938 prez. 20.V.1938.

<sup>86</sup> SNA, f. PD, c. 335, no. 31.441/1938 prez. 21.V.1938

<sup>87</sup> For example: *A-Zet*, May 22, 1938, Vol. XXXV, Issue 120. Jeden ročník zálohy povolaný ku cvičeniu Zaisťujeme poriadok; *České Slovo*, May 22, 1938, Vol. XXX, Issue 120. K mimořádnému cvičení a zajištění klidu a pořádku Povolání jednoho ročníku zálohy a náhradní zálohy; *Venkov*, May 22, 1938, vol. XXXIII, Issue 120. Cvičení jednoho ročníku zálohy.

<sup>88</sup> *Robotnícké noviny* informed about the joint pronouncement of Georges Bonnet and the British Ambassador Erick Phipps, in which both politicians declared that “*the position of the French and British government toward Czechoslovak issue remain in perfect harmony, without change, same firm and clear as before*”. *Robotnícké noviny*, June 15, 1938, Vol. XXXV, Issue 135. Francia a Anglia rovnako pevne a jasne za ČSR. *Pražské noviny* cited a speech the French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier, in which he declared, that “*Our obligations to Czechoslovakia are sacred. We wish that we do not have to fulfill these obligations, however, when this hope will disappoint us, then we are firmly committed to never betray our word, which we give*”. *Pražské noviny*, July 12, 1938, Vol. CCLIX, Issue 160. Francouzská vláda znovu prohlašuje: Závazky Francie ČSR jsou posvátné.

<sup>89</sup> KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, p. 594.

<sup>90</sup> Shortly after the Anschluss *Slovenské Zvesti* informed about an interview of Maxim M. Litvinov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, given to the news media representatives, who, when asked if the ZSSR will help Czechoslovakia, answered: “*Of course!*” *Slovenské Zvesti*, March 20, 1938, Vol. III, Issue 56. Otázka: Pomôže SSSR

some non-communist politicians exaggerated the resolution of the ZSSR to help the CSR and the strength of the Red Army. One of the most irresponsible assurances was expressed by the chairman of the Defense Committee Josef David, who after his return from the ZSSR spoke about “thousands” of planes ready to be sent to the CSR, and three million Soviet soldiers massed on the Romanian border. These assertions were clearly fabrications made for propaganda purposes.<sup>91</sup>

The possibility of effective military assistance provided by the ZSSR was even more questionable than in case of France. Unlike France, which could attack Germany directly, the Soviet Union had no direct border with the CSR nor with Germany. If the Red Army wanted to attack Germany, it had to be crossed via Romania or Poland. Neither of these countries had agreed to let the Red Army enter their territory. In spite of assurances to help Czechoslovakia, Soviet leaders never clearly specified the mode of their military assistance to Czechoslovakia.<sup>92</sup> According to Prokop Drtina, a Secretary of President Beneš, even Beneš himself did not trust the Soviets.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the desperate struggle of Beneš to keep negotiations with representatives of the SGP alive, the hope to achieve a compromise became increasingly elusive. A solution was unable to be reached also by a British emissary W. Runciman, who officially came to Czechoslovakia as an independent “*investigator and negotiator*”, but in reality he was sent by the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain with the mission to arrange a peace agreement which would satisfy Hitler. On September 7<sup>th</sup> 1938 the SGP ended negotiations under the pretence of an incident in Moravská Ostrava, where during a demonstration a German member of Parliament was hurt by a policeman. It was clear that the leadership of the SGP was not interested in coming to an agreement with the Czechoslovak government but was acting as an obedient tool of Hitler’s strategy to destroy Czechoslovakia. There was also another aspect which should be taken into consideration – the hostile attitude of Hungary and Poland.<sup>94</sup>

President Beneš remained defiantly optimistic. In a radio broadcast on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1938 he praised the achievements of the Czechoslovak Republic. He stressed the necessity to improve the status of its ethnic minorities, which according to Beneš, would be solved in a short time. After the incident in Moravská Ostrava, however, there was a minimal possibility of bringing the leaders of the SGP to the negotiation table. On the contrary, encouraged by Hitler’s speech at Congress of the Nazi Party in Nuremberg on September 12 1938, Sudeten Germans initiated violent protests. Henlein and prominent representatives of the SGP escaped to Germany,

---

napadnutému Československu? Litvinov: Samozřejmě!; During festivities of May First in Moscow, a prominent Russian politician, Michail I. Kalinin declared that the Soviet Union will fulfill “all obligations”. *Slovenské zvesti*, May 11, 1938, Vol. III, Issue 110. Kalinin o sovětské pomoci Československu Rusko splní všechny závazky; *Slovenské zvesti* argued that fighting valor exhibited by the Red Army during border clashes with Japan proved that Czechoslovakia can rely upon ZSSR. *Slovenské Zvesti*, July 26, 1938, Vol. III, Issue 143. Ponaučenie z Ďalekého východu ČSR sa môže spoľahnúť na Sovietsky zväz.

<sup>91</sup> PFAFF, Ivan. *Sovětská zrada*. Praha : Nakladatelství BEA, 1993, p. 65.

<sup>92</sup> When the French ambassador in Moscow asked Litvinenko if the ZSSR will help Czechoslovakia regardless of the position of Poland and Romania, the Soviet Foreign Minister answered that ZSSR will help in case the French will help. When French Foreign Minister Bonnet received the Ambassadors report, he allegedly remarked “*I knew it! Russians will not attack!*” KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, p. 617.

<sup>93</sup> In his memoirs Drtina quoted Beneš, who allegedly told to him: “*I know. They naturally also are playing their game. It is impossible to trust them without reservations. If they would get into it, they will leave us in it*”. DRTINA, Prokop. *Československo můj osud*. Praha : Melantrich, 1991, p. 106.

<sup>94</sup> German dictator, who was keen to liquidate the Czechoslovak state, endeavored to engage his plans to Hungary and Poland. ARPÁŠ, Róbert. *Autonómia, víťazstvo alebo prehra?* Bratislava : VEDA, 2011, p. 150.

followed by a number of German refugees. The Czechoslovak security forces restored order in the Sudeten region, and the situation was diffused, but it proved only the calmness before the storm.<sup>95</sup> Seeing his mission devoid, in existing circumstances, of any purpose, Runciman also left Czechoslovakia.

Highly surprising was a communique from the British government issued on September 14<sup>th</sup> 1938, informing that the Prime Minister Chamberlain, “motivated by the intention to preserve peace in Europe” would visit Hitler in Germany, if invited. It was an unprecedented offer and Hitler agreed to meet Chamberlain on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1938.<sup>96</sup> With the exception of the interpreter Paul Schmidt, there was no other person present at the meeting. According to Chamberlain, Hitler declared that besides the annexation of the Sudeten region he had no further claims and was willing to abstain from military interference. Chamberlain had no objections, but remarked that he had to consult his colleagues in government. Hitler agreed.

With the intention of forming a common strategy in dealing with the looming crisis, members of British and French governments met on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1938 in London to discuss their options. They agreed that to assist Czechoslovakia militarily in any meaningful way was impossible. Therefore the only solution was to accept the annexation of Czechoslovak territory by Germany, where more than 50 % of inhabitants were ethnic Germans. Pressured by the French, the British agreed that rest of Czechoslovakia was to be granted an international guarantee.<sup>97</sup> The next day the French Ambassador M. V. De Lacroix and the British Ambassador Basil Newton submitted to Beneš a proposal describing regions which had to be transferred to Germany. The President refused.<sup>98</sup> On September 20<sup>th</sup> 1938 Krofta submitted to the Ambassadors of France and Great Britain a negative response from the Czechoslovak government. However, the refusal was not accepted. In the early morning on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1938, both the Ambassadors visited Beneš and presented him with a sternly formulated ultimatum – either Czechoslovakia accepted the proposal or France and England would be disinterested in the further course of events.<sup>99</sup> The French Foreign Minister Bonnet later argued that ultimatum was requested by Beneš or Hodža with an aim to find an excuse for its acceptance. However, convincing evidence is lacking and Beneš described these accusations as totally false.<sup>100</sup>

During the government session convened by Beneš on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1938 generals Ludvík Krejčí and Jan Syrový stated that without help from their allies the Czechoslovak Army could resist only for a short time. In spite of negative reactions voiced by several members of government, Beneš accepted the ultimatum.<sup>101</sup> When news about the acceptance of the ultimatum

---

<sup>95</sup> To prevent occurrence of any disturbances in Slovakia the Provincial Office in Bratislava instructed authorities controlling the periodical press to allow publishing of only articles describing the situation in border regions as released only by official sources. SNA, f. PD B, c. 335, no. 58.629/1938 prez.

<sup>96</sup> LAFFAN, R. D. G. *Surway...*, pp. 323-325.

<sup>97</sup> KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, p. 628.

<sup>98</sup> BENEŠ, E. *Mnichovské dny...*, pp. 255-256.

<sup>99</sup> In his memoirs E. Beneš, enraged by alleged French duplicity, published the French ultimatum in its entirety: “*If the Czechoslovak government will be immediately not able to accept proposals and refuse them and if such situation will lead to war, Czechoslovakia will be responsible for it and France will not participate in this war*”. BENEŠ, E. *Mnichovské dny...*, p. 260.

<sup>100</sup> BENEŠ, E. *Mnichovské dny...*, p. 265.

<sup>101</sup> The Foreign Minister Krofta informed Czechoslovak Foreign Embassies about of response of government: „*To French and British Ambassadors was today at 17 hours submitted this answer of the Czech. Government. Compelled by circumstances and extraordinary pressure by French and British governments the Czechoslovak government with*

became publicly known, mass protests erupted in Prague and other Czech cities. On September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1938 the government resigned and a new government was formed led by General J. Syrový.<sup>102</sup>

It seemed that an essential condition for the preservation of peace in Europe – the transfer of the Sudeten region to German sovereignty – was achieved. With this optimistic expectation on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1938 Chamberlain flew again to Germany. After his arrival at Godesberg, a small town situated on the banks of the river Rhine, the Prime Minister introduced his version of the Sudeten territory transfer. The regions inhabited exclusively by Germans were to be transferred outright. The regions inhabited by a mixture of Czechs and Germans were to be divided according to the decision of the commission composed of representatives of Germany and Czechoslovakia and of a representative from a neutral state. Further, Czechoslovakia's military agreements were ended and instead it accepted the protection of international guarantees. Hitler, however, refused the proposal with the argument that thousands of refugees were escaping to Germany from Sudeten region daily, and that the situation was unstable and it was impossible to know what would happen. Hitler categorically demanded that whole transfer should be executed "in a span of several days". In addition, he emphasized that the requirements also of Hungary and Poland should be satisfied. In regard to guarantees, they could be given by Germany if neighboring countries – Hungary and Poland would agree. Chamberlain, enraged by the refusal of his proposal, left. Nevertheless, he decided to stay in Germany. During their next meeting with Hitler, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Chamberlain received the memorandum containing the German demands with a map attached.<sup>103</sup> Convinced that the response was for the Czechoslovak leaders to make, he dispatched Hitler's decision to Prague. Speaking for the Czechoslovak government, Jan Masaryk, the Czech Ambassador in Great Britain, rejected the memorandum.<sup>104</sup>

The next step taken by the Czechoslovak government was full-scale mobilization. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, after consultations with general Syrový and representatives of political parties composing of the ruling coalition, Beneš issued an order to mobilize the military forces of the CSR. Even though mobilization proceeded smoothly, it did not incite a similar reaction in the ranks of Czechoslovakia's allies.<sup>105</sup>

Conscious of the necessity to react to the existing situation, representatives of Great Britain and France discussed their options during a meeting in London between September 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 1938. Daladier, who considered Hitler's ultimatum unacceptable, declared that in case of conflict the French Army would attack German fortifications with the support of the airforce. Chamberlain was skeptical and expressed also doubts that the Soviets would engage in military operations.

---

*pain accepts Franco-English suggestions*". Archív Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic; hereinafter referred only to as AMFA CR), f. Kroftův archív, c. 3. Odpověď vlády československé vládám britské a francouzské z 20. IX. 1938.

<sup>102</sup> There are differing opinions among historians in regard to the significance of government change. Whereas Z. Kárník values the change as important (KÁRNÍK, Z. *České země...*, p. 602-603), in the judgment of A. Klimek the change of government was a mere „charade“, devoid of real meaning KLIMEK, A. *Velké dějiny...*, p. 638). Similarly, H. Ripka, a close associate of E. Beneš argued that it was only a cosmetic measure, which changed nothing in the situation (RIPKA, Hubert. *Munich: Before and After*. London : Gollanz, 1939, p. 110.)

<sup>103</sup> ČELOVSKÝ, Bořivoj. *Mnichovská dohoda 1938*. Šeňov u Ostravy : Nakladatelství Tilia, 1999, pp. 320-321.

<sup>104</sup> AMFA CR, f. Kroftův archív, c. 3. Nota, odevzdaná vyslancem Janem Masarykem předsedovi britské vlády N. Chamberlainovi dne 25. IX. 1938, č. 27.

<sup>105</sup> According to Zeman Zbyněk „France limited preparations to defensive measures and preparations of the Great Britain were negligible. In regard to the Soviet Union only vague reports occurred that some military forces were moving to western borders“. ZEMAN, Zbyněk. *Edward Beneš. Politický životopis*. Praha : Mladá Fronta, 2009, p. 143.

When questioned what measures England would take, he avoided a direct answer. He asked Daladier to invite Maurice Gamelin, the Commander-in-chief of the French Army, so the general could express his opinion about the military situation. Gamelin judged the French Army to be stronger than the German army except for their airforce. He also had a positive opinion in regard to the fighting ability of the Czechoslovak Army. However, as a serious problem he perceived the unpredictability of Poland.<sup>106</sup> Chamberlain, who was far more reluctant to assume more a resolute approach than was exhibited by Daladier, offered symbolic help in the case of war with Germany. According to the British Prime Minister, Britain could during the first six months of fighting commit only two divisions and 150 planes.<sup>107</sup>

Chamberlain voiced his abhorrence to wage war with Germany also in a radio broadcast on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1938, in which he pointed to the absurdity that Londoners must dig trenches around the city and test gas masks, because conflict was looming caused by a country basically unknown to them.

A breakthrough in the situation saw a joint initiative by the British Prime Minister and the Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini. They agreed that the last chance to prevent war would be a conference of leaders of European Powers. Hitler agreed on condition that the meeting would be enacted without delay. Daladier also agreed to take part. Representatives of Czechoslovakia were not invited.

The conference, in line with Hitler's wishes, was hastily convened on September 29<sup>th</sup> in Munich. Unlike Chamberlain and Daladier who came separately and did not consult on their strategy with each other, Hitler met Mussolini in the Austrian town of Kufstein. Hitler arranged the meeting to make sure that his ally would act according to his wishes. He had no qualms disclosing to Mussolini how he intended to destroy Czechoslovakia and also about his hostile plans against France. Mussolini had no objections against Hitler's suggestions and assumed, seemingly, a leading role after the conference started at noon on September 29<sup>th</sup>.<sup>108</sup> Daladier tried to invite representatives of Czechoslovakia to the conference, but it was refused by Hitler. Surprisingly, Daladier was more willing to accept Hitler's demands than Chamberlain, who tried, in vain, to guarantee the personal property of Czechs living in the annexed territory.<sup>109</sup>

The conference, which became known as the Munich Agreement, was concluded on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1938. As Hitler requested in the ultimatum formulated in Godesberg, the German Army started the process of annexation of the Sudeten region on October 1st.

Despite the readiness of the Czechoslovak Army to fight, Beneš, refused to give the order to go to war with Germany with the explanation, that in the existing circumstances it would result in the massacre of the citizens of the Republic.

The diplomatic victory Hitler had immense consequences. Czechoslovakia became basically defenseless and soon was swallowed up by Nazi Germany. But it was not only the tragedy of Czechoslovakia. According to the Czech historian Jindřich Dejmek *“the mutilation of Czechoslovakia by “Munich” and its consequences led to the breakdown of the fragile balance in the whole region of the Central Europe and a definitive turn away by governments of the majority from remnants of the principle of collective security.”*<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> ČELOVSKÝ, B. *Mnichovská dohoda...*, pp. 336-337.

<sup>107</sup> LAFFAN, R. D. G. *Surway...*, pp. 397-398.

<sup>108</sup> LAFFAN, R. D. G. *Surway...*, pp. 397-398.

<sup>109</sup> ČELOVSKÝ, B. *Mnichovská dohoda...*, p. 345.

<sup>110</sup> DEJMEK, Jindřich. Československo a Mnichov: reality a mýty okolo osudového rozhodování z konce září 1938. In NĚMEČEK, Jan (ed.). *Mnichovská dohoda cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě*. Praha : Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2004, p. 33.

## References:

### Archives

Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic)

- fund Kroftův archiv (The Archives of Krofta)

Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives)

- fund Policajné riaditeľstvo Bratislava (Police Directory Bratislava)

Štátny archív Košice (State Archives Košice), pracovisko (section) Rožňava

- fund Okresný úrad Rožňava (District Office Rožňava)

Štátny archív Banská Bystrica (State Archives Banská Bystrica), pracovisko (section) Rimavská Sobota

- fund Okresný úrad Rimavská Sobota (District Office Rimavská Sobota)

Štátny archív Banská Bystrica (State Archives Banská Bystrica), pracovisko (section) Lučenec

- fund Notársky úrad v Poltári (Notary Office Poltár)

### Sources

Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého. Ročník 1937. Částka 45. Vydána dne 15. července 1937.

Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého. Ročník 1938. Částka 37. Vydána dne 30. května 1937.

Zákon 131/1936 Sb z. a n. ze dne 13. května 1936 o obrane státu.

Zákon 142/1936 Sb z. a n. ze dne 29. května 1936 o půjčce na obranu státu.

Poslanecká sněmovna N. S. R. Č. IV Voleb. Obd. Zased. Těsnopisecké zprávy, 131. schůze posl. Sněmovny N.S.R.Č.

### Contemporary press

A-Zet, 1938

České Slovo, 1936, 1937, 1938

Lidové noviny, 1938

Národní politika, 1938

Narodnie noviny, 1938

Novosti, 1937

Pražské noviny, 1937, 1938

Robotnícke noviny, 1937, 1938

Slovák, 1938

Slovenská politika, 1938

Slovenská Pravda, 1938

Slovenské zvesti, 1936, 1937, 1938

Slovenský východ, 1935, 1936, 1937

### **Bibliography**

ARPÁŠ, Róbert. *Autonómia, víťazstvo alebo prehra?* Bratislava : VEDA, 2011.

BENEŠ, Edvard. *Paměti. Od Mnichova k nové válce a k novému vítězství.* Praha : Naše vojsko, 2004.

BENEŠ, Edvard. *Mnichovské dny. Paměti.* Praha : Svoboda, 1968.

BROOK-SHEPHERD, Gordon. *The Anschluss.* Philadelphia and New York : J. B. Lippincott Company.

BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián. *Od autonómie k vzniku Slovenského štátu.* Bratislava : Prodama, 2008.

CESAR, Jaroslav. *Mnichov 1938.* Praha : Melantrich, 1978.

ČAPLOVIČ, Miloslav. *Branné organizácie v Československu 1918 – 1939) (so zreteľom na Slovensko).* Bratislava : Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 2001.

ČAPLOVIČ, Miloslav. Československá armáda medzi Mnichovom 1938 a marcom 1939 a dôrazom na Slovensko. In BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián et al. *Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Historické reflexie zániku Česko-Slovenska.* Bratislava : VEDA, 2010.

ČELOVSKÝ, Bořivoj. *Mnichovská dohoda 1938.* Šeňov u Ostravy : Nakladatelství Tilia, 1999.

DEJMEK, Jindřich. Československo a Mnichov: reality a mýty okolo osudového rozhodování z konce září 1938. In NĚMEČEK, Jan (ed.). *Mnichovská dohoda cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě* Praha : Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2004.

DRTINA, Prokop. *Československo můj osud.* Praha : Melantrich, 1991.

GARAJOVÁ, Alena. *ČSR a střeoevropská politika velmocí (1918 – 1938).* Praha : Academia, 1967.

JANIŠOVÁ, Milena. Francouzská zahraniční politika a Československo v období příprav Mníchova. In *Československý časopis historický*, 1963, Volume XI, Issue 5, p. 576.

JOHN, Miloslav. *Září 1938. II. díl Možnosti obrany Československa*. Brno : Nakladatelství Bonus A, 1997.

KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk. *České země v éře První republiky (1918 – 1938). Díl třetí o přežití a o život (1935 – 1938)*. Praha : Libri, 2000.

KROFTA, Kamil. *Z dob naší první republiky*. Praha : Jan Laiter, 1939, pp. 102 – 103.

KLIMEK, Antonín. *Velké dějiny země Koruny české, Svazek XIV. 1929 – 1938*. Praha Litomyšl : Paseka, 2002.

LAFFAN, R. G. D. *Survey of international affairs 1938 Volume II The Crisis over Czechoslovakia January to September 1938*. London New York Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1951.

LUKES, Igor. *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler. The Diplomacy of Edward Beneš in the 1938*. London New York Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1996.

PFAFF, Ivan. *Sovětská zrada*. Praha : Nakladatelství BEA, 1993. SHIRER, L. William. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1960.

PURDEK, Imrich. *Československá vojenská symbolika v letech 1914 – 1939*. Bratislava : Vojenský historický ústav, 2013.

SHIRER, L. William. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1960.

ZEMAN, Zbyněk. *Edward Beneš. Politický životopis*. Praha : Mladá Fronta, 2009.



## Binary Trouble: Preconditions for Non-binary Gender in Works of Heidegger, Derrida and Butler

Jan Prášil, Department of Electronic Culture and Semiotics, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University Prague, [jan@prasil.eu](mailto:jan@prasil.eu)

**PRÁŠIL, Jan. Binary Trouble: Preconditions for Non-binary Gender in Works of Heidegger, Derrida and Butler. Človek a spoločnosť, 2018, roč. 21, č. 3, s. 25-38.**

### Abstract:

Non-binary gender as an umbrella term refers to any gender beyond the male/female categories. With the progressing LGBT+ movement and future predictions referring to all persons equally „*regardless of their chosen gender*” (Cave, Klein, 2015), the question of philosophical and societal limits of being non-binary is a fundamental one for understanding the patterns in the current sign system. Binary, as such, is of a philosophical nature and can be interpreted as political; as in the works of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler who both accelerated feminist criticism by analysing how the masculine is privileged in the construction of meaning. Also, for Martin Heidegger binary is a subject of criticism as he tried to establish a new dualistic-thinking humanism in which being comes before metaphysical oppositions. However, in his attempt to define being through its difference to beings, being is dependent on the difference. There is a significant problem with Heidegger's approach to gender and sex. The neutral *Dasein* is neither of the two sexes but as factual it is a gendered being (*Geschlechtswesen*). Derrida analyses the pre-differential state as a precondition for uniqueness of each gender, which is separated by space and time of endless difference, and Butler investigates the reinterpretation of meanings of differences and the becoming of gender.

The goal of this article is to compare the approaches of these three scholars to find the possibilities, preconditions and limits of non-binary gender. Thus, I read Heidegger and compare his thoughts on sex and gender of *Dasein* with the perspective of Derrida and Butler, and then I discuss the limits of Butler's approach by using the perspective of Derrida and come to the conclusion on visibility of gender signs and their validity in discourses. Together with Butler, I assume that there is no gender identity but performatively constituted expressions (Butler 1990, 25), whose origin is the own desire for recognition, which is why I don't differentiate between sex/gender/desire.

In his lectures on *Geschlecht*, Derrida describes inter alia the way logocentrism has been genderized on the example of *Dasein*, a fundamental concept in the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger which has opened novel possibilities. Although these three thinkers rarely come together in comparisons, I am of the opinion that analysing them in this sequence is optimal for the reasoning about gender and its limit within the process of structural reorganization of society in the Western culture throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. I argue that the point of clash of their arguments dwells in the interlinkage of thinking, acting and signifying of a politicized material body. All of them problematize authenticity and repetition. Heidegger provokes the idea of a neutral and bodiless *Dasein* which can become authentic but where no becoming of gender is possible, Derrida seeks the pre-differential state which enables becoming, and Butler seeks the way in which gender is becoming. Although Heidegger tried to establish thinking beyond dualistic terms, he defined being by using its difference from beings, i.e. he thought of being through difference and escaped the problem of identity, including the sexual or gender identity of *Dasein*. Derrida criticized the binary domination, reviewed the conditions for the functioning of the prime beginning, which he understands as the primordial sexual difference that existed before the binary opposition. In this context, sex is pre-differential, unsigned, naked but is being veiled by the clothes of language and culture. This pre-differential state can be understood as a positive potential for a non-binary identity, a possibility of sexual multiplicity and denotation of self as any possible sex. Similarly, as a stroke strikes validity as for example when minting the coin, the formation of gender should be understood as striking, respectively as

signification rather than construction or production. It is a violent act which is exercised from the outside on the surface which is initially reconciliatory.

In the space opened by Derrida and by using his instruments of decomposition and citationality, Butler builds her concept of performativity and gender performance as a practice by which discourse produces effects that it names. She regards binary as fiction which has the regulatory function to confirm the heterosexual coherency. The materiality of sex is violently created and operates as a ritual. Such performativity as a predicate used for creating facts is based on a game of sign because whatever we think of materiality it is always embedded in a chain of signs that constitutes its concept. The possibility of subversion offered by Butler does not "mint" the validity of non-binary identity because this is being done, with Derrida's words, by a stroke which is the discourse itself. It has its power just by the sign, if it would not operate with signs, it wouldn't be visible. However, in the space of the current „we“ invisibility means recognisability, i.e. the legibility of the sign. By breaking the power of the current „we“ or „discourse“ the possibility of sexual multiplicity can be afforded, respectively of non-binary identity. But its strike, which would impede the validity of such identity, will only be possible in chaos. Until then, the signs of the non-binary identity will be assigned to the ideal created by the actual „we“, i.e. to the ideal of masculinity, respectively femininity, likewise there will be the effect of phallogocentrism.

Subversion is necessarily political because it requires a refusal of repeating the imposed sign and its replacement by a modified sign in a new context. It can take place only within the discourse because it cannot be left out. Concluding on her approach, I argue that sex/gender/desire depends on the strength of the discourse and on the strength of subversion; their essence is incidental and can be compared to the essence of thrownness, which Derrida describes on the basis of Heidegger's thrownness into being. The spreading of non-binary visibility can further abolish the effects of the discourse, but not the discourse itself. It is the power of the „monster“ which shifts away into a field of impossibility, excludes, respectively pathologizes. Similarly, the expressions of non-binary gender identity are excluded because they are visible and therefore unreadable. Although Derrida is considering the possibilities of a pre-differential state and Butler points out to the possibility of returning back into it, neither of them shows a way how it would be possible to overcome the power of discourse because, in my opinion, the existence outside of the discourse is not possible. Likewise, it is not possible to break the logic of positivity by destruction because we would lose communication and thus ourselves. Thus, logocentrism cannot be done away with, it is only possible to disturb it and let the act of questioning it function further.

**Keywords:**

Non-binary gender, Dasein, Authenticity, Becoming, Body, Heidegger, Derrida, Butler.

## Introduction

Based on the reconsideration of identity and ethical justification of alterity which we have known since Jean-Françoise Lyotard (1984, 74), postmodern authors divert from the concept of the objective world and thereby from values respected by all in society and the fundamentals of sex/gender/ desire. The postmodern change of values was, according to Gilles Lipovetsky (1998, 7), enabled by the permanent revolution of everyday life and a human who strives for being totally themselves. He regards the feminist revolution to be the reason for the end of gender binary and its coded oppositions, on whose foundations can neo-feminism deal with the question of how to be self without dealing with the binary (1998, 98). Derrida would never speak about himself as of a postmodern author, he discarded all forms of „-isms“, he would also reject any connection to feminism. He would distrust terms and meaning as he distrusted all attempts to construct a coherent image of anything that has never existed, including being. He rejected an objectively existing being or nature which can be perceived, because all thought and language systems have no final *logos* as does nature or truth as their foundation. In his understanding, writing precedes the *logos* and creates it. Therefore, identity cannot be reached because it is a set of perceptions which have been designated by writing. Thus, signifying is necessary to be understood as transcendental, as a metaphysical term. Through writing it is possible only to approximate to *logos*. Systems which assume a final *logos* are logocentric and the signified within them is always already in the position of the signifying. By his approach Derrida implants each signified to the state of a

differential trace, where meaning is continually saved. The meaning is received from this reserve by the motion of signification as a trace of a past element (Derrida 1993, 157). The signified is transcendental; it is an ideal construction which does not match with the object as such. The whole work of Derrida is dedicated to the question of how terms by which we all signify a specific thing came to our mind. He doubted the existence of a centre which would have a natural place and thought instead of it as a „non-place“ where signs are being incessantly substituted. Representations are being endlessly chained and their significance cannot be present or absent, they shift continually in contexts and time. Meanings, or unambiguously considered structures of the world, must necessarily be called into question and Derrida considers every meaning to be deferred, which „brings to the frontier zone of Western metaphysics, to the boundaries of the philosophical zone of significance, whose original territory Plato has attempted to mark and form“ (Fišerová 2014, 11). Derrida also considers writing to be treacherous because we only put our thoughts into it. It can be considered as a mere supplement of true thinking that takes place only in our heads. Deferring of meaning is primarily an ethical reason. If he would replace the fixed meaning with another fixed meaning, he would establish a new logocentrism. That's why Derrida encouraged questioning each binary opposition and hierarchisation by the concept<sup>1</sup> of *différance*, respectively by neographism, which is a goal in itself. Just as he refused the opposition of nature and culture in the critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss (Derrida 1967, 101) stating that the nature is indistinguishable from culture; he rejects any contrapositions of a couple and inferiority, which results from the definition of the other by his negation against the former; it is the foundation of his critical text analysis and of seeking for contexts hidden beneath their surface. In particular, throughout his work he emphasized the phallogocentric principle of Western culture, which is placing masculinity in leadership and at the beginning. He considered phallogocentrism to be „a system of metaphysical opposition“ (Derrida 1978, 20), which was written exclusively by men until the 20th century. Heidegger is one of the representatives of phallogocentric inheritance, as was Plato, Freud, Lacan, Kant, Hegel or Lévinas (Spire 2000).

The emergence of differences is not the difference in itself but the happening of differentiation. It is a constant shift in the structure of signifiers, a movement by which each code is historically constituted as an outline of difference (Derrida 1993, 156). Otherness is not understood on the basis of characteristics or substance but on the process of differentiation, which can be understood as an interspace that encompasses both distinct elements so that they are both equal within it but not identical. At the same time, the difference divides and establishes, gives identity to the other but also to the first. *Différance* does neutralise and is neutral, it points to the malfunctioning of the logic of positivity and negativity as it hinders the neutrality of being. It is not possible to demarcate oneself against it in positive terms.

It is necessary to consider the act of defining a man and a woman in similar terms, as it is not possible to define a woman; as it is done by the phallogocentrism, which is based on the order of the Father, the difference and the signifying. The association of logocentrism with the phallus is essential for understanding the perception of Western metaphysics, which is dominated by male superiority. Neutrality is important for Derrida's analysis of sex, and, together with the „ability of active agency“, it is the basis for the concept of performativity introduced by Butler. According to Derrida, each structure has been neutralised by assigning to it a permanent origin, which serves for the orientation and the balancing of totality of each

---

<sup>1</sup> Derrida would never talk about his approach as a concept; even so he denied in discussions that he would establish a new method when he proceeds in a similar way in his texts. It is possible to call it quasi-transcendental (Gasché 1986, 123).

of such structures. Derrida rejects this presumed constancy and in his later works he reflects on the otherness of animals and the plurality of differences among animals. As an example of an animal beyond a sexual difference and sexual duality he uses the silkworm caterpillar. In *A Silkworm of One's Own*, he recalls his childhood in Algeria where he bred indistinguishable silkworm caterpillars „*Before I was thirteen, before ever having worn a talith and even having dreamed of possessing my own, I cultivated (what's the link?) silkworms, the caterpillars*“ (Derrida 1996, 87). Linking tallit as a sign of assignment to a male community and an ambiguous or unidentified gender can be understood as a reference to belonging to a species without any identification sign.<sup>2</sup> He comes back to the silkworm caterpillars parallel in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (1997) where he describes his inspiration to deal with that which is not veiled, i.e. with the nakedness of animals. He thinks about nakedness in terms of pre-differential state, which is then being veiled by the clothes of language and culture. He starts with the analysis of *Genesis* and asks if the creation of Adam, respectively *ha-adam* (the human), preceded the creation of a woman. He comes back to the relationship between animals and women in *The Beast and The Sovereign* (2002) where he thinks about why there are no women on the island of Robinson Crusoe but only men and animals. He considers the femininity of the animal and the masculinity of the ruler as the basis for the articulation of an erotic relationship. According to Derrida, the readers of Robinson return back to their childhood and paradise where the sexual difference did not exist. All this consideration leads to the question of whether it would be possible to avoid the power which veils and assigns and if an erotic relationship would be possible if such an identification sign would be absent.

### **Dasein becomes, so should its gender**

Derrida searches for the prerequisites of the primordial state which is in his opinion the state of the gender difference that existed before the binary opposition. In lectures *Geschlecht I* (1983) and *Geschlecht II* (1987) he analyses old meanings of words in order to open alternative possibilities for the understanding of difference. This deconstruction is not dealing only with text but also with being silent on specific issues and uncovering the intent of the silence. Silent is also the *a* in *différance* which stays hidden. He understands „being silent“ as a necessary non-being which precedes being. Derrida is interested in Heidegger's being silent on the sex or gender of *Dasein* in *Being and Time* from 1927 (Derrida 1983, 65). There, Heidegger declared the essence of the human to be neutral (*das Dasein*) as he deals with the indifference of the average everydayness which is made of repetition without difference. *Dasein* can be interrupted through experience of limits and become authentic (process of individuation<sup>3</sup> as an existential mode) because the neutrality is broken. That means it can be freed from domination and, although Heidegger doesn't thematise the sex or gender of *Dasein*, it is obvious that it can decide to be authentic and that it is dependent on the “they”. According to § 40, *Dasein* can be authentic or not<sup>4</sup> depending on its dealing with anxiety,<sup>5</sup> i.e. it can be itself in its existence or run away from itself (Heidegger 1996b, 185). Becoming authentic and acting authentically means to understand one's nature and act in line with one's

---

<sup>2</sup> The reference to tallit, the Jewish prayer coat, is common for Derrida. It is a reminder of the law of God which cannot be discarded; one is deposited in it even after his death.

<sup>3</sup> This is based on the understanding of the possibility of authentic existence, the focus on the self as a happening (*Geschehen*) and revelation of the lostness in the they-self which means merely actualizing possibilities enabled by the “they”. In § 27, the “they” are characterized as those who present every judgement and decision (Heidegger 1996a, 152).

<sup>4</sup> There is no positive determination of inauthenticity, it is thought by Heidegger as a negation to authenticity.

<sup>5</sup> Anxiety about being-in-the-world is a mood which enables one's distinguishing from the “they”, self-awareness and its experience causes authenticity. Its origin is the finity of life.

nature as being-in-the-truth. This leads to two questions: Could this authenticity be perceived in relation with gender? And, how does the deliberate decision to act authentically relates to others and the fall back into the “they”? In §26, Heidegger focuses on „being-with“ in the world as *Dasein* is always with others and never alone<sup>6</sup>, and refers to the essential assignment or reference to those, for whom it should be „cut to the figure“ (*auf den „Leib zugeschnitten“ sein*) (Heidegger 1996b, 143). Here arises the question if this with-one-another could be interpreted as a precondition of being gendered and whether this „cut to the figure“ means a necessity to understand *Dasein* through its body? Heidegger avoids giving answers and provides some comments on the choice to refer to the „neutrality“ of *Dasein* in his later lectures. In 1928, in the last lecture at the University of Marburg entitled *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, he concludes in §10, point 2 that “*the peculiar neutrality of the term “Dasein” is essential, because the interpretation of this being must be carried out prior to every factical realization. This neutrality indicates that Dasein is neither of the two sexes,*” and in point 4 that “*neutral Dasein is never what exists; Dasein exists in each case only in its factical realization*” (Heidegger 1984, 136-137). On the other hand, in 1928/29 Freiburg lectures *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy* in which he states: “*However, it belongs to the essence of this neutral being that, insofar as it exists factically, it has necessarily broken its neutrality, that is, Dasein is either masculine or feminine; it is a sexual creature (Geschlechtswesen)*” (Heidegger 1996b, 146).

*Dasein* („being there“ as in German „*da*“ stands for „there and „*sein*“ for „being“) is a finite being (existence) which is realized in human<sup>7</sup> (contrary to *Sein* may also pertain to a thing) in a world where others exist, i.e. it is open towards the world and other existences. According to François-David Sebbah, *Dasein* is a destruction of the subject as a base and self-presence (Sebbah, 369) because it doesn't dispose of „I“ and can be itself only if it is out of itself. Thus, Heidegger acts phenomenologically beyond an objectivizing differentiation of dividing a body and soul from the given primordial unity. He considers the structure of being to be characterized by thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) into the world, which is its mode and possibility. It is not physically present in the form of a body; it is a dynamic way of being which is responsible for understanding the world and ourselves. It seems to be never fully present to itself. Its primordial ontological base is timeness which stands for movement, sense and is simultaneously a limit.

### **The (material) body interchanges with the world.**

If *Dasein* disposes of no body, then it is questionable if one can think of its sex, gender and sexuality. This is not an obstacle, however, either for Heidegger or Derrida to deal with the question of *Dasein's* sex. In *Being and Time* the phenomenon of body is no issue<sup>8</sup> for Heidegger, which was criticized by Jean-Paul Sartre (1978, 429) or Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Aho 2005, 42), who consider the perception of the body as primary for the contact of a human with his world. For Merleau-Ponty, body is a cultural object. In his Heraclitus Seminar Heidegger himself recognized that the problem of the body is the „*most difficult*“ one (Heidegger 1993, 146). In the Zollikon Seminars (Heidegger, 2001), which took place thirty

---

<sup>6</sup> „Being-alone“ means only a lack of the others and is possible only as a opposite to „being-with“ which is default.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger doesn't speak directly about a human, only in quotation marks which is a prerequisite for challenging being from the very beginning and thus his initial experience (Johannßen 2017, 97). The problem then arises automatically with grasping its corporeality and later differentiating the body into a lived and material one.

<sup>8</sup> He only speaks about the space which *Dasein* fills up: „*Dasein takes space in; this is to be understood literally. It is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of space which its body fills up*“ (Heidegger 1996a, 368).

three years after *Being and Time* was published, Heidegger reacts to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's critique, despite not mentioning the latter by name. Just like Husserl, Heidegger distinguishes the unlimited lived body (*Leib*) which is a medium of all experience from the material body (*Körper*) which is a material anatomic object. For Heidegger, the material body stands for a way of existence in the world, and the lived body is a communication organ which determines itself actively towards the world in the interconnection with others. Both, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty argue that the lived body is the openness towards the world. In my opinion, if *Dasein* exists, then it is necessarily in the world and must dispose of a bodily form which reflects its otherness as a material body and thus, the question of sex and gender is a relevant one. In my opinion, the only remaining explanation would be that Heidegger would not think about *Dasein* as a factual at all, which is not the case. *Dasein* itself is exposed to effects which create categories of gender. Heidegger considers *Dasein* as a unit composed of two parts, *Da-sein as being there*, in which *Da* (there) holds a lived body. *Da* existed even before and includes norms which create categories of sex and gender. Thus, *Dasein* contains in itself history, presence and future, and in my opinion, it must necessarily be dependent on social practices, institutions and language. Even social practices do limit the possibilities of the lived body and affect directly the material body, inter alia when interpreting and representing sex, gender or sexuality. Thus, *Dasein* should be becoming also in regard to its gender just like the subject in Butler's understanding as a performative materialization of its social environment.

In Derrida's view, for Heidegger the sex difference stands for an existential structure of *Dasein* which would mean that it would influence the significance of existence (Derrida 1983, 70). In *Geschlecht I*, Derrida concludes that the neutrality of sex does not use ontological negativity in relation to sex but to sexual duality. According to him neutral *Dasein* is not sexless, only its sexual binarity is neutralized. Binarity includes a positive and a negative pole, at the same time it is a determination which is negated and which determines. While the sexual duality is being removed, the sex itself is being released. By sex he means the sign belonging to one of two sexes. This release or liberation opens new possibilities for signs of sex beyond duality. However, it is not pre-dual because there is no duality. Subsequently Derrida thinks of sex as pre-differential, which does not mean that it is necessarily undivided, homogeneous or undifferentiated. Such determination of sex can be perceived as a positive potential for non-binary identity, the possibility for gender multiplicity and the possibility to denominate oneself to whichever gender. According to Derrida, this multiplicity is enabled by both thrownness (into existence) and the dispersed structure (the dispersion of *Dasein*), the combination of which creates a space for differences without oppositions. *Dasein* is not born but is thrown into a space already dominated by the male element, which multiplies by seeding.<sup>9</sup> Pre-differential multiplicity is originary dissemination and exactly the thrownness has this originary attribute and enables it. But Heidegger speaks about not assigning *Dasein* to any of both sexes and Derrida understands this neutralisation as an effect of negativity which results from the binary difference of sex. From his point of view, neutralisation is an act of violence which is preceded by the intention to reduce the differentiation of sexes to just one sex – the masculine – and as such it is an instrument of phallogocentrism. In its neutrality *Dasein* is an originating positivity and has the power over existence. When *Dasein* is thrown into the originary dissemination, it should find itself in a space without oppositions, where it would have a positive potential for sexual multiplicity. But dissemination is allowed only to

---

<sup>9</sup> By spreading, dispersion or dissemination refers Derrida to the process of spreading of (male) element (semen) and to a state of what is dispersed, i.e. at the same to a signifying and sign („séminalisation“ and „sém“). In *Dissemination* (Derrida 1981, 45), he points out at the non-reducible and generative multiplicity of dissemination.

the masculine element just as the language is enabled by dissemination, which perpetually produces oppositions.

### **The validity of belonging**

In *Geschlecht II* Derrida tackles the relation of a lived body (Leib) and sexual difference. He deconstructs the origin of the German term *Geschlecht* which stands for “*stock, race, family, species, genus/gender, generation, sex*” (Derrida 1987, 183). *Geschlecht* is a series of his lectures on philosophical belonging and nationalism<sup>10</sup> which unveil 'strokes' (*Schlag* in German as a root word for *Geschlecht*) that bring about signification. Similarly, as a 'stroke imprints validity', for example when minting the coin, the formation of gender should be understood as striking imprinting, respectively as signification rather than as a construction or production. Also in this case it is a violent act which is exercised from the outside on the surface, which is reconciliatory in its beginning: „*The primordial sexual difference is tender, gentle, peaceful; when that difference is struck down by a “curse” (Fluch', a original word of Trakl used and interpreted by Heidegger), the duality or the duplicity of these two becomes unleashed or even a bestial opposition.*“ (Derrida 1987, 193). Then, what is this that makes sexual difference, understood as sexual diversity, a sexual opposition? What is for Derrida this „curse“ which strikes *Geschlecht* and breaks it into oppositions? Is it the Christian-Platonic morality with its metaphysics which Nietzsche began to break down? Will originary dissemination ensure the liberation from this morality, and thus enable sexual multiplicity? Or will the stroke still imprint the validity; but a shift will occur which that will broaden the space for the sexual multiplicity? Or will such liberation just bring repetition of what was already the content of *Da* and will such multiplicity be dependent on the stroke which strikes the validity? Derrida stimulates to ask such questions but he doesn't give answers. He concludes *Geschlecht I* with the question if dispersion and multiplication give the possibility to think about the sexual difference without negativity, not stroked by duality. He answers that a shift is possible when the opposition would be decomposition. In my opinion, this can be understood as a conscious rejection of the „curse“, disassembling of its structure and interchange of order and chaos only in which the sexual multiplicity is possible. Thus, it is essential to understand the order of the „curse“ and the overcoming of anxiety which *Dasein* suffers from. Derrida concludes *Geschlecht II* with a reference to Heidegger's assumption that there is one single space for metaphysics and Christianity and asks if there is such a space. Again, he leaves this question open before *chute* (downfall in French), by which he denominates the end of text, but at the same time he refers to the possibility of replacing *chute* with *envoi* (send out in French). Such a recommendation is certainly not accidental and I argue that *envoi* can be understood as Heidegger's term *Geschick* (fate, i.e. something that goes beyond what happens), which binds everyone to the primary experience of the community, on the antecedent heritage. The fate of being is „sent out“ as determined (Derrida 1982, 1). It is itself historical. For Heidegger, being is the fate of thinking. For Derrida downfall would be equal to fate. Coming out from his conviction that sign is a premonition of downfall, then fate consists in the sign and it is possible to change it only through a sign. The transition of the presence of the signified to its representation in the signifying is a downfall from the imaginary to the perceptible, and the imaginary has a greater value got by the „curse“ than the perceptible. If signs are repeated, this repetition must be disrupted to put this value straight.

In *Geschlecht II* Derrida explains how the polysemic *Geschlecht* links the belonging with the current „we“; it is not „*determined by birth, native soil, or race, has nothing to do with the*

---

<sup>10</sup> *Geschlecht III* (only as an unfinished handwriting) reacts on Heidegger's 1953 essay *Language in the Poem: A Placement of Georg Trakl's Poem*.

*natural or even the linguistic (...)*“ (Derrida 1987, 162). This „we“ is a „monster“, in the sense of sign which points at (*monter* in French) and warns (*la monstre*).<sup>11</sup> At the same time *la monstre* stands in French for changing of gender and *une montre* is a watch. i.e. one time. „We“ authorizes the current *Geschlecht* by pointing at it and signifying. Derrida considers „monster“ to be a power structure in specific time and also Heidegger's hand which points at and assigns (Derrida 1987, 187).<sup>12</sup> It is a hand which humans use to write signs by signature, i.e. assigns signs and thus it is itself a monstrous sign as its gestures run through language by also being silent. Indirectly, in *Geschlecht II*, Derrida deals with the instrumentalization and politicization of the body, in the sense of the material body (*Körper*) which is responsible for the manifestation of word in the handwriting (*Handschrift*) and handiwork (*Handwerk*) which is at the same time thinking and product of the hand, i.e. the physical sign of a thought and humankind (*Geschlecht*). In the view of Derrida, the hand only fulfils its essence in the movement of truth, „in the double movement of what hides and causes to go out of its reserve“ (Derrida 1987, 178), while only being alone which disposes of language can dispose of hand. Derrida doesn't speak in this context about sex or gender. However, in my opinion, this is where Heidegger's, Derrida's and Butler's arguments clash - in the interlinkage of thinking, acting and signifying hand of a politicized material body.

*Da*, i.e. here, comprehended the „monstre“ which creates categories of sex/gender. Actually, *Dasein* is a happening, on which basis one understands the world around and himself. Heidegger doesn't give to *Dasein* a material body but the lived body is for him difficult to grasp, he speaks about the phenomena of lived body as the most difficult one and mentions it only on few lines of *Being and time*. It is not clear for me if he takes into account the impact of the „monster“ in the form of the material body which he understands just as a box. However, this box has the „monste“ effect, which strikes the validity and assigns. Derrida breaks the „monstre“ to liberate the women und opened hereby the possibility for emergence of sexual/gender multiplicity. By the disrupting of the binary opposition, i.e. defining a man against a woman, the man loses the control over the limit which defines his identity. The woman ceases to be the opposite of man, and so man is unable to assert the uniqueness of „his“ gender. By the opening of the space for the overwriting of the sexual difference from the traditional metaphysical determination, Derrida gives the possibility for genders at which cannot be pointed or assigned and which exceed the language. The man loses by the disruption of the Binary opposition the control over the preservation of the symbolic order whose language does signify the gender and sexuality. In my opinion, here is the space for doing one's own gender in such an uncontrolled environment and also to assign to one's own body arbitrary signs which will in such an environment be received without any regard to sex because of the existing multiplicity in this space. But can they exist if it is not possible to point them out and when they exceed the language? According to Butler, Jacques Lacan also considers both the possibility to gain, accept or take over gender, and symbolic positions. He understands the constitution of I as a psychological work of fiction, which originates within the limits of the symbolical order that legitimizes gender-differentiated fiction mediated by language (Butler 1993, 96). In the tradition of both, Derrida and Lacan, Butler continues in the performance which enables the sexual multiplicity.

---

<sup>11</sup> Etymologically, the verb *monstrare* in Latin relates to medieval spirituality and means to show or demonstrate the numinous which was believed to be the origin of everything. A monstrance stands in the Roman Catholic church, Old Catholic and Anglican churches for a vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

<sup>12</sup> Acting (*handeln* in German) is thinking and thinking is a part of the way how body functions. The hand thinks before it is thought and therefor is for Heidegger thinking itself: “The hand designs and signs, presumably because man is a sign” (Heidegger 1976, 16).



### Political subversion at the surface of the body

Butler uses Derrida's opened space for sexual multiplicity and takes over his instruments of decomposition, repetition and citation. She understands the gender binary as a fiction which has a regulative function confirming the heterosexual coherency. Such an approach can put aside the biological sex and think instead of a socially determined gender which sex takes over in the framework of a specific culture and it realizes itself through performance. The subject constantly reacts to the „monstre“ by repeating it and confirming ideals of sex/gender/desire. It relates to them through its behaviour in order to get into a concordance accepted by the „monster“. Otherwise the power of „monster“ would move them into a space of impossibility, pathologizing the subject. That means that the materiality of sex originates violently and functions as a ritual. Such a performativity<sup>13</sup> is based on playing with signs which is taking place at the surface of the body because everything which is claimed about materiality is always embedded in a chain of signification which make a concept out of it: „to return to matter requires that we return to matter as a sign which in it redoublings and contradictions enacts an inchoate drama of sexual difference“ (Butler 1993, 49). With regard to the non-existence of being which wouldn't be social, there cannot be any body which could exist before a cultural signification and thus each body wrestles with the problem of assignment to a sex, gender and sexuality. Such wrestling leads to „doing“ gender which the „monstre“, i.e. in her conception discourse requires what is appropriate for the order and readable for the others. It comes to a dissimulation which reacts to the current here, respectively *Da* as for the concept of *Dasein*. The sexual and gender identity is being performatively oversigned and this re-citation constitutes the fundamental for the existence of the subject in the order of „monster“, and thus also the possibility to convert this order against itself. This subversion is necessarily political because it requires a refusal of repeating of the imposed sign and its replacement by a modified sign in a new context. Such an imitation removes the meaning of the „original“, which doesn't exist though, and thus it is an imitation of a myth of an original. Subversion can take place only within the discourse because this cannot be left. Therefore, it depends only on the stability and strength of the symbolic and the power by which it is possible through a political reaction to restrict its strength. Butler argues that a sign produces modes of its own violation and can become an imperative and thus a cultural sign which the imperative becomes readable. Concluding her approach, I argue that sex/gender/desire depends on the strength of the discourse and on the strength of subversion; their essence is incidental and can be compared to the essence of thrownness which Derrida describes on the basis of Heidegger's thrownness into being.

Both Derrida and Butler consider the conscious rejection of the „curse“ as a precondition for enabling non-binary. In the situation as described by Derrida as 'silkworm caterpillar', it is possible to work through with a political rejection and modification of signs through which the „monstre“ constructs artificially ideals of sex/gender/desire. This will disrupt the readability, the distinguishability of sign and will discontinue the effect of the order. The perceptible gains greater value than the imaginary, and the „curse“ will be cancelled. The new conditions for such a political act loosens the originally acknowledged values, and postmodernity has become an appropriate time to articulate such an approach. Such subversion is, for example, *gender blending* which involves mixing of signs on one body, or the disjunction of looks and behaviour. Although the „monster“ allows the subject to be beside the ideal, it will still try to assign it to the ideal. It remains problematic that the subversion of a subject itself doesn't strike the validity which is caused by the stroke which is

---

<sup>13</sup> i.e. the ability of discourse to create phenomena, including the creation of a notion of what is beside performance.

the „monster“ itself, i.e. the current „we“, respectively individual discourses. To reach the goal of subversion, a subject can approach in subcultures in which a certain disruption of the order has been caused but also here it is just a mere shift of the ideal which has to be validated and not its cancellation; respectively a discontinuation of the „curse“ within this subculture. Butler demonstrates this in the example of homosexual communities in which there is a continuous differentiation of masculine and feminine individuals. Thus, is the abolishment of the „curse“ and a return to the pre-differential state possible?

Although Derrida encourages the decomposition, he doesn't speak in its context about chaos which in my opinion would necessarily occur if the „curse“ would be discontinued. I assume that chaos is such a situation in which signs don't underlie any hierarchy and therefore, it is not possible to assign them. In such a chaos, the sign ceases to exist and there is an end of the language. However, such chaos would not be possible in a society and would isolate the subject on a desert island. But as Fišerová points out, it is Derrida's strategy: „*Derrida doesn't want to get out of metaphysics: Just when he reveals the metaphysical patterns of thinking in the analyzed texts, he leaves them exposed to function further because he realizes that every critique of metaphysics uses metaphysical terms whereby he keeps the movement of his thoughts in a vicious circle*“ (Fišerová 2014, 20). He overturns the hierarchy of metaphysical binary opposition and casts doubt on the „natural“ supremacy, he opens up new possibilities for signs beyond the duality of the sex but he ends up with this proposal because he knows that it is a vicious circle.<sup>14</sup> Butler paves the way from this vicious circle through a political activity which would necessarily have to encompass the whole „us“ to reach the goal. Derrida doesn't have such an ambition; his policy of deconstruction aims to think differently, to thematize, to draw attention and remains coming. Butler follows Derrida's approach but moves it to where Derrida himself wouldn't go. I am of the opinion that the pre-differential gender is an ideal as well as the „monster“ repeated and confirmed by the ideals of sex/gender/desire.

## Conclusion

In my view, the limit of such an ideal dwells in the current „we“, in the „monster“ which keeps the „curse“ alive. Heidegger says in this context that *“Dasein's everyday possibilities of Being are for the Others to dispose of as they please. (...) What is decisive is just that inconspicuous domination by Others which has already been taken over unaware of Dasein as Being-with. One belongs to the Others oneself and enhances their power”* (Heidegger 1996a, 152). He might be thinking about the problem of the current “we” also when thinking about the genderized being (*Geschlechtlichkeit*) and its relation to “they”. The same applies to love which is not mentioned in *Being and Time*, maybe because he would be pressed into constitution of self through a “you”, including the question of sex. Therefore I deduce that these aspects necessarily relating to *Dasein* and necessarily to a body have been avoided by Heidegger for his own purpose. “We” is dependent on thrownness into being and thus on place which one couldn't choose and thus must learn to exist in as a part of the process of individuation. Heidegger's approach which is based on becoming as the existence is a possibility of being and a possibility to be authentic could have been a suitable precondition for non-binary gender or trans-gender if Heidegger would not think in a binary way about sex or gender of *Dasein*. In authenticity, *Dasein* would be not limited by the domination of the “they” and would allow becoming of an existence in-between. Such a precondition would also find backing in Heidegger's assumption that the authenticity can be lost which causes a fall

---

<sup>14</sup> His approach is purely ethical, not political, and not intended for application.

back into inauthenticity in which *Dasein* dissolves in the everydayness of the “they”, i.e. the domination of norms causing a fall back onto the limits of binary gender in the case of trans-gender inauthenticity.<sup>15</sup> It is obvious that Heidegger was thinking about the aspect of gender and the relation of *Dasein* and body for a long time as he developed his thoughts on the *Geschlechtswesen* two years after *Being and Time* in *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*. It might be the current “we” which kept him back from the reflections on authentic gender. Probably such a step would have been controversial in the first half of the 20th century. However, it makes Heidegger's attempt to go beyond binary questionable. Such a step is in the second half of 20th century already possible after the accelerating of the process of individuation by societal change, feminism and LGBT+ movement. However, for Butler the relevant example of gendering is limited to drag and homosexual communities. Performativity and subversion enable the effect of authenticity by continuous citing but they will not cause the validity if norms of the “they” are not cited. Subversion has its power just by the sign, if it would not operate with signs, it wouldn't be visible. However, invisibility means in the space of the current „we“ recognisability, i.e. the legibility of the sign. In my opinion, the possibility of sexual multiplicity, respectively of non-binary identity, can be afforded by breaking the power of the current „we“ or „discourse“ but its strike, which would impede the validity of such identity, will only be possible in chaos. Until then, the signs of the non-binary identity will be assigned to the ideal created by the actual „we“, i.e. to the ideal of masculinity, and respectively femininity, likewise there will be the effect of phallogocentrism. However, there is no single discourse but several discourses. Derrida states in one of his last lectures that „*between my world, the “my world,” what I call “my world,” and there is no other for me, every other world making up part of it, between my world and every other world, there is initially the space and the time of an infinite difference, of an interruption incommensurable with all the attempts at passage, of bridge, isthmus, communication, translation, trope, and transfer that the desire for a world and the sickness of the world [mal du monde], the being in sickness of the world [l'être en mal de monde] will attempt to pose, to impose, to propose, to stabilize. There is no world, there are only islands*“ (Derrida 2011, 31). Thus, everyone's gender can be understood as unique, separated by space and time of endless difference, which makes out of it necessarily a social and political construct. Returning to the silkworm caterpillar which is wrapped in fibre when curled, Derrida compares it to a person who is wrapping himself from the pre-differential state with the fibre of the language and weaves from it a substance of „truth“. He comes to this statement by considering *ver* (caterpillar in French) and *verité* (truth in French). Sex difference is, from this point of view, a means of preventing *shatnez*, mixed wool and linen, which *halacha*, Jewish religious law, forbids wearing.<sup>16</sup> The one who violates this rule by his actions is “*naluz*“ (perverse in Hebrew) and „*turns God against himself*“ (Sifra Kedoshim 2:4). *Shatnez* is *chok* (order in Hebrew)<sup>17</sup> which the King pointed out to his people and the commentators of the Talmud agree that there is no rational explanation for its origins.<sup>18</sup> It is a „monster“, it shifts away into a field of impossibility, excludes, respectively pathologizes.

---

<sup>15</sup> Forgetting of the self, i.e. resigning on authentic gender for a specific period of time as a result of the societal pressure is common characteristic feature of trans-gender people.

<sup>16</sup> Permitted is to wear wool and linen cloth but never mixed cloth (Leviticus 19:19 a Deuteronomy 22:9–11). *Kilayim*, (mixture, clutter, heterogeneity in Hebrew) is a general ban on mixing species.

<sup>17</sup> Derived from *chakak*, „engrave“ in Hebrew, is meant as to engrave the law into stone as it was customary. Simultaneously, *chok* means also „border“ in the sense of a limit. Unlike other commands (*mitzvah*) that have reasonably justifiable reason (e.g. do not kill because someone dies), the absence of rational explanation should be an impulse for developing a relationship with God.

<sup>18</sup> One of the many interpretations is that God has created different species to live in accordance with their creation, and our task is to respect his purpose and to maintain the established order.

Similarly, the expressions of non-binary gender identity are excluded because they are visible and therefore unreadable. Although Derrida is considering the possibilities of a pre-differential state and Butler points out the possibility of returning back into it, neither of them shows a way how it would be possible to overcome the power of discourse because, in my opinion, the existence outside the discourse is not possible. Likewise, it is not possible to break the logic of positivity by destruction because we would lose communication and thus ourselves. Thus, logocentrism cannot be discarded, it is only possible to disturb it and leave it questioned to continue to function further. Deconstruction does not offer a way out but allows realizing the risks from inside. Non-binary gender identity must necessarily remain under the "curse" of discourse which despite the effects of subversion will perform its power questioned further.

## References:

- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Cave, S., Klein, S. (2015). *Once and Future Sins*. Available at <https://aeon.co/essays/what-will-our-descendants-judge-as-our-greatest-sin>
- Derrida, J. (1979). *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Dissemination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1982). Sending: On Representation. In *Social Research*, 49 (2), 294-326.
- Derrida, J. (1983). Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference. In *Research in Phenomenology*, 13 (1), 65-83.
- Derrida, J. (1987). Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand. In J. Sallis, *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 161-96.
- Derrida, J. (1993). Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (Geschlecht IV), In J. Sallis, *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations, Studies in Continental Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1993). *Texty k dekonstrukci, práce z let 1967-72*. Bratislava: Archa.
- Derrida, J. (1996). A Silkworm of One's Own. In *The Oxford Literary Review*, 18, 3-63.
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Ostrohy. Štýly Nietzscheho*. Bratislava: Archa.
- Derrida, J. (1991). At This Very Moment In This Work Here I Am. In R. Bernasconi, *Re-reading Levinas*. London: Athlone.
- Derrida, J., Wills, D. (2002). The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow). In *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2), 369-418.
- Derrida, J. (2011). *The Beast and the Sovereign (Volume II)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fišerová, M. (2014). Odložený význam. Derrida o sémantickej konštrukcii a deštrukcii. In *Filozofia* 69 (1), 11-21.
- Heidegger, M. (1976). *What is called thinking?* New York: HarperCollins.
- Heidegger, M. (1984). *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1993). *Heraclitus seminar*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1996a). *Bytí a čas*. Praha: OIKOYMENH.

Heidegger, M. (1996b). *Einleitung in die Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Lipovetsky, G. (2008). *Éra prázdnoty: úvahy o současném individualismu*. Praha: Střed (Prostor).

Sebbah, F-D. (2007). Subjektivita v súčasnej francúzskej fenomenológii. In *Filozofia*, 62 (5), 365-377.

Spire, A. (2000). Jacques Derrida: „Autrui est secret parce qu'il est autre“. In *Le Monde de l'éducation*, 284, 14-21.

## Belief in a Just World and Coping with Injustice in Intimate Relationships

Rovenská Denisa, Department of Social Studies, Faculty of Public Administration, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, [denisa.rovenska@upjs.sk](mailto:denisa.rovenska@upjs.sk)

Daduláková Lenka, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, [dadulakova.lenka@gmail.com](mailto:dadulakova.lenka@gmail.com)

**ROVENSKÁ, Denisa – DADUĽÁKOVÁ, Lenka. Belief in a Just World and Coping with Injustice in Intimate Relationships. Človek a spoločnosť, 2018, roč. 21, č. 3, s. 39-49.**

### Abstract:

**Aim:** According to the just world hypothesis, people want to and have to believe they live in a just world so that they can go about their daily lives with a sense of trust, hope, and confidence in their future (Lerner, 1980). Justice can be seen as a key issue in intimate relationships. People want to be treated justly and consider justice to be one of the most important attributes of a good intimate relationship. Social justice research has shown that people respond with negative attitudes and behaviors when they perceive unjust treatment or situations. However, belief in a just world is associated with a positive coping style (Dalbert & Filke, 2007).

The aim of this contribution is to examine the level of the belief in a just world (personal and general), find out which strategy is most used when people cope with injustice in intimate relationships, and analyze the relation between the belief in a just world and particular coping strategies.

**Method:** 117 respondents (66 women and 51 men) with an average age of 21.60 years ( $SD = 1.54$ ) answered the questions measuring coping strategies in the *Coping with Injustice in Intimate Relationships Questionnaire* (Dotazník zvládania nespravodlivosti v partnerskom vzťahu, Rovenská & Lovaš, 2017) and belief in a just world in the *General Belief in a Just World Scale* and *Personal Belief in a Just World Scale* (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987). The sample included heterosexual, childfree relationships. The average length of relationship was 28.00 months ( $SD = 19.88$ ). Participation was voluntary, and all participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines.

**Results:** The results showed significant differences in belief in a just world ( $t_{(116)} = 4.07$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Respondents had a stronger personal belief in a just world than general belief in a just world ( $M_{(GBJW)} = 3.96$ ;  $SD = .85$ ),  $M_{(PBJW)} = 3.08$ ;  $SD = .84$ ). Furthermore, cooperation was the most common strategy used to cope with injustice in romantic relationships ( $M = 4.61$ ;  $SD = .85$ ). There was no significant relationship between belief in a just world and coping with injustice.

**Conclusion:** The paper dealt with the concept of belief in a just world and coping with injustice in intimate relationships. The paper defined the character of the belief in a just world and clarified that personal BJW is more significant for individuals than general BJW. The present paper also showed that cooperation was the most used coping strategy through dealing with injustice in intimate relationships. The main aim of the contribution was to analyse the relationship between the belief in a just world and selected coping strategies used in unjust situations. The results showed there was no significant relationship between the belief in a just world and coping strategies. Our findings are inconsistent with the Montada and Lerner study (1998), in which the belief in a just world was associated with constructive coping strategies. The reason for inconsistent results can be found in the nature of the belief in a just world. Dzuka and Dalbert (2000) point out that the belief in a just world could be a positive and healthy coping strategy in itself. The belief in a just world is a stabilizing force that helps one deal with daily hassles (Dalbert, 1998). The belief in a just world could be found as a major coping strategy

(Fuhrman, 2003) or as a personal coping resource influencing the coping process in different ways and protect victims from ruminating (Dalbert, 1998).

**Key words:**

Justice. Belief in a just world. Coping with injustice in intimate relationships.

## Introduction

If we believe the world is a just place, we also believe that everyone gets everything that they deserve from their own deeds. According to Hellman et al. (2008) the belief in a just world is an argument representing the world as a just place where a person gets what they deserve and deserve as much as they give to the world. Every human act results in a foreseeable consequence.

Lerner (1980) hypothesized about the functions of the belief in a just world in his book „*The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*“ and suggested that people have a need to believe that the environment is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve.

Lerner (1980) proposed that individuals need to believe in a just world to deal with witnessed or experienced injustice, helplessness, and insecurity. The just world theory assumes that people want to believe that they live in a world where good things happen to good people and bad things only to bad ones. This belief is essential for people to feel safe and to perceive the world as a predictable and manageable place (Lerner, 1980).

Accordingly, Hafer (2002) argues that individuals have an implicit need to believe that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people, which implies that justice is framed in terms of deservingness. Moreover, he proposes that the function of belief in a just world is to allow one to invest in long-term goals and to do so according to society's rules of deservingness (Hafer, 2002).

The belief in a just world seems to provide psychological buffers against the harsh realities of the world, as well as personal control over one's own destiny. People feel less personally vulnerable and have a lower perception of risk because they believe they have done nothing to deserve negative outcomes. Furthermore, the developmental and life-span literature suggests that belief in a just world is fairly stable across one's life-span (Furnham, 2003). The belief in a just world is often seen as a personality trait with dispositional variations (Furnham, 2003; Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Sutton, 2016). The research also suggests that males and females do not meaningfully differ in their belief in a just world (Durm & Stowers, 1998; O'Connor et al., 1996).

As it was stated, Lerner (1980) refers to the belief in a just world as a fundamental delusion. A "fundamental" belief in the sense that it is essential for most people to maintain their sense of sanity and security and a "delusion" in the sense that the world is not always just and orderly.

Lipkus, Dalbert and Siegler (1996) suggest that it is necessary to distinguish the belief in a personal just world from the belief in a general just world. The general belief in a just world leads individual to believe that people generally live in a just world, while the personal belief in a just world concerns whether they are personally fairly treated (Dalbert, 1999).

The personal belief in a just world is more important than the general belief in a just world (Dalbert, 2009). However, it is also hypothesized that the personal and the general belief in a just world are primitive beliefs and their importance is lost in adulthood (Wu et al., 2011).



According to Oppenheimer (2006), the general belief in a just world would lose its importance much earlier and to a greater extent than the personal belief in a just world, and would be replaced by more sophisticated forms of reasoning and justification that allow individuals to manage an unjust world.

These distinguishing patterns between personal belief in a just world and general belief in a just world led Bègue and Bastounis (2003) to propose that they could be considered distinct spheres of the belief in a just world, although somewhat correlated. Many authors stress the importance of distinguishing the personal and the general belief in a just world because individuals' scores are systematically higher for the personal than for the general belief in a just world (Dalbert, 1999; Lipkus et al., 1996; Wenzel, Schindler, & Reinhard, 2017). An adequate explanation could be found in the idea that the endorsement of the personal rather than the general belief in a just world is more fundamental for the individual's well-being (Lipkus et al., 1996), interpersonal trust (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003) or prosocial behavior (Bègue, 2014).

Moreover, social psychologists have argued that the belief in a just world is a powerful personal resource influencing the coping process in different ways (Hafer & Sutton, 2016; Dalbert, 1998, 2001; Rubin & Peplau, 1975). It was concluded that the belief in a just world can affect an array of stress-related processes over the long term, including buffering emotional stress, protecting physical health, and improving achievement motivation. The belief in a just world is therefore considered an important healthy factor in moderating the experience of challenge and threat in potentially stressful situations (Furnham, 2003).

The belief in a just world plays an important role in the process of coping with injustice. Several studies have highlighted the fact that individuals who believe in a just world cope effectively with stressful situations such as a partner's unfairness (Dalbert, 1993; Lerner & Somers, 1992).

The importance of the belief in a just world can vary among people. As Rubin and Peplau (1975) state; the higher the belief in a just world is, the more the reactions to different life events are motivated by justice. The research has identified several coping strategies in the context of injustice. In particular, it is possible to mention strategies as rationalizing, helping victims of injustice or blaming the victim for their own suffering (Hafer & Gosse, 2011).

Nevertheless, coping strategies that people use when they have been harmed by a loved one may be more specific because these strategies describe coping in the frame of interaction (the synergistic nature of coping). Rusbult (1993) considers that coping strategies used in unjust situations are defined by two fundamental dimensions: (1) constructive / destructive and (2) active / passive. Constructive strategies are associated with an open mind; conflict parties provide each other with space for emotional expression, clarifying their thoughts, and showing an effort to bring the conflict to a solution that is more or less acceptable to both parties (e.g. expressing opinions or loyalty). On the other hand, destructive strategies are often accompanied by higher intensity of aggressive and/or explosive reactions (e.g. ignorance, avoidance). The destructive strategies end up unfavorably for one party or for both of them.

Lipkus & Bissonnette (1998) looked at the relationship between the belief in a just world and coping strategies used by couples (married and dating) in the conflict situations. The authors tried to find out how people in intimate relationships deal with conflict; specifically the willingness to accommodate which is the more constructive response to a partner's negative (unjust) behavior. They hypothesized that individuals with higher belief in a just world would be more likely to perceive their partner as acting in a manner consistent with themes of deservingness and therefore expect that their own accommodation will be reciprocated for the long-term well-being of the relationship. The results found support for the authors' thesis

suspecting that both the stage of the relationship and the established and “routinized” methods of handling conflict might suppress the effects of the belief in a just world.

The relationship between the belief in a just world and coping with injustice shows that individuals with a high belief in a just world are more willing to adapt and therefore use constructive strategies (Montada & Lerner, 1998). Furthermore, the authors point out that individuals who have a higher belief in a just world, trust their partner more, are more open-minded through coping with an unfair situation, and consider their partner as more flexible. Individuals who believe in a just world are more willing to use constructive strategies if their partner's behavior is unfair (Montada & Lerner, 1998).

The aim of the study is examine the level of the belief in a just world (personal and general), find out which strategy is most used when people cope with injustice in intimate relationship and analyze the relation between the belief in a just world and particular coping strategies.

## Method

### Participants

The sample consisted of 117 participants (51 men and 66 women). Participants aged from 19 to 25 years ( $M = 21.60$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ). Regarding gender, women were 22.00 years old ( $SD = 1.63$ ), men were 21.30 years old ( $SD = 1.40$ ). There were 115 respondents cohabiting with a partner, while 2 respondents were married. 17 participants shared the same household with a partner and 100 participants lived in separate households. The sample included heterosexual, childfree relationships. The average length of relationship was 28.00 months ( $SD = 19.88$ ). Participation was voluntary, and all participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines.

### Measurements

Demographic questionnaire – the questionnaire included questions which ascertain age, gender, length and type of relationship, number of children and type of household .

General Belief In A Just World Scale and Personal Belief In A Just World Scale (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987; slovak version Džuka, 2001) - General Belief In A Just World Scale consists of 6 items (“*I think basically the world is a just place*”). Personal Belief In A Just World Scale was measured with 7 items (“*I am usually treated fairly*”). The items are formulated as statements and are measured on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly agree, 6 = strongly disagree). A higher score indicates a lower belief in a just world. Cronbach’s alpha values were: (a) general belief in a just world .58 and (b) personal belief in a just world .81.

Coping with Injustice in Intimate Relationships Questionnaire (Dotazník zvládania nespravodlivosti v partnerskom vzťahu, Rovenská & Lovaš, 2017) – the self-report instrument is designed to measure coping strategies used in unjust situations in intimate relationships. The instrument includes 5 dimensions: (a) cooperation, (b) assertivity, (c) revenge, (d) instrumental support and (e) nonchalance. 38 items are formulated as the statements and the response options are delivered on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (to a small extent) to 6 (to a large extent). Cronbach’s alpha values were: (a) cooperation .87, (b) assertivity .78, (c) revenge .54, (d) instrumental support .62, (e) nonchalance .64.

## Results

### *The belief in a just world and its dimensions*

Paired samples t-test (general BJW vs. personal BJW) revealed that personal BJW score was significantly higher than general BJW (personal BJW:  $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = .84$ ; general BJW:  $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = .85$ ;  $t_{(116)} = 4.07$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (*higher score indicates lower belief in a just world*). In other words, respondents had a higher belief in their own control over their just destiny rather than the belief that the world is generally a just place.

### *Coping with injustice in intimate relationships*

In the presented sample, a repeated measures ANOVA determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the levels of the measured variable "coping with injustice" -  $F(3.00; 347.96) = 188.24$ ;  $p < .001$ . Post hoc tests using Bonferroni correction revealed a significant difference between coping strategies, specifically: cooperation x assertivity ( $p < .001$ ), cooperation x revenge ( $p < .001$ ), cooperation x instrumental support ( $p < .001$ ), cooperation x nonchalance ( $p < .001$ ), assertivity x revenge ( $p < .001$ ), assertivity x instrumental support ( $p < .001$ ), assertivity x nonchalance ( $p < .001$ ), revenge x instrumental support ( $p < .001$ ), revenge x nonchalance ( $p < .001$ ), instrumental support x nonchalance ( $p < .001$ ). The assessment of coping strategies showed that most common strategy used in unjust situations was cooperation ( $M = 4.61$ ;  $SD = .85$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1** Descriptive analysis of coping strategies used in unjust situations

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Cooperation</b>	4.61	.85
<b>Assertivity</b>	3.78	.75
<b>Nonchalance</b>	3.21	.85
<b>Revenge</b>	2.33	1.09
<b>Instrumental support</b>	1.82	.86

### *The belief in a just world and coping with injustice in intimate relationships*

Based on the theoretical background and the aim of the present study, we focused additionally on analyzing the character of the relationship between the belief in a just world and particular coping strategies used in unjust situations. The Pearson correlation coefficient of the belief in a just world and coping strategies did not point to any statistically significant relationship. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Correlation between the belief in a just world and coping strategies

Belief in a just world	Coping strategies	r	p
Personal	Cooperation	-.10	.30
	Assertivity	.12	.18
	Revenge	.07	.50
	Instrumental support	.01	.93
	Nonchalance	-.06	.51
General	Cooperation	-.13	.17
	Assertivity	.11	.24
	Revenge	.06	.50
	Instrumental support	.09	.31
	Nonchalance	.03	.76

## Discussion

Justice is an important part of intimate relationships because if a person treats their partner fairly, and shows respect and dignity, the partner feels happier and more satisfied with the relationship (Cramer, 2002). However, negative situations such as conflicts, lying and infidelity or a partner's unfairness can affect the quality and future of the relationship. According to Feeney (1994) more important than the frequency and perceived significance of an unfair situation, is the way in which partners solve the problem and especially how they try to cope with it. Our research has shown that cooperation was the most commonly used coping strategy in dealing with injustice. Intimate relationships are interdependent and overlapping because one is identified with one's own partner. According to Arona et al. (1991), individuals consider interaction with partner as a part of their own *self*. This mechanism increases the level of cooperation through coping with injustice. In other words, identification with partner, the "me and you" feeling supports the process of cooperation in coping with injustice. This phenomenon has been confirmed by other studies (e.g. Derlega et al., 2002; Karremans, van Lange, & Holland, 2005), which consistently claim that interdependence or synergy between partners is associated with the effort of using more constructive strategies and is associated with a higher willingness to forgive injustice.

The belief in a just world is a fundamental component of understanding the world and gives people the ability to orientate in it. As Dalbert (2009) argues, a personal belief in a just world is more important than a general belief in a just world, because of the sense of personal belief in a just world. The belief in a justice that determines the personal life of an individual is more important for mental health; the general belief in a just world plays only a mediating or marginal role (Dalajka & Širůček, 2010). This hypothesis has been confirmed in our research, as well. Respondents had a higher level of personal belief in a just world than general belief. A personal belief in a just world is shaped by one's own experiences and it is an indicator of the personal relevance of justice in one's own life (Dalbert, 1999).

Many authors stress the importance of distinguishing the personal and the general belief in a just world because individuals' scores are systematically higher for the personal than for the

general belief in a just world (Dalbert, 1999; Lipkus et al., 1996; Wenzel, Schindler, & Reinhard, 2017). An adequate explanation could be found in the idea that the endorsement of the personal rather than the general belief in a just world is more fundamental for the individual's well-being (Lipkus et al., 1996), interpersonal trust (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003) or pro-social behavior (Bègue, 2014).

The belief in a just world plays an important role in the process of coping with injustice. Several studies have highlighted the fact that individuals who believe in a just world cope effectively with stressful situations such as a partner's unfairness (Dalbert, 1993; Lerner & Somers, 1992). The main aim of the contribution was to analyse the relationship between the belief in a just world and selected coping strategies used in unjust situations. The results showed there was no significant relationship between the belief in a just world and coping strategies. Our findings are inconsistent with Montada and Lerner study (1998), in which the belief in a just world was associated with constructive coping strategies. Moreover, Lipkus and Bissonete (1998) argue that individuals with higher belief in a just world are more likely to perceive their partner as acting in a manner consistent with themes of deservingness, and therefore expect that their own accommodation will be reciprocated for the long-term well-being of the relationship.

The reason for inconsistent results can be found in the nature of the belief in a just world. According to Dalbert and Sallay (2004), individuals who have strong belief in a just world, have stronger belief in other people and also expect their acts will be rewarded fairly in the future. Individuals who perceive the world as a just place, value positive information about justice rather than negative information (Hagedoorn, Buunk, & van de Vilert, 2002) and tend to deny the harms committed against others in order to maintain their own well-being (Faccenda & Pantaléon, 2011). This strong belief in a just world is closely related to the use of the principle of deserving - everything that has happened is deserved, so the world can not be unjust (Faccenda & Pantaléon, 2011). Faccenda and Pantaléon (2011) add that strong belief in a just world can be considered as an ego-oriented, defensive mechanism. Thus, it is possible to assume that the belief in a just world is associated with cognitive responses to injustice (e.g. changing the context of injustice) rather than behavioral responses (e.g. revenge, cooperation, instrumental support) in coping with injustice in intimate relationships.

Dzuka and Dalbert (2000) point out that the belief in a just world could be a positive and healthy coping strategy in itself. The belief in a just world is a stabilizing force that helps one deals with daily hassles (Dalbert, 1998). The belief in a just world could be found as a major coping strategy (Fuhrman, 2003) or as a personal coping resource influencing the coping process in different ways and protect victims from ruminating (Dalbert, 1998).

Another explanation is the fact that this study was limited by sample size. Further, the results of this study were based on data collected from the respondents in early adulthood and cohabitating in short-term relationships. Specific stage of life and/or the character of the relationship might have influenced the results. Future studies should look into the phenomenon of "the belief in a just world and coping with injustice" paradox to understand the process of coping with a partner's unfairness in the context of the belief in a just world among people in different stages of life, people who are married or those who have children.

## Conclusion

This paper dealt with the concept of belief in a just world and coping with injustice in intimate relationships. The paper defined the character of the belief in a just world and clarified that personal BJW is more significant for individuals than general BJW. The paper also showed that cooperation was the most used coping strategy through dealing with injustice in intimate relationships.

When people are confronted with injustice in an intimate relationship, they can use a variety of strategies to help them cope with this unfair situation. How they can cope with an unfair situation depends on several variables. The aim of this contribution was to analyze the relationship between the belief in a just world and coping with injustice. However, this relationship was not confirmed by the presented research.

It is necessary to continue the research in this area; whether in terms of analysing the relationship between the belief in a just world and coping with injustice in intimate relationships and/or adding new dispositional and situational variables, which could relate to coping with injustice in intimate relationships - sensitivity to injustice (Gollwitzer et al., 2009; Thomas, Baumert, & Schmitt, 2012); moral justification (Čopková, 2017); dominance (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000); emotions (Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998), characteristics of intimate relationships (Kluwer & Johnson, 2007), etc.

Thus, new findings would be able to enrich the research in the field of coping established in the context of justice in intimate relationships.

## References

- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., Tudor, M., & Nelson, G. (1991). Close relationships as including other in the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 241-253.
- Bègue, L. (2014). Do just-world believers practice private charity?. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 44, 71-76.
- Bègue, L., & Bastounis, M. (2003). Two spheres of belief in justice: Extensive support for the bidimensional model of belief in a just world. *Journal of Personality*, 71(3), 435-464.
- Burgoon, J. K., & Dunbar, N. E. (2000). An interactionist perspective on dominance-submission: Interpersonal dominance as a dynamic, situationally contingent social skill. *Communication Monographs*, 67, 96-121.
- Cramer, D. (2002). Relationship satisfaction and conflict over minor and major issues in romantic relationships. *The Journal of Psychology*, 136, 75-81.
- Čopková, R. (2016). Morálne zdôvodňovanie v kontexte na cieľ orientovaného správania. *Človek a spoločnosť*, 19(3), 9-18.
- Čopková, R. (2017). Procesy morálnej sebaregulácie v dosahovaní cieľov. *Procesy sebaregulácie v dosahovaní cieľov*. Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, s. 144-170.
- Dalajka, J., & Širůček, J. (2010). Víra ve spravedlivý svět, psychosociální zátěž a depresivita v adolescenci: mediační model. *E-psychologie*, 4(1), 1-15. Dostupné z <[http://e-psycholog.eu/pdf/dalajka\\_etal.pdf](http://e-psycholog.eu/pdf/dalajka_etal.pdf)>.
- Dalbert, C. (1993). Gefährdung des Wohlbefindens durch Arbeitsplatzunsicherheit: Eine Analyse der Einflussfaktoren Selbstwert und Gerechte-Welt-Glaube. *Zeitschrift für Gesundheitspsychologie*, 4, 294-310.
- Dalbert, C. (1998). Belief in a just world, well-being and coping with an unjust fate. In: L. Montada & M. Lerner (Eds.), *Responses to victimizations and belief in the just world* (pp. 87-105), New York: Plenum.
- Dalbert, C. (1999). The world is more just for me than generally: About the personal belief in a just world scales validity. *Social Justice Research*, 12(2), 79-98.
- Dalbert, C. (2009). Belief in a just world. In: M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior* (pp. 288-297). New York: Guilford Publications.
- Dalbert, C., & Sallay, H. (2004). *The Justice Motive in Adolescence and Young Adulthood*. London: Routledge.
- Dalbert, C., & Filke, E. (2007). Belief in a personal just world, justice judgments, and their functions for prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34(11), 1516-1527.
- Derlega, V. J., Cukur, C. S., Kuang, J. C., & Forsyth, D. R. (2002). Interdependent construal of self and the endorsement of conflict resolution strategies in interpersonal, intergroup and international disputes. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology*, 33, 610-625.
- Durm, M., & Stowers, D. (1998). Just world beliefs and irrational beliefs: a sex difference?. *Psychological Reports*, 83, 328-330.

- Džuka, J. (2001). Viera slovenskej mládeže v spravodlivý svet. *Psychológia a patopsychológia dieťaťa*, 36(3), 225-239.
- Faccenda, L., & Pantaléon, N. (2011). Analysis of the relationships between sensitivity to injustice, principles of justice and belief in a just world. *Journal of Moral Education*, 40(4), 491-511.
- Feeney, J. A. (1994). Attachment style, communication patterns, and satisfaction across the life cycle of marriage. *Personal Relationships*, 1, 333-348.
- Furnham, A. (1993). Just world beliefs in twelve societies. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 133(3), 317-329.
- Furnham, A. (2003). Belief in a just world: research progress over the past decade. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34(5), 795-817.
- Gollwitzer, M., Rothmund, T., Pfeiffer, A., & Ensenbach, C. (2009). Why and when justice sensitivity leads to pro- and antisocial behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43(6), 999-1005.
- Hafer, C. L. (2002). Why we reject innocent victims. In M. Ross & D. T. Miller (Eds.), *The Justice Motive in Everyday Life* (pp. 109-126). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hafer, C. L., & Gosse, L. (2011). Predicting alternative strategies for preserving a belief in a just world: The case of repressive coping style. *European Journal of Personality*, 41, 730-739.
- Hafer, C. L., & Sutton, R. (2016). Belief in a just world. In C. Sabbagh, & M. Schmitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research* (pp. 145-160). New York: Springer.
- Hagedoorn, M., Buunk, B. P., & van de Vilert, E. (2002). Do just world believers process unfair authoritative decisions differently?. *Applied psychology: An international review*, 51(1), 126-145.
- Hellman, CH. M., Muilenburg-Trevino, E. M., & Worley, J. A. (2008). The belief in a just world: An Examination of reliability estimates across three measures. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 90(4), 399-401.
- Karremans, J. C., Van Lange, P. A. M., & Holland, R. W. (2005). Forgiveness and its associations with prosocial thinking, feeling, and doing beyond the relationship with the offender. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31, 1315-1326.
- Kay, A. C., & Jost, J. T. (2003). Complementary justice: Effects of “poor but happy” and “poor but honest” stereotype exemplars on system justification and implicit activation of the justice motive. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(5), 823-837.
- Kluwer, E. S., & Johnson, M. D. (2007). Conflict frequency and relationship quality across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(5), 1089-1106.
- Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*. New York: Springer Science Business Media, 203 p.
- Lerner, M. J., & Somers, D. G. (1992). Employees' reactions to an anticipated plant closure: The influence of positive illusions. In L. Montada, S. H. Filipp, & M. J. Lerner (Eds.), *Life crises and experiences of loss in adulthood* (pp. 229-253). Hillsdale, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.



- Lipkus, I. M., & Bissonnette, V. (1998). The belief in a just world willingness to accommodate among married and dating couples. In: L. Montada, & M. Lerner (Eds.), *Responses to victimizations and belief in the just world* (pp. 127-138), New York: Plenum.
- Lipkus, I. M., Dalbert, C., & Siegler, I. C. (1996). The Importance of distinguishing the belief in a just world for self versus for others: Implications for psychological well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(7), 666-677.
- Mikula, G., Scherer, K., R., & Athenstaedt, U. (1998). The role of injustice in the elicitation of differential emotional reactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(7), 769-783.
- Montada, L., & Lerner, M. J. (1998). *Responses to Victimizations and Belief in a Just World*. New York: Plenum Press.
- O'Connor, W. E., Morrison, T. G., McLeod, L. D., & Anderson, D. (1996). A meta-analytic review of the relationship between gender and belief in a just world. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 11(1), 141-148.
- Oppenheimer, L. (2006). The belief in a just world and subjective perceptions of society: A developmental perspective. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29(4), 655-669.
- Peplau, L. A. (1983). Roles and gender. In H. H. Kelly, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau, & D. R. Peterson (Eds.). *Close relationships* (pp.220-264). New York: Freeman.
- Rabbie, J. M., & Lodewijkx, H. F. M. (1995). Aggressive reactions to social injustice by individuals and groups as a function of social norms, gender, and anonymity. *Social Justice Research*, 8(1), 7-40.
- Rovenská, D., & Lovaš, L. (2017). Identifikácia stratégií zvládania nespravodlivosti v partnerskom vzťahu. *Psychologie a její kontexty*, 8(2), 57-72.
- Rubin, Z., & Peplau, L. A. (1975). Who believes in a just world?. *Journal of Social Issues*, 31(3), 65-89.
- Rusbult, C. (1993). Understanding responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships: The exit, voice, loyalty and neglect model. In S. Worchel, & J. Simpson (Eds.), *Conflict between people and groups: Causes, processes, and resolutions* (pp.30-59). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Thomas, N., Baumert, A., & Schmitt, M. (2012). Justice sensitivity as a risk and protective factor in social conflicts. In E. Kals, & J. Maes (Eds.), *Justice and conflicts*. (pp.107-120). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Tyler, T. R. (2012). Justice and effective cooperation. *Social Justice Research*, 25(4), 355-375.
- Wenzel, K., Schindler, S., & Reinhard, M. A. (2017). General belief in a just world is positively associated with dishonest behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8.
- Wu, M. S., Yan, X., Zhou, Ch., Chen, Y., Li, J., Zhu, Z., Shen, X., & Han, B. (2011). General belief in a just world and resilience: Evidence from a collectivistic culture. *European Journal of Personality*, 25, 431-442.
- Wu, M. S., Sutton, R. M., Yan, X., Zhou, C., Chen, Y., Zhu, Z., & Han, B. (2013). Time frame and justice motive: Future perspective moderates the adaptive function of general belief in a just world. *PLoS ONE*, 8(11).

## Attitudes towards Social Security: Review of Literature

Ivana Piterová, Institute of Social Sciences, Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of SAS, Košice, [piterova@saske.sk](mailto:piterova@saske.sk)

**PITEROVÁ, Ivana. Attitudes towards Social Security: Review of Literature. Človek a spoločnosť, 2018, roč. 21, č. 3, s. 50-69.**

### Abstract:

There has not been enough attention given to the topic of social security in Slovak psychological research; although the state of social protection, legal aspects of social security or themes of social services, social policy and social care are well described by economists, sociologists, lawyers or social workers. The article provides an overview of the current knowledge of social security attitudes as attitudes have been a research topic of social psychology for a long time.

Social security benefits and services provided by welfare states are linked to many predictable or unpredictable events; such as unemployment, illness, birth of a child or retirement. The questions that could arise are: who has a positive or negative attitude towards providing social security benefits and services?; who deserves the help?; why and to what extent?; and if there are any causal differences between European countries.

This review is divided into four main parts. Firstly, a brief description of the social security system in the Slovak Republic is provided. The social security system consists of social insurance, state social support, and social assistance. They are based upon dissimilar principles, i.e. the principle of merit, equality and need, respectively. Within the European Union, the coordination of the social security system is applied. However, due to the specific conditions in every country, it is not possible to establish a unified social security system yet.

Secondly, the paper describes and summarizes different types of welfare states in the context of chosen typologies. It begins with the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990), Leibfried, (1992), Ferrera (1996), and Bonoli (1997) and continues with recent research that lead to the question about numbers and different types of welfare states e.g. Arts and Gellisen (2001) or Gryaznova (2013). Thirdly, the definition of social security attitudes in relation to Fishbein's and Ajzen's theory is presented. The possibility of categorizing welfare attitudes into three levels, according to the degree of generality, is outlined. The most general category is welfare state attitudes, more specific one are attitudes towards different types of welfare state. These are: Social democratic, Conservative, Liberal, and Radical. It is possible to divide people into attitudinal types and analyse their attitudes or specific traits. At the most specific level, there are attitudes towards providing benefits and services to different groups of beneficiaries, such as pensioners, the unemployed or single parents.

Finally, the results of research on determinants of social security attitudes carried out are described. The large amount of research is built on survey databases such as the European Social Survey or International Social Survey Program. These surveys have been conducted internationally over several decades and thus provide the opportunity to compare different countries as well as to capture differences over time. We focused on individual level determinants; such as self-interest, socio-demographic characteristics, values, interpersonal and institutional trust and deservingness heuristics. At the institutional level there is a considerable amount of research on welfare regimes, values and normative beliefs at a national level, culture, justice perception, contextual indicators as a level of unemployment, and the existence of economic and social disparities in countries. Other indicators that are included in the research are gross domestic product (GDP) per capita or GDP based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per capita.

In conclusion, the comparison of European countries gave an answer to the question: "Who is more supportive?" The highest support for social security benefits and services is in Scandinavian countries operating a social democratic regime. Additionally, people from other countries with social democratic attitudes show more solidarity to other people, have a higher level of trust and higher support for welfare programs and redistributive policies. When it comes to socio-demographic characteristics, those who are more supportive include: women,

young people, those with secondary education, those from the middle class, religious people, political of a left wing persuasion, and the unemployed.

In the case of self-interest, those who receive benefits and services and those who pay lower taxes are more in favour. People with egalitarian, collectivistic value orientations and values of self-transcendence, altruism and embeddedness are more supportive. Moreover, a value of conservation is significant for welfare state support mostly in Eastern Europe.

The answer to the question "who do we support?" is provided through extensive research by Jensen, Petersen, Koostra, Roosma, Reeskens and van Oorschot, who studied the heuristics of deservingness and solidarity of people. Five factors have been confirmed: control, need, reciprocity, identity and attitude. We are more in favour of helping people we perceive not to be responsible for their situation; if we assume they contribute to the state or will do in the future, and are similar to us and express gratitude for the help they receive.

The research of contextual factors brings an answer to the question "when are we more often supportive". More left-wing policies and egalitarian principles are expressed in times of crisis and higher unemployment, and also during periods of greater economic and social disparities amongst people.

The weaknesses of the survey research may be in the low number of items represented, and the large amount of data that reduces error sensitivity and the accuracy of results. Another difficulty may arise from contextual factors, which are different in countries and make results and their interpretation less clear. Moving some attention from robust comparative research to partial experiments would allow us to capture a narrower spectrum of selected factors and their interaction.

It is necessary to know how the attitudes are changing, why they differ among people and countries and how we could affect them. Scientific study of welfare attitudes creates the imaginary bridge between people and the welfare state and allows the formation of a welfare policy in accordance with the preferences of citizens. That is one reason why research on this topic matters.

**Key words:**

Attitudes. Social security. International comparative surveys.

## Introduction

There has not been a sufficient level of attention given to the topic of attitudes towards social security in Slovak psychological research. Previously, it has been frequently associated with social work, economics, law and sociology. Information on the state of social protection in Slovakia has been provided by Bednárík (2018), the legal aspect of social security has been described by Macková (2017), while Repková (2012; 2016; 2017) has long been interested in the theme of social services, social policy and social care. However, it is also possible to examine this issue from the social psychology point of view, precisely through the optics of attitudes or attitudinal types towards social security. From this perspective, there have not been enough publications in Slovakia yet, but an overview of attitudinal types and attitudes towards social care from the European social survey (ESS)<sup>1</sup> 4th round data has been produced by Výrost (2010).

Through various predictable and unpredictable events people can end up without work, permanent incomes or dependent on low-incomes. In such situations, people have to make recourse to social security benefits and services provided by the welfare state. Our question is whether the level of social solidarity of the state, communities or families is increased in times of hardship.

Consequently, the following questions have been asked: "To what extent are the individual and the state responsible when in such a situation?" "Who has positive attitudes towards providing social security?" "Who deserves the help of the state, why and to what extent?" and "What causes differences in attitudes to the provision of social security benefits?" Finding

---

<sup>1</sup> The European Social Survey is an academically driven cross-national survey that is conducted across Europe at two-year intervals. The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of diverse populations in more than thirty nations. The main goal is also to achieve and spread higher standards of rigour in cross-national research in the social sciences (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>).

answers to such questions has prompted a scientific study of this topic, especially of research carried out in other countries outside Slovakia.

The presented review summarizes the findings of studies that were found in online scientific databases (WOS, SCOPUS, and EBSCO etc). Among the studies that were found using keywords such as “welfare attitudes”, “welfare state attitudes”, “social security”, “attitudes towards redistribution”, we selected mostly those comparative ones, carried out on data of international surveys which were as close as possible to the chosen topic.

## **I. What is social security?**

Social security as the right of every person has been guaranteed in the Declaration of Human Rights at international level since 1948. According to Article 25 of this document, everyone as a member of society has *“the right to a standard of living adequate to the health and welfare of his and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, the right to unemployment insurance, sickness, incapacity, widowhood, old age or other cases of loss of earnings arising from circumstances beyond his control (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).”* This right is also guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in Article 39.

In Slovakia, the social security system includes three subsystems: social insurance, state social support and social assistance. The first one, social insurance, is based on the principle of merit. In the case of a situation such as unemployment, maternity or disability, benefits are calculated from the amounts paid to the state, which, in turn, relate to the individual’s previous income. In other words, higher benefits are provided to people who have worked longer, and/or earned and contributed more to the state. The second one, state social support, is based on the principle of equality, and addresses situations like the birth of a child, or a more longer-lasting situation such as a dependent child. In this case, the benefits are provided by the state as an equal amount for all. The last one, social assistance, is based on the principle of need. When a person demonstrates that they lack the ability to provide for themselves and/or their family, each individual case will be assessed when setting the amount of social benefits (Jurík, 2017).

Within the European Union, the coordination of social security systems is applied. However, certain coordination rules have been established which do not replace national systems. In particular, due to the development of individual countries in specific economic, social, and cultural conditions, it is not possible to establish a unified social security system yet.

## **II. Models of the Welfare state**

Among the countries that belong to the social model, there are considerable differences in their social policies, including their social security systems. The existence of different types of social states has been described in well-known typology by Esping-Andersen (1990). Despite the fact that it was neither the first typology nor was it generally accepted, and has been modified or supplemented by several authors over the years, it is frequently mentioned in foreign studies. Esping-Andersen (1990) distinguished three models of the welfare state, based on the operationalisation of three principles: decommodification (which examined the extent to which an individual’s welfare is reliant upon the market), level of social stratification (which examined the role of welfare states in maintaining or breaking down social stratification), and private-public mix (which focused on the relative roles of the state, the family and the market in welfare provision).

Knowing the differences between models of welfare state can result in a deeper understanding of dissimilarities among attitudinal types. The existence of four distinct welfare attitudinal types (social democratic, conservative, liberal, and radical) is confirmed as valid, based on the possibility of dividing people into four categories (Výrost, 2010). Various models of the social state from the Esping-Andersen typology are presented. Additionally, the names of welfare state types from several selected typology modifications are added.

The first type includes the countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway who have a social democratic system, and is called the Scandinavian model (Ferrera, 1996; Leibfried, 1992) or Nordic (Bonoli, 1997). In these countries, according to Esping-Andersen (1990), there is a high level of decommodification, universal benefits and a high degree of benefits equality. Ferrera (1996) emphasizes social protection as a civil law, a certain amount of contributions are entitled to all the people of the country (universality), and the contributions are funded by general taxes.

The second one consists of the UK and Ireland, who have a liberal system (Esping-Andersen, 1990), and is called Anglo-Saxon (Ferrera 1996; Leibfried, 1992) or British type (Bonoli, 1997). There is a greater restriction of social benefits and a basic system is defined at a minimum level. In addition, benefits are provided only to the poorest or to people facing hardship, so social security support is strongest in this group of the most disadvantaged people.

The third type contains the Western European countries (e.g Germany, Austria, France) with a conservative system (Esping-Andersen, 1990); also called Bismarck/Institutional (Ferrera, 1996; Leibfried, 1992) or continental (Bonoli, 1997). The state intervenes only in situations when family resources to secure the basic needs of their members have failed (Výrost, 2010).

The first version of the Esping-Andersen (1990) typology was not accepted by other authors. Castles and Mitchell (1992) reviewed his typology and further divided the liberal type into two distinct categories, two different groups of social states: liberal and radical. The former, which combined low social expenditure, low taxation and low benefit equality with a weak position of labor parties and trade unions, exemplified by the USA, the latter, in which low social expenditure and low taxation were combined with high benefit equality, exemplified by Australia, and New Zealand.

The countries of southern Europe (e.g. Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal) constitute the fourth group, which was not included in the Esping-Andersen typology and lead to a critique by others authors. Leibfried (1992) named this system as rudimental, Castles and Mitchell (1993) called it radical and Bonoli (1997) and Ferrera (1996) labelled it as southern. It is a mixture of systems with uncertain rules. In these countries there are systems based on the family status of social protection; that is, the family assumes responsibility for their members and is less reliant on government, so they are also called familialistic (Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008). Esping-Andersen (1998) added this model to his typology later as the Mediterranean regime.

The first type, which was added later, is the aforementioned regime of Down Under (Australia and New Zealand) which combines the elements of the liberal and social democratic system; thus there are low income differences and high social benefits paid mostly to the middle classes. A second type that was added is East Asian, which combines the elements of the previous regimes, particularly the liberal and conservative ones, in which the state does not provide high social benefits because the employer or the family should take responsibility for

care. Therefore, a person who does not work for a corporation, which partially replaces the state care, is disadvantaged (Esping- Andersen, 1998).

Recent studies indicate groups of countries that cannot be divided into the categories already mentioned; mainly post-socialist countries (the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria) and the countries of the former USSR (Russia, Estonia, and Lithuania). These Eastern European configurations have not been confirmed as self-existing social models, rather they are understood as combinations of the previous types. For example, as stated by Beblavý (2012, p. 29), Slovakia "includes elements of a liberal and conservative-corporative type as well as some clear features of post-socialist countries (e.g. high level of coverage but relatively low level of benefits and low level of trust in state institutions). Despite the fact that the existence of these groups of countries as separate types is not confirmed, they are used in research as separate groups. For example, Gryaznova (2013) defines six types of social states in research: social democratic, conservative, liberal, familiaristic, post-socialist countries and countries of the former USSR. Alternatively, we can find a categorization of clear types; such as Denmark, Norway or Sweden, while Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands are the hybrids of the social democratic countries (Arts & Gellisen, 2001).

Mixed results in conducted research may arise from reference to the general typology of welfare states and indicators that fail to capture the complexity of institutional establishment and individual views (Jordan, 2013). The study of types of welfare states has some deficiency in the theoretical inconsistency and rigidity of the concept. Relying on the empirical categorization and the lack of match between description and welfare state is becoming a problem.

### **III. Attitudes towards social security**

A definition of attitudes towards social security from a psychological point of view can be derived from Fishbein's and Ajzen's (1975; 1980) Theory of Reasoned Action that brought some changes into the attitudes research. Firstly, the authors split the behavioral intention from behaviour that is related but not identical. Secondly, instead of three parts of attitudes, they described attitudes as an affective evaluation of performing behaviour not attitudes to the object itself. Thirdly, they added a subjective norm that represents the individual's perception about a particular behaviour which is influenced by the judgement of others, i.e. peoples' behaviour is influenced not only by our attitudes but also our effort to meet the expectations of others. The theory was modified by Ajzen (1985) who added the perceived behavioural control that is an individual's perceived ease or difficulty in performing a particular behavior. The theory was renamed, The Theory of Planned Behaviour.

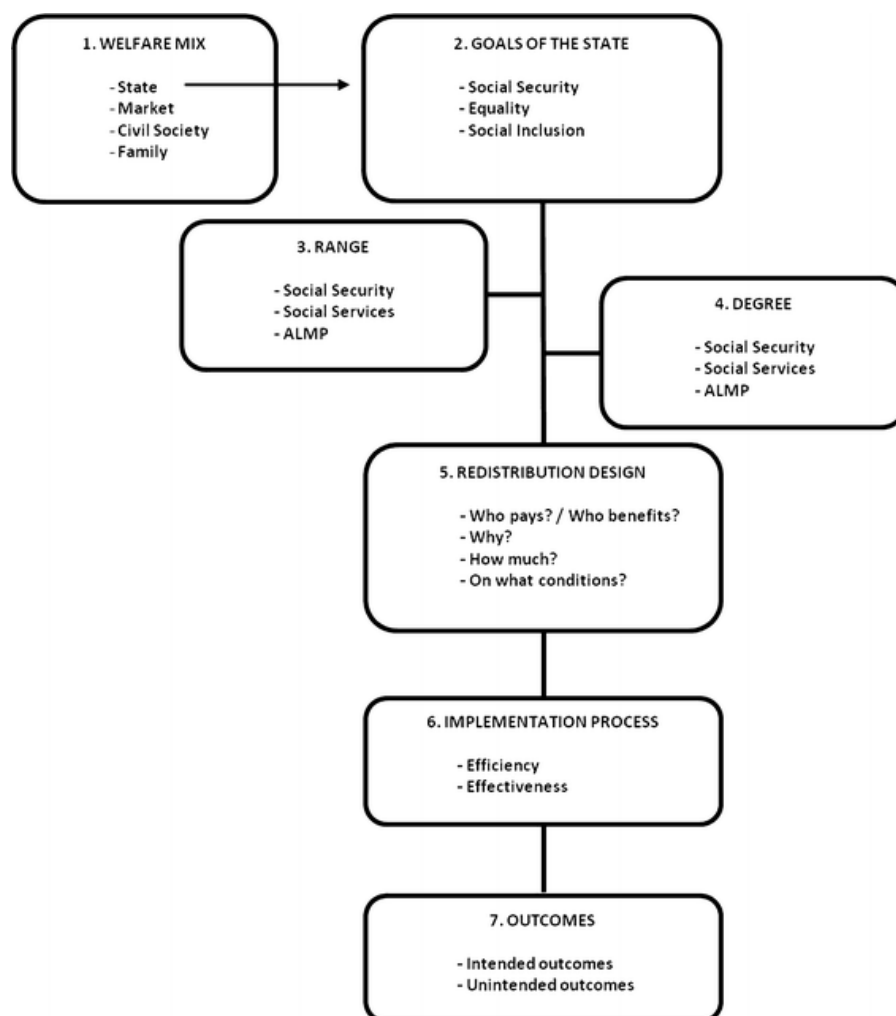
The application of this theory seems appropriate, as in the case of social security we do not refer to attitudes towards institutions or attitudes towards people (assessment of object of attitude) but attitudes towards providing assistance to given categories of people (assessment of behavior towards the object of attitude). Therefore, recipients of social security become the object of attitudes, and we are interested in the level of support for helping these groups of people. The state is a provider of such assistance in this case, but citizens are the contributors to the state budget, thus this question of providing social security benefits and services is also their concern.

Attitudes towards social security can be categorized into Welfare attitudes, which have more levels of generality. The most general are Welfare state attitudes; the more specific ones are

attitudes towards individual models of welfare state, or attitudinal types such as conservative, liberal, social democratic, and radical. Even more specific are the attitudes towards benefits and services for different groups of people, e.g. the unemployed, the sick or disabled, the retired or single parents. In this case, our attitudes are influenced by attitudes towards this category of beneficiaries. A more specific description of proposed categorization is delivered in the following section.

### Welfare state attitudes

The welfare state began to develop with the aim to protect and promote the social and economic well-being of citizens. It is based on an equitable distribution of wealth paid for by citizens' taxes. However, a person may have a different attitude as a beneficiary of social benefits than as a contributor. The research findings confirm that attitudes to the welfare state are not continuous but multi-dimensional and may be in conflict. For example, van Oorschot and Meuleman (2012) confirmed the multi-dimensionality of attitudes towards the welfare state in the data from Denmark in 2006. Moreover, individual dimensions were influenced by the socio-economic structure and ideology. Roosma, Gelissen and van Oorschot (2013) predicted the existence of the seven social-state dimensions outlined in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Dimensions of Welfare state (Roosma, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2013)

The first dimension is a „welfare mix“, that is slightly different from other dimensions. It represents the alternative institutions providing help and welfare for citizens. The question in this case is “who is responsible?” Is it the state, family or the market or other private institutions, such as the church or charity? In this paper, as well as the authors, we focus on the responsibility of welfare state to redistribute sources.

The second dimension includes the goals of the state; the goal of achieving a more liberal idea of equal opportunities or rather an equalitarian idea of equal income, and whether the goal is to protect the public from the rigidity of the market. The authors highlight three main goals, namely: providing social security, achieving equality (income / opportunities), and promoting social inclusion through participation.

Other dimensions are the range and degree that relate to areas of life or society into which the state should redistribute resources (range) and how much funding should be allocated (degree). There are three sub-dimensions: social benefits, social services, and an active labor market policy.

The redistribution design refers to issues such as: "Who should receive redistributed resources?", "Who should contribute, for what purpose and under what conditions?" and "Which groups deserve which types of contributions and under what circumstances?"

The implementation concerns procedural justice, and has two subdimensions: efficiency and effectiveness. This means whether the finances and services are provided in a timely manner, whether they are understandable and whether they are not being wasted or inadequately provided.

The last dimension is outcomes, i.e. the intended and unintended results, which are related to redistribution and objectives.

Roosma, van Oorschot and Gelissen (2013) on data from 22 countries participating in the European Social Survey in 2008 confirmed this hypothesis on multi-dimensionality of attitudes. They found that people were especially positive towards the welfare state and the scope of its powers, while being critical of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of social security provision. These dimensions correlated with each other, but were different in each country. Eastern and Southern European countries have been characterized by positive attitudes towards government goals and tasks with slightly negative attitudes towards the effectiveness and outcome of social policy; while in contrast, the attitudes of Western and Northern European countries to these dimensions of the welfare state were based on a fundamentally positive or negative attitude towards the welfare state.

In another study conducted in 2014, the same authors refer to the two main dimensions in attitudes to the role of the welfare state; attitudes to what the welfare state should do (the preferred role of the state) and the belief in its current performance (perceived performance). Based on the analysis of 22 European countries from the ESS data (2008), it was confirmed that based on scores within these two dimensions, it is possible to place a person in 1 of 4 clusters (overall positive, overall negative, critical of performance, critical of the role). Each of these clusters contained a certain proportion of respondents which differed between types of welfare states. When they were looking for profiles of individuals belonging to these clusters, they came to the conclusion that those who have a subjectively high income and prefer a right-wing political ideology are satisfied with the results but not with the tasks of the state. Those with subjectively low income and left-wing political ideology were satisfied with



the tasks but not with the performance of the welfare state. Such results have been confirmed for all types of welfare states. Only "critical of the role" was not sufficiently represented in post-socialist and Mediterranean countries. The people in the cluster "generally positive" did not have a political orientation and were relatively satisfied with their income. The smallest number was "totally negative", and in the case of post-socialist countries it was individuals who identified themselves with right-wing political ideology and without employment.

### **Attitudes towards types of welfare state - Welfare attitudinal types**

A welfare state can exist in different forms in regards to different social policies; as described in the typology of Bonoli (1997); Castles & Mitchell (1993); Esping- Andersen (1990) or Ferrera (1996). Each type of welfare state is described with different level of solidarity, a dissimilar range of government responsibilities, universality of benefits and services or acceptance of income equality. It seems to be reasonable to expect that attitudes towards different types of welfare state differ as well.

In compliance with the aforementioned typologies, Svallfors (1997) analyzed the data of eight nations from the International Social Survey Programme. He distinguished four attitudinal types on the basis of a low inter-correlation between attitudes to redistribution and to income. A social democratic type was defined as highly supportive of state interventions with an egalitarian preference of income equality. A conservative type was described as highly supportive of state interventions with non egalitarian attitudes to income. A liberal type had low support for state interventions with non egalitarian beliefs about income. The last one, the radical type, was characterised as a low supporter of state interventions with an egalitarian view on income.

A similar approach was applied by VÝrost (2010). He defined four types of attitudes towards social protection based on the average score measured on two scales: social solidarity and social differentiation. The former was defined as co-dependence and support for benefits provided to people. The latter had a meaning of tolerance towards social differences between people, leading to a rejection of benefits for some people or groups of people. The social democratic type support providing help to people on the basis of general rules.. The conservative type has a high level of solidarity with the conviction that assistance and support from the state should only be provided to those who objectively need it and only at a differentiated range. The radical type is an expression of the belief that people should take care of themselves, supporting the acceptance of differences between people and providing assistance only in an extraordinary situation. The liberal type prefers social differentiation, and at the same time is not an advocate of providing help to others unless they really need it, but to such an extent that they remain motivated to take care of themselves (VÝrost, 2010).

Furthermore, at the level of attitudinal types, there is a possibility to divide people into categories and examine the characteristics and features that are typical for individual types in the same way as to look for differences. Unfortunately, we don't register research studies covering this topic but VÝrost (2010) explored the attitudes of four attitudinal types towards items from ESS 4th round rotating module about welfare in Slovakia.

The results of the analysis have shown that out of the socio-demographic characteristics, age has been statistically significant. The preference of the liberal attitudinal type declined, while preference for the conservative type inclined with age. Women in Slovakia prefer more conservative attitudes in contrast to more liberal men. The conservative attitudinal type dominated in all educational groups. The preference of the social democratic attitudinal type

decreased while the preference of the liberal attitudinal type increased with the rising level of education (Výrost, 2010).

Regarding the attitudes of these four groups to the tasks of the government in the area of welfare, all four attitudinal types supported the view that Governments should take responsibility to ensure work and health care, but to varying degree, while the opinions of conservative and liberal respondents were less positive (Výrost, 2010).

When assessing the actual state of social security in Slovakia (living standards), responses were rather in the negative pole of the scale, but they slightly differ between attitudinal types. Conservative and liberal respondents perceived this state as less negative than radical and social democratic respondents (Výrost, 2010).

Lastly, the views on social security perspectives in Slovakia were analyzed. People with social democratic and radical attitudes agree to increase taxes to contribute more to benefits and services, while liberal and conservative prefer tax cuts to contribute less to social benefits and services (Výrost, 2010).

### **Attitudes towards social security programs**

We can debate about varying attitudes towards individual social programs or benefits and services provided to specific groups of people (e.g. pensioners, the unemployed, single parents), depending on each type of recipient.

Out of nine sub-dimensions (goals, range of government responsibility, degree, efficiency, effectiveness/abuse, effectiveness/underuse, outcomes policy, outcomes economic, and outcomes moral) that were defined by Roosma, Gelissen, and van Oorschot (2013), Gryaznova (2013) selected the range of government responsibilities and tested its dimensionality. There were three dimensions discovered: unconditional social programs (pensions and health care), labor market regulation (jobs and unemployment benefits) and family support (paid leave for care and kindergartens). Dimensionality was confirmed across all types of Welfare state: conservative, social democratic, familiaristic, ex-communist and the former USSR.

Even at this level, our attitudes are multidimensional and, to a certain extent, correspond to our attitudes towards the category of recipients of benefits and services. The reason for supporting a particular program is also self-interest; it is confirmed that people who are likely to become social security benefits recipients will have a more positive attitude towards a given social policy (Kangas, 1997). More detailed information on the importance of socio-demographic characteristics and self-interest is given below in the following section dedicated to the results of research on determinants of attitudes towards social security.

Older research confirmed the universally high support for the elderly and the sick, but support for the poor and the unemployed differs more widely between countries (Jaeger, 2007). One of the explanations is provided by Larsen (2008), which assumes that the type of welfare state affects the way people perceive poverty through unemployment, such as whether it is due to a lack of effort, such as laziness or lack of happiness. For example, the US public and the media are accustomed to attributing poverty through unemployment to a lack of individual effort and laziness, so they attach responsibility to individuals. Conversely, in most European countries they are accustomed to "blame" contextual factors such as luck or social and economic conditions in the country (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). For this reason, support for the poor and

the unemployed can be very different between countries. The results of research on the importance of the welfare state are also presented in the next sections.

#### **IV. Research on determinants of social security attitudes**

Most foreign literature involves extensive research on social security attitudes, welfare state attitudes or attitudes towards social policy that contain the items or uses the survey databases such as the European Social Survey (ESS), International Social Survey Program (ISSP), European Values Survey (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS).

These surveys are conducted internationally or globally over the course of several decades and thus provide the data suitable for comparing countries and cultural and historical entities as well as capturing differences in attitudes and behavioral patterns over time. In order to clarify the current state of knowledge on this topic, we present the results of research built on survey data according to the determinants at individual and institutional level.

##### **a. Individual level determinants**

##### **Self-interest and socio-demographic characteristics**

Support for social welfare policy, programs and services or the welfare state in general results from how socio-demographic characteristics relate to self-interest. Self-interest as a factor depends on the position of an individual in the social structure of the state (van Oorchot, 2010), while the socio-economic status influences the perception and evaluation of social reality.

In the literature, there are classifications of people into individual groups which are characterised by a different interest in social benefits and services. For example, Andreß and Heien (2001) distinguished between taxpayers, consumers and producers of social security benefits and services. Women, pensioners, young families with children, low-income and low-educated people, ethnic minorities, the unemployed and the sick as among the main consumers support the welfare state to a greater extent, as compared to taxpayers. Although the attitudes of the taxpayers are more heterogeneous. It also depends on the social position, duties, services and care they receive. Similarly, Svallfors (2006) or Jaeger (2006) came to similar conclusions about self-interest and position in the labor market. In other words, those with a low market position - women, the unemployed, pensioners and sick people – express higher demands for government interventions.

Among socio-demographic characteristics, the importance of education for the support of the welfare state is contradictory. There is a greater variability of support between high income groups and higher educational levels (Linos & West, 2003). Some other studies confirmed the negative effect of education on solidarity and support for redistributive social policy (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Jaeger, 2006). While, Muuri (2010) confirmed in the Finnish sample that higher educated respondents actually have more positive attitudes than other educational groups on the functioning of the welfare services and the state of welfare benefits.

With regard to differences at a country level, Gryaznova (2013) confirmed the effect of education on welfare attitudes only in the countries of the former USSR and post-socialist countries. With higher education the support for a reduction in the government's responsibility for social security has declined. The importance of income was confirmed in all types of welfare states while the importance of the genus was confirmed only in post-socialist and

social democratic countries. Age was relevant only in conservative, liberal and familiaristic countries.

Although, according to studies and research of public opinion, self-interest as an indicator of support for social security programs is constantly confirmed, the effect is not usually too strong (van Oorschot, 2002). As reported by van Oorschot (2013), it is possible because the interest in the program exceeds their current situation and, for example, they do not assume that the program will benefit them or their family members or friends in the future.

## Values

Due to the low effect size of self-interest for social security programs support, research is often focused on cultural dimensions such as values, norms, national culture of the welfare state and ideology.

A lot of research covers the topic of importance of basic human values and value orientations. In Svallfors, Kullin and Schnabel (2012) the relationship between basic human values and welfare attitudes was not evident. On the contrary, Gryaznova and Magun (2012) and Gryaznova (2013) have confirmed that the values of dimension Conservation<sup>2</sup> and Self-transcendence<sup>3</sup> increase the level of support for government interventions, while the values of dimension Openness to change<sup>4</sup> and Self-enhancement<sup>5</sup> have a negative effect.

The predictive power of Schwartz's motivational type of values for attitudes towards social security was examined in their contribution "Values as predictors of attitudes towards social security (Piterová, 2017). The paper draws on the ESS 4th round data. Respondents of Slovak Republic were assigned to four distinct attitudinal types<sup>6</sup> (Social democratic, Conservative, Liberal, and Radical) with the aim to compare values profiles of these clusters. The results confirmed the values Benevolence and Tradition as significant predictors of Social Solidarity and values Power and Security as a significant predictors of Social Differentiation.

With a rising preference for security value, a decline in social differentiation can be predicted; or in other words the desire for equality between people is increasing; whereas, an increase in preference of value power predicts an increase in social differentiation, ie accepting differences. With the increasing importance of benevolence and tradition, an increase in solidarity can be predicted. Thus, values from the dimensions self-transcendence (benevolence), conservation (tradition, security) and self-enhancement (power) have been significant. Respondents in all four groups were most identified with values associated with conservative and self-transcendent values; mostly security and universalism.

---

<sup>2</sup> Dimension includes values of security, tradition, conformity, highlighting the desire for stability, traditions, self-discipline and obedience (Schwartz, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Dimension includes the values of universalism and benevolence, emphasizing the interest and care of the welfare of others, loyalty and social justice (Schwartz, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Dimension includes the values of self-direction, stimulation and hedonism, thus finding and testing new things, openness of thought, creativity and desire for pleasures are typical (Schwartz, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Dimension includes the values of Power and Achievement, which are characterized by the emphasis on authority, wealth, intelligence and abilities (Schwartz, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The respondents who score 1SD around the arithmetic mean on both scales were excluded from the analysis.

## Interpersonal and institutional trust

Welfare attitudes in general can also be affected by peoples' trust as well as by trust in institutions and politicians who create social policy programs and decide about redistribution. The fact that interpersonal trust can play a central role in supporting the welfare state is based on the belief that trust in people will strengthen the conviction that others will not misuse the social system.

Rothstein, Samanni and Teorell (2012) and Svallfors (2013) argued that support for a state's social policy is influenced by their confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the procedures used to redistribute money. Thus, interpersonal trust is associated with perceived procedural justice where people need to believe that it is equitable and efficient for the state.

These hypotheses were followed by Daniele and Geys (2015) who confirmed that interpersonal trust helps to explain preferences in redistributing resources. People who have trusted others have been more supportive of paying higher taxes, as well as increasing social spending for the state. A certain assumption indicating that the positive effect of interpersonal trust on social support may depend on the perceived quality of public institutions was also confirmed. Support for social policy thus required both interpersonal and institutional trust.

## The deservingness heuristics

When deciding on social security support we do not use, or we do not have, all the necessary information, and therefore we use cognitive heuristics. Heuristics are fast-pervasive decision-making rules that determine the relationship between the available information and the preferred decision (Petersen, 2015). It is a solution to the information deficit by encouraging people to look for and consider only a certain part of available information. One such heuristics is the heuristics of merit. When assessing social policy no attention is drawn to the program or policy itself, but to the moral nature of the recipients (see, for example, Jensen & Petersen, 2017, Koostra, 2016, Reeskens & van Orschoot, 2014, Van Orschoot, 2000, 2002, 2006, van Orschoot & Roosma, 2015).

One of the most widespread overview of factors that serve as inputs for cognitive heuristics in social policy has been described by van Oorschot (2000, 2002). According to him, recipients are considered as deserving of social benefits as: 1) they do not have control over their own situation; 2) they have a high level of need; 3) they have contributed to their society; or will do in the future; 4) share the same group identity; 5) their attitudes and behavior express gratitude. On the basis of these criteria (need, control, reciprocity, identity and attitude), it is possible to create a certain rank of merit among groups, which is comparable between European welfare states (van Oorschot, 2006).

What is particularly important is *effort* (e.g. control); as people support those who are perceived to be trying - for example, undergoing training to stop smoking or find work. Koostra (2016) confirmed in the English and the Dutch sample that *effort* was more important than the ethnic background in assessing merit; that is, if the minority ethnic population tried to find a job, the evaluation was the same as for the majority population. However, similar studies have not yet been conducted to create space for further study.

## **b. Institutional level determinants**

The importance of normatives, values, and beliefs about redistribution is formed even at the national level. A considerable amount of comparative research has confirmed the relationship between the welfare state regime and attitudes towards social security (redistributive principles, welfare programs, welfare policies) (see e.g. Andreß and Heien, 2001; Arts & Geliseen, 2002; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Gryaznova, 2013; Jaeger, 2006; Larsen, 2008; Svallfors, 1997). Gryaznova (2013), highlights how the welfare state regime explains 60 per cent of variability of welfare attitudes.

Analysis of values and value orientations at the national level, specifically the significance of self-transcendence and conservation, was confirmed by Kulin and Meuleman (2015). The study showed conservation (values tradition, conformity and security) as a stronger predictor for welfare state attitudes in East European countries. In addition, results were explained by mutual experience of “authoritarian egalitarianism” during the communism period. On the other side, self-transcendence (values universalism and benevolence) was proved as a stronger predictor in Western European countries, with higher social expenditure. Gryaznova (2013) also confirmed collectivism (= conservation) and altruism as significant predictors for demanding the welfare state, in post-socialist and former USSR countries, compared to other countries (familiaristic, liberal, conservative, social democratic).

Arikan and Ben-Nun Bloom (2015), Guo and Gilbert (2014) and Jaeger (2006) confirmed that individuals in countries highlighting egalitarianism and embeddedness<sup>7</sup> are more supportive of welfare security and higher state social expenditure. Furthermore, attitudes towards social policy are more positive. It has also been verified that the less a person is informed, the stronger the effect of values on their decision-making support for government interventions is (Elster, 2007; Kangas, 2007).

The concept of egalitarianism (in contrast to meritocratic values) was applied to research as a justice principle. Calzada, Gómez-Garrifo, Moreno and Moreno-Fuentes (2014) validated the positive correlation of egalitarianism and welfare attitudes in east European countries, while this concept was true in relation to the support of welfare state in southern Europe. People with meritocratic opinions were less supportive of welfare programs in northern and continental Europe.

Even the question of perceived justice plays a role in promoting social security. Arikan and Ben-Nun Bloom (2015) confirmed, in ISSP data, that if the preferred principle of distributive justice is not consistent with the perceived reality, it has a significant effect on attitudes towards the welfare state. The preferred principle of justice and the perception of social differences or even conflicts (between rich and poor, management and employees, high and low socio-economic groups) act as a mediator of the relationship between one's own position in society and support for the welfare state (Lewin-Epstein, Kaplan & Levanon, 2003).

Among the contextual factors, the level of unemployment as well as the existence of economic and social disparities in the country has been confirmed for social security attitudes. In other words, people in times of high unemployment are more supportive of social security. (Blekesaune, 2006; Erikson, MacKuen & Stimson, 2002). People identify more with left-wing

---

<sup>7</sup> Embeddedness is a characteristic trait of societies where an individual is not autonomous but as part of a group is responsible for meeting the collective goals. Those societies prefer values as social order, tradition, security, obedience and wisdom (Schwartz, 2004).

beliefs when unemployment increased, while inflation leads to a rise in right-wing opinions (Piurko, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011).

Other indicators that are used to explain the existing differences between countries are, for example, the living standard of the country expressed in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita or GDP based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) or CPP, the country's social expenditure in relation to GDP. However, the issue of attitudes to social security is so complex that looking for individual and institutional factors to explain differences is not enough. Frequently considered factors in the discussion of comparative studies are therefore the specific history, distinction in culture, and ideology of countries and cultural entities.

## Conclusion

The extensive amount of international research has considerably expanded the state of knowledge in the field of attitudes towards social security and its determinants over the last 20 years. Research is based on extensive databases that enable international comparison, and longitudinal assessments responding to changes.

As for the question “*Who is more supportive?*”, the comparison of European countries showed that the highest support for social security is in northern countries with social democratic regimes. These countries provide benefits and services to a wide range of people. Moreover, they have higher interpersonal and institutional trust, which leads to the higher support of redistribution and welfare programs. Even amongst attitudinal types, the social democratic type has the most positive attitude towards social security.

When taking into account the socio-demographic characteristics, women, young people, people with secondary education, the middle-classes, religious people, the political left and the unemployed are more supportive.. In the case of self-interest, people working in state sector, those who perceive higher risk (the unemployed), those who receive services and benefits (women, the retired, the unemployed), and those who pay lower taxes are more supportive.

When it comes to values, people with egalitarian, collectivistic value orientations and values of self-transcendence, altruism and embeddedness are more supportive. The conservation value is significant for welfare state support mostly in east European countries.

The answer to the question “*Who do we support?*” is provided by the extensive research of Jensen, Petersen, Koostera, Roosma, Reeskens and van Orschoot who study the heuristics of deservingness. Five factors for the decision-making process: control, need, reciprocity, identity, attitude have been confirmed. We are more in favor of helping people who are not responsible for their situation; who will contribute to the state later or who are similar to us and express an attitude of gratitude for the benefits and services they received. Studies also confirm that while we are more supportive of the elderly and the sick, help towards the unemployed and the poor appears to be more diverse amongst countries (Jaeger, 2007).

Research of contextual factors answers the question “*when are we supportive more often?*” We are more in favor of left-wing policies, we use egalitarian principles, and show social solidarity in times of crisis and higher unemployment and also during a period of greater economic and social disparities among the people in a country.

The weakness of exploring this topic is in the abstractness of the concept. Welfare attitudes are a multi-dimensional phenomenon that leads to differences in research projects; sometimes the focus is on the support of higher taxes to provide higher benefits while in other studies it is necessary to evaluate the state of welfare system, social programs or answer the question of welfare state responsibilities. However, it is possible to categorize these attitudes according to the degree of generality as outlined in the contribution.

Similarly, surveys use a low number of items representing scales, and a large amount of data that reduce error sensitivity and the accuracy of results. It is also difficult to capture contextual influences, which in this case play a significant role; research does not directly investigate whether differences are caused by a welfare regime or other contextual factors. In this case, the possible solution could be the realisation of experiments that bring clear information about the causality. Moving some attention from robust comparative research to partial, reproducible experiments would allow us to capture a narrower spectrum of selected factors and their interaction.

It is necessary to know how the attitudes are changing, why they differ among people and countries and how we could affect them. Scientific study of welfare attitudes creates the imaginary bridge between people and the welfare state and allows the formation of a welfare policy in accordance with the preferences of citizens.



## References:

- Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann (Eds.), *Action control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11-39). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Alesina, A., & Glaeser, E. L. (2004). *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, xii, 250 pp.
- Andreß, H. J., & Heien, T. (2001). Four Worlds of Welfare State Attitudes? A Comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States. *European Sociological Review*, 17, 337- 356.
- Arikan, G., & Ben-Nun Bloom, P. (2015). Social Values and Cross-National Differences in Attitudes towards Welfare. *Political Studies*, 63(2), 431-448.
- Arts, W., & Gelissen, J. (2001). Welfare states, solidarity and justice principles: Does the type really matter? *Acta Sociologica*, 44(4), 283-300.
- Arts, W., & Gelissen, J. (2002). Three worlds of welfare capitalism or more? A state of the art report. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 12(2) 137-158.
- Beblavý, M. (2012). *Sociálna politika*. E-book. Available on: [http://www.socialnapolitika.eu/files/8613/5393/1103/mbeblavy\\_socialna\\_politika.pdf](http://www.socialnapolitika.eu/files/8613/5393/1103/mbeblavy_socialna_politika.pdf)
- Bednárík, R. (2018). *Stav sociálnej ochrany na Slovensku (Situácia k 1. januáru 2018)*, Bratislava: Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, 68s. Available on: [https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2018/socialna\\_ochrana\\_1\\_1\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2018/socialna_ochrana_1_1_2018.pdf)
- Blekesaune, M. (2006). *Economic Condition and Public Attitudes towards Welfare State Policies*. ISER Working Paper 2006-45. Colchester: University of Essex.
- Blekesaune, M., & Quadagno, J. (2003). Public Attitudes towards Welfare State Policies: A Comparative Analysis of 24 Nations. *European Sociological Review*, 19, 415-427.
- Bonoli, G. (1997). Classifying Welfare States: A two dimensional approach. *Journal of Social Policy*, 26(3), 351-372.
- Calzada, I., Gómez-Garrifo, M., Moreno, L., & Moreno-Fuentes, F. J. (2014). It is not about equality. A Study on the (Other) Values That Ground Attitudes to the Welfare State. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 26(2), 178-201.
- Castles, F. D., & Mitchell, D. (1992). Identifying Welfare State Regimes: The Links Between Politics, Instruments and Outcomes. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institution*, 5(1), 1-26.
- Castles, F. D., & Mitchell, D. (1993). Worlds of Welfare and Families of Nations. In F.G. Castles (Ed.), *Families of nations: Patterns of public policy in western democracies* (pp. 93-128). Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth.

- Daniele, G., & Geys, B. (2015). Interpersonal trust and welfare state support. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 39, 1-12.
- Elster, J., (2007). *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Erikson, R. S., MacKuen, M. B., & Stimson, J. A. (2002). *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1998). *Social Foundation of Post-industrial Economies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferrera, M. (1996). The 'Southern Model' of Welfare in Social Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 6(1), 17-37.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Gryaznova, O. (2013). Factors Affecting Welfare Attitudes in Different Types of Welfare States: Personal Interests and Values. *Higher School of Economics Research Paper No. WP BRP 18/SOC/2013*. Available on: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2267337>
- Gryaznova O., & Magun V. (2012). Zaprošy zhitelej evropejskih stran na gosudarstvennuju social'nuju podderzhku i ih bazovye cennosti. *SPERO*, 17, 7-34.
- Guo, J., & Gilbert, N. (2014). Public Attitudes towards Government Responsibility for Child Care: The Impact of Individual Characteristics and Welfare Regimes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 44(12), 82-89.
- Jaeger, H. M. (2007). Global Civil Society and the Political Depoliticisation Global Governance. *International Political Sociology*, 1(3), 257-277.
- Jæger, M. M. (2006). What Makes People Support Public Responsibility for Welfare Provision: Self-interest or Political Ideology? A longitudinal approach. *Acta Sociologica*, 49(3), 321-338.
- Jensen, C., & Petersen, M. B. (2017). The Deservingness Heuristic and the Politics of Health Care. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1), 68-83.
- Jordan, J. (2013). Policy feedback and support for the welfare state. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 23(2), 134-148.
- Jurík, J. (2017). *Sociálne zabezpečenie v kocke* (05.01.2018). Available on: <https://ippr.sk/s/207-socialne-zabezpecenie-v-kocke>
- Kalmijn, M., & Saraceno, Ch. (2008). A Comparative Perspective on Intergenerational Support. *European Societies*, 10(3), 479-508.

Kangas, O. (1997). Self-interest and the common good: The impact of norms, selfishness and the context in social policy opinions. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 26, 475–494.

Kangas, O. (2007). *The Grasshopper and the Ants: Popular Opinions of Just Distribution in Australia and Finland*. Sidney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Koostra, A. (2016). Deserving and Undeserving welfare claimants in Britain and the Netherlands: Examining the Role of Ethnicity and Migration Status Using a Vignette Experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 32(3), 325-338.

Kulin, J., & Meuleman, B. (2015). Human Values and Welfare State Support in Europe: An East - West divide? *European Sociological Review*, 31(5), 418-432.

Larsen, Ch. A. (2008). The Institutional Logic of Welfare Attitudes: How Welfare Regimes Influence Public Support. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(2), 145-168.

Leibfried, S. (1992). Towards a European Welfare State? On Integrating Poverty Regimes into the European Community. In Z. Ferge, & J. E. Kolberg (Eds.), *Social Policy in a changing Europe* (pp. 245-79). Frankfurt: Campus.

Lewin-Epstein, N., Kaplan, A., & Levanon, A. (2003). Distributive Justice and Attitudes towards the Welfare State. *Social Justice Research*, 16(1), 1-24.

Linos, K., & West, M. (2003). Self-Interest, Social Beliefs, and Attitudes to Redistribution. *European Sociological Review*, 19, 393-409.

Macková, Z. (2017). *Právo sociálneho zabezpečenia*. Bratislava: Heuréka, 161pp.

Muuri, A. (2010). The impact of the use of the social welfare services or social security benefits on attitudes to social welfare policies. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 19, 182-193.

Petersen, M. B. (2015). Evolutionary Political Psychology: On the Origin and Structure of Heuristics and Biases in Politics. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 36(1), 45-78.

Piterová, I. (2017). Hodnoty ako prediktory postojov k sociálnemu zabezpečeniu. In M. Blatný, M. Jelínek, P. Květon, & D. Vobořil (Eds.), *Sociální procesy a osobnost, 2017: Looking back, looking for...Sborník příspěvků*. (pp.302-308). Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

Piurko Y., Schwartz S. H., & Davidov E. (2011). Basic personal values and the meaning of left-right political orientations in 20 countries. *Polit. Psychol.* 32, 537–561.

Reeskens, T., & van Oorschot, W. (2014). Europeans' Feelings of Deprivation amidst the Financial Crisis. The Effects of Welfare State Effort and Informal Social Relations. *Acta Sociologica*, 57(3), 191-206.

Repková, K. (2012). *Sociálne služby v kontexte komunálnej sociálnej politiky*. Bratislava, IVPR.

Repková, K. (2016). *Kvalita v kontexte transformácie sociálnych služieb*. Bratislava, IVPR

Repková, K. (2017). *Sociálne služby. Podpora zmysluplnej každodennosti v ľudsko-právnej perspektíve*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, 265 s.

Roosma, F., Gelissen, J., & W. van Oorschot (2013). The multidimensionality of Welfare State Attitudes: A European Cross-National Study. *Social Indicators Research*, 113(1), 235-255.

Roosma, F., van Oorschot, W., & Gelissen, J. (2014). The preferred role and perceived performance of the welfare state: European welfare attitudes from a multidimensional perspective. *Social Science Research*, 44, 200-210.

Rothstein, B., Samanni, K., & Teorell, J. (2012). Explaining the welfare state: power resources vs. the quality of government. *Eur. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 4(1), 1–28.

Schwartz, S., H. (2004). Mapping and Interpreting Cultural Differences around the World. In H. Vinken, J. Soeters, & P. Ester (Eds.), *Comparing Cultures, Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective*, (pp. 43-73). Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Svallfors, S. (1997). Worlds of Welfare and Attitudes Redistribution: A comparison of eight western nations. *European Sociological Review*, 13, 283-304.

Svallfors, S. (2006). *The Moral Economy of Class: Class and Attitudes in Comparative Perspective*. Stanford (Ca): Stanford University Press.

Svallfors, S. (2012). Welfare States and Welfare Attitudes. In S. Svallfors (Ed.), *Contested Welfare States: Welfare attitudes in Europe and Beyond* (pp. 1- 24). Stanford, California: Stanford university press.

Svallfors, S. (2013). Government quality, egalitarianism, and attitudes to taxes and social spending: a European comparison. *European Political Science Review*, 5(3), 363-380.

Svallfors, S., Kulin, J., & Schnabel, A. (2012). Age, class, and attitudes towards government responsibilities. In S. Svallfors, (Ed). *Contested Welfare State: Welfare attitudes in Europe and Beyond*, Stanford, California: Stanford University press, 158-192.

van Oorschot, W. (2000). Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy and Politics: Studies of local government and its services*, 28(1), 33-48.

van Oorschot, W. (2002). Individual motives for contributing to welfare benefits in the Netherland. *Policy & Politics*, 30(1), 31-46.

van Oorschot, W. (2006). Making the difference in Social Europe: Deservingness perceptions and conditionality of solidarity among citizens of European Welfare States. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 16, 23-42.

van Oorschot, W. (2013). Comparative Welfare State Analysis with Survey-based Benefit Reciprocity Data: The "Dependent Variable Problem" Revisited, *European Journal of Social Security*, 15(3), 224-249.

van Oorschot, W., & Meuleman, B. (2012). Welfarism and the multidimensionality of welfare state legitimacy: Evidence from The Netherlands, 2006. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 21(1), 79-93.

van Oorschot, W., & Roosma, F. (2015). *The social legitimacy of differently targeted benefits*. *ImPRovE Working Paper No. 15/11*. Antwerp: Herman Delleck Centre for Social Policy-University of Antwerp. Available on: <http://improve-research.eu>

Výrost, J. (2010). Postoje k sociálnej starostlivosti. In J. Výrost, a kol. (Eds.), *Európska sociálna sonda (ESS) 4. kolo na Slovensku* (s. 181-219). Prešov: Universum.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). OSN: New York, [cit. 4.12.2017]. Available on: [http://www.dostojnost.eu/Vseobecna\\_deklaracia\\_ludskych\\_prav.pdf](http://www.dostojnost.eu/Vseobecna_deklaracia_ludskych_prav.pdf)

## Modelling the oscillatory component of forward locomotion in *C. Elegans*

Marek Dobeš, Institute of Social Sciences, Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of SAS, Košice, [dobes@saske.sk](mailto:dobes@saske.sk)

Rudolf Andoga, Department of Avionics, Faculty of Aeronautics, Technical University of Košice, [andoga@tuke.sk](mailto:andoga@tuke.sk)

Ladislav Fózó, Department of Aviation Engineering, Faculty of Aeronautics, Technical University of Košice, [ladislav.fozo@tuke.sk](mailto:ladislav.fozo@tuke.sk)

**DOBEŠ, Marek – ANDOGA, Rudolf – FÓZÓ, Ladislav. Modelling the oscillatory component of forward locomotion in *C. Elegans*. Človek a spoločnosť, 2018, roč. 21, č. 3, s. 70-76.**

### Abstract:

In this study we provide a simplified model of the forward oscillatory locomotion neural circuit of the worm *C. Elegans*. Based on available connectome but lacking electrophysiological data on neurons and synapses we fill this gap by fine-tuning the electrophysiological parameters of the model so that it achieves oscillations.

We observe that without electrical synapses the motor neurons are not active synchronously, thus hindering movement patterns observed in live worms. After the introduction of electrical synapses into the model, motor neurons work in synchrony.

Worm *C. Elegans* is still the only organism with a completely mapped connectome. This makes it a popular system for computational modelling. *C. Elegans* hermaphrodite has 302 neurons. The number of chemical and electrical synapses is in the thousands but is not yet definitively mapped. A seminal study by White et al. (1986) provided the first description of *C. Elegans* connectome and is continually updated.

In spite of its relatively simple nervous system, *C. Elegans* is capable of a whole range of behaviours. The locomotory system of *C. Elegans* comprises of 95 wall muscles and 75 ventral cord motor neurons. Motor neurons are regulated by motor command interneurons. A worm moves by propagating bends along its body. *C. Elegans* is capable of moving forward and backward with differing speed. It can also realise U-turns to abruptly change the direction of its movement.

Using Animatlab2 software we specified a set of neurons. We built two pairs of artificial motor neurons, representing VB and DB class and a single artificial neuron representing the PVC interneuron. Parameters of neurons and synapses were set by the software and fine-tuned by the authors to mimic processes described in theory.

The first step was to build an oscillatory circuit that would enable the undulatory movement of the animal. We set up the PVC neuron with 100 nA tonic stimulus that would simulate incoming impulses that drive the forward movement. We also added 0.1 mV tonic noise to all neurons simulating noise inherent in neural systems. The initial threshold of the PVC neuron was -40mV; the resting potential was -60mV. Accommodation time constant was set to 10 ms, AHP conductance to 1 microS and AHP time constant to 3 ms. Relative accommodation was set to 0.3, relative size to 1 and time constant to 5 ms.

We then set up DB1, DB2, VB1 and VB2 neurons with the same parameters: the initial threshold of neurons was -40mV, and the resting potential was -60mV. The accommodation time constant was set to 1 ms, the AHP conductance to 1 microS and the AHP time constant to 30 ms. The relative accommodation was set to 0.3, the relative size to 1 and the time constant to 5 ms.

In the next step we introduced four depolarising IPSP synapses from PVC to DB and VB neurons. The equilibrium potential of each synapse was set to -30 mV, the decay rate to 10 ms and the facilitation decay to 100 ms. The relative facilitation was set to 1 and the synaptic conductance to 5 microS.

Then we built two pairs of mutually inhibitory synapses; between DB1 and VB1 and between DB2 and VB2. These reciprocal inhibitory synapses together with the threshold adaptation enable oscillation of activity alternating between DB and VB neurons. The parameters of inhibitory (hyperpolarising IPSP synapses) were set as follows: the equilibrium potential of each synapse was set to -70 mV, the decay rate to 10 ms and the facilitation decay to 100 ms. The relative facilitation was set to 1.5 and the synaptic conductance to 0.5 microS. There are more ways to achieve oscillation in a neural circuit. We do not know yet what mechanism is used in *C. Elegans* as we have very little information on the electrophysiology of *C. Elegans* neurons. Oscillation can happen because of a rhythmically bursting pacemaker neuron or by mutual inhibition of neurons with adaptation of either neural threshold or the synapses. In our study we provide a possible mechanism of oscillatory synchronised activity necessary for *C. Elegans* locomotion. We show that without the electrical synapses muscle, contraction would not be synchronous and forward movement would not happen.

**Keywords:**

*C. Elegans*. Locomotion. Computational modelling.

## Introduction

Worm *C. Elegans* is still the only organism with a completely mapped connectome. This makes it a popular system for computational modelling. *C. Elegans* hermaphrodite has 302 neurons. The number of chemical and electrical synapses is in the thousands but is not yet definitively mapped. Seminal study by White et al. (1986) provided the first description of *C. Elegans* connectome and is continually updated (Varshney et al., 2011; wormwiring.org).

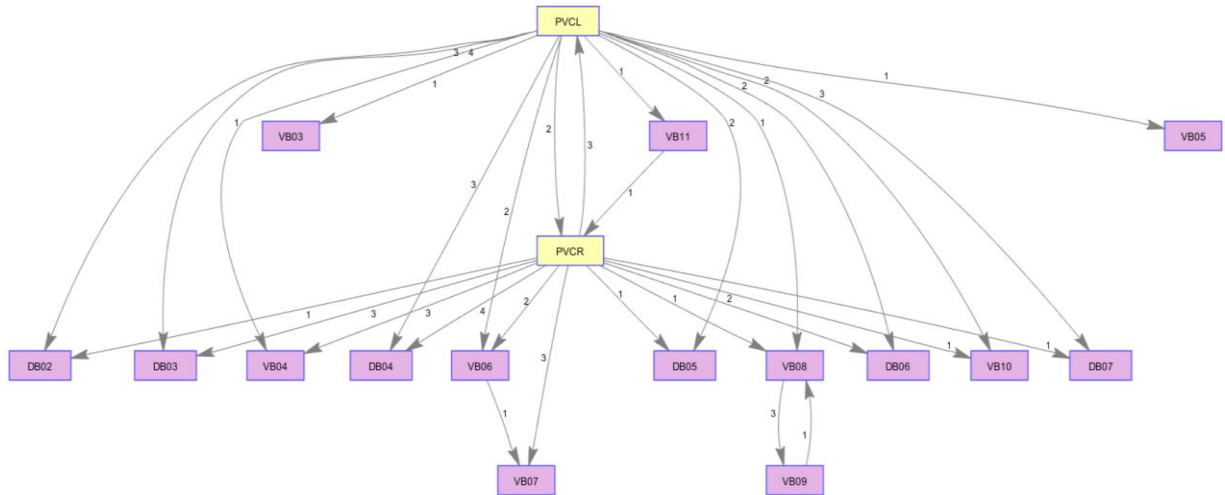
In spite of its relative simple nervous system, *C. Elegans* is capable of a whole range of behaviours. The locomotory system of *C. Elegans* comprises of 95 wall muscles and 75 ventral cord motor neurons. Motor neurons are regulated by motor command interneurons. A worm moves by propagating bends along its body. *C. Elegans* is capable of moving forward and backward with differing speed. It can also realise U-turns to abruptly change the direction of its movement.

We still do not know how the motor circuit operates, although many models have been proposed (e. g. Bryden, Cohen, 2008; Majmudar et al., 2012).

In this study we look at the question of how the oscillatory pattern that could cause movement in *C. Elegans* could be generated.

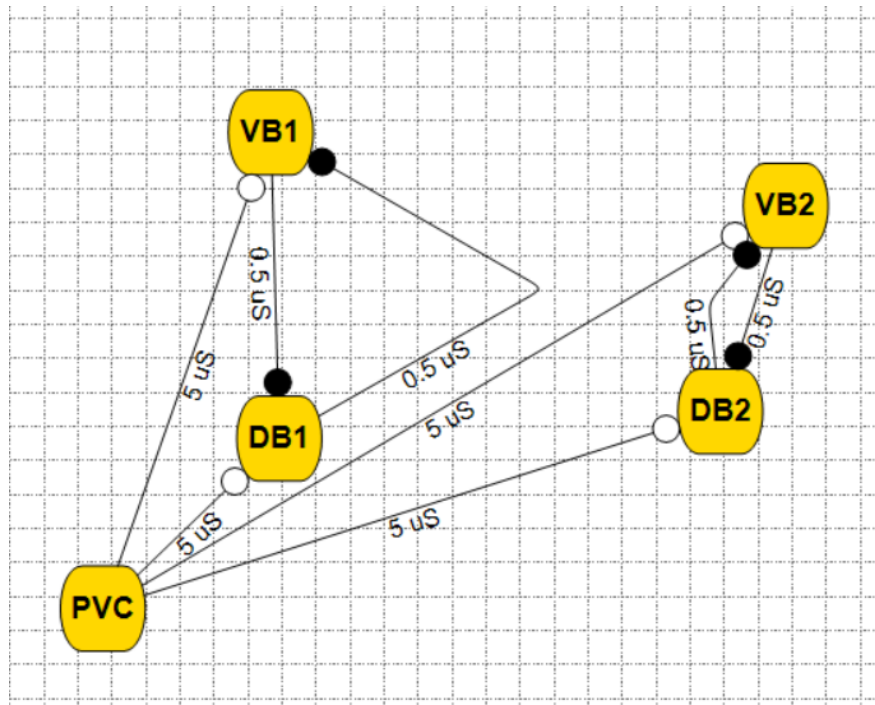
## Method

Using Animatlab2 software ([www.animatlab.com](http://www.animatlab.com)) we specified a set of neurons. Studies (Goodman, 2006; Olivares et al., 2017, Wen et al., 2012) show that PVC interneurons play a crucial role in forward locomotion in *C. Elegans*. PVCL and PVCR neurons run across the body of the worm and innervate (among others) the VB and DB class of motor neurons (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Connectome of PVC, DB and VB neurons - chemical synapses. Reconstructed from data from White et al. (1986) and Varshney et al. (2011).

We built two pairs of artificial motor neurons, representing the VB and DB class and a single artificial neuron representing the PVC interneuron (Figure 2). The parameters of neurons and synapses were set by the software and fine-tuned by the authors to mimic processes described in the theory.



**Figure 2:** A simplified model of the oscillatory circuit in *C. Elegans*. White dots = excitatory synapses. Black dots = inhibitory synapses.



The first step was to build an oscillatory circuit that would enable undulatory movement of the animal. We set up the PVC neuron with 100 nA tonic stimulus that would simulate incoming impulses that drive the forward movement. We also added 0.1 mV tonic noise to all neurons simulating noise inherent in neural systems. The initial threshold of the PVC neuron was -40mV, the resting potential was -60mV. The accommodation time constant was set to 10 ms, the AHP conductance to 1 microS, and the AHP time constant to 3 ms. The relative accommodation was set to 0.3, the relative size to 1 and the time constant to 5 ms.

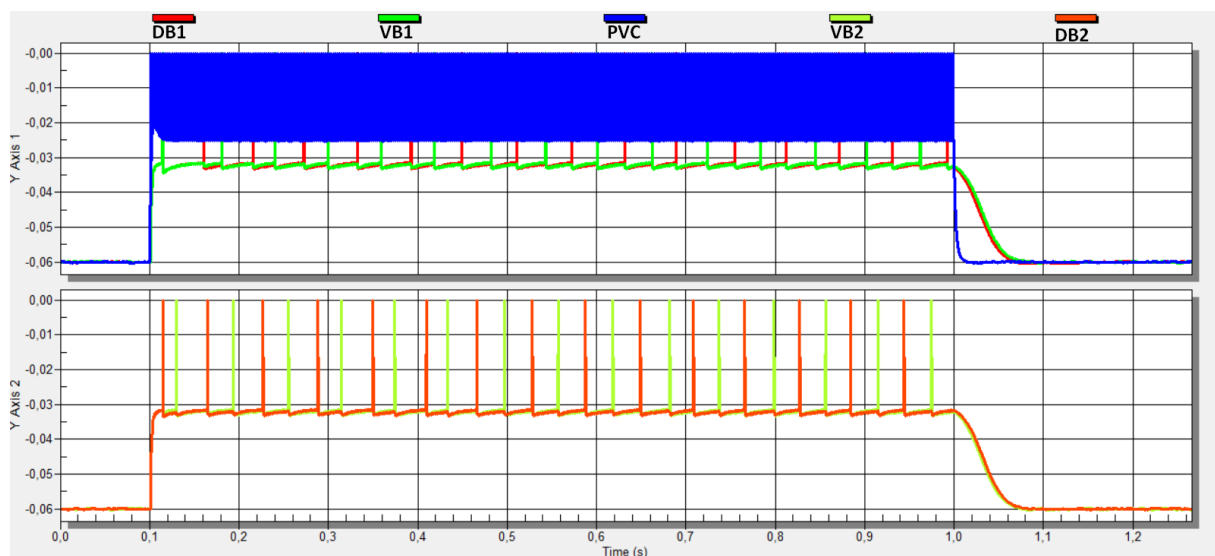
We then set up DB1, DB2, VB1 and VB2 neurons. Their parameters were the same; the initial threshold of neurons was -40mV, and the resting potential was -60mV. The accommodation time constant was set to 1 ms, the AHP conductance to 1 microS, and the AHP time constant to 30 ms. The relative accommodation was set to 0.3, the relative size to 1 and the time constant to 5 ms.

In the next step we introduced four depolarising IPSP synapses from PVC to DB and VB neurons. The equilibrium potential of each synapse was set to -30 mV, the decay rate to 10 ms and the facilitation decay to 100 ms. The relative facilitation was set to 1 and the synaptic conductance to 5 microS.

We then built two pairs of mutually inhibitory synapses between DB1 and VB1, and between DB2 and VB2. These reciprocal inhibitory synapses together with the threshold adaptation enable the oscillation of activity alternating between DB and VB neurons. The parameters of inhibitory (hyperpolarising IPSP synapses) were set as follows: the equilibrium potential of each synapse was set to -70 mV, the decay rate to 10 ms and the facilitation decay to 100 ms. The relative facilitation was set to 1.5 and the synaptic conductance to 0.5 microS.

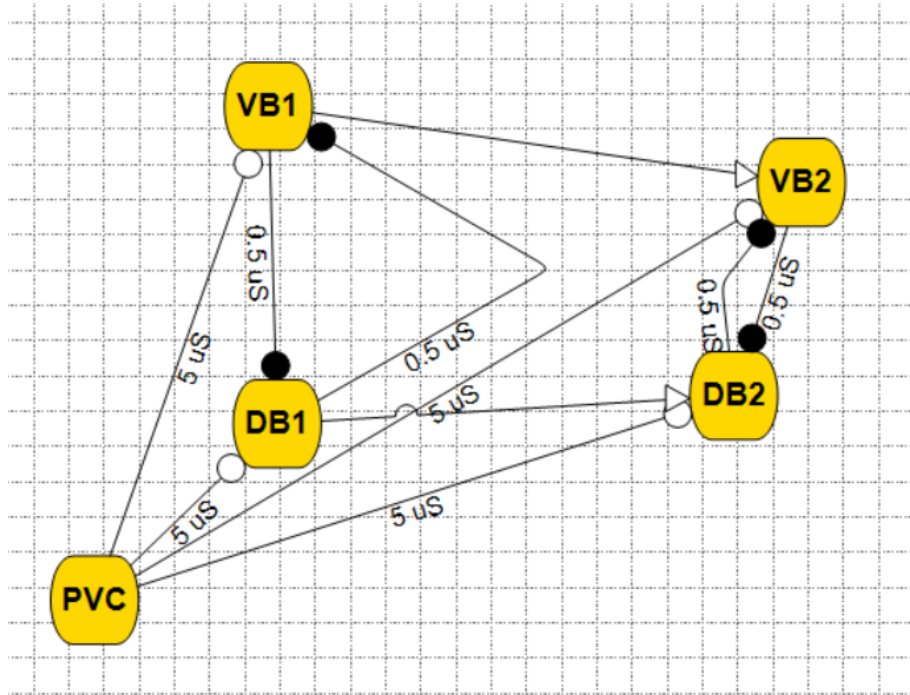
## Results

When running a simulation, we can observe an oscillatory pattern of activity in DB and VB neurons (Figure 3). In a random pattern, either neuron starts being active and via inhibitory synapse inhibits the activity of its counterpart. After the neural threshold adapts, the neuron's activity ceases, inhibition stops and the opposite neuron starts to be active. The process repeats, forming oscillations.



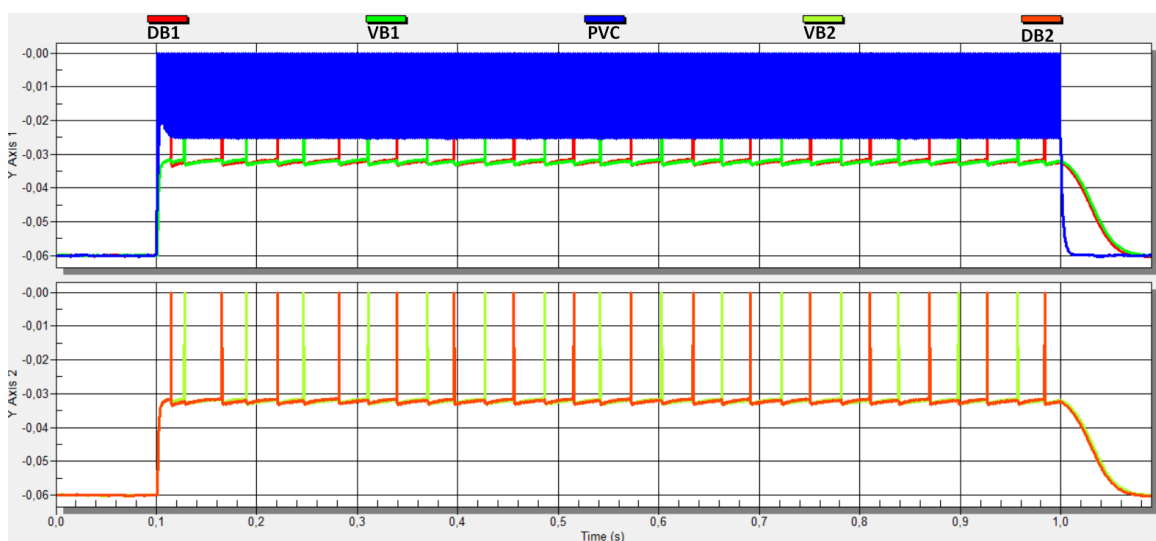
**Figure 3:** Oscillatory activity of DB and VB neurons. Y-Axis 1 and 2: membrane voltage in mV.

However, after closer inspection we can see that the activity of DB1 and DB2 neurons (as well as the activity of VB1 and VB2 neurons) is not synchronised. Such behaviour would in practice lead to uncoordinated muscle activity in the worm, seriously impairing its movement. This is when electrical synapses come into play. We introduced electrical synapses following the data from White et al., 1986, Varshney et al., 2011 and wormwiring.org that connect classes of motor neurons. In Animatlab we used non-rectifying electrical synapses between DB1 and DB2 neurons and VB1 and VB2 neurons (Figure 4). Both low coupling and high coupling was set to 0.2 microS.



**Figure 4:** Extended model with electrical synapses. White dots = excitatory synapses. Black dots = inhibitory synapses. Arrows = electrical synapses.

After the introduction of electrical synapses we can see that the activity of pairs of motor neurons belonging to the same class is synchronised (Figure 5).



**Figure 5:** Synchronised oscillatory activity of DB and VB neurons. Y-Axis 1 and 2: membrane voltage in mV.

## **Discussion**

There are more ways to achieve oscillation in a neural circuit. We do not know yet what mechanism is used in *C. Elegans* as we have very little information on the electrophysiology of *C. Elegans* neurons. Oscillation can happen because of rhythmically bursting pacemaker neuron or by mutual inhibition of neurons with the adaptation of either neural threshold or the synapses.

In our study we provide a possible mechanism of oscillatory synchronised activity necessary for *C. Elegans* locomotion. We show that without electrical synapses, muscle contraction would not be synchronous and forward movement would not happen.

## References:

- Bryden, J., Cohen, N. (2008). Neural control of *Caenorhabditis elegans* forward locomotion: the role of sensory feedback. *Biol Cybern*, 98(4), 339-351.
- Goodman, M. B. (2006). Mechanosensation. *Wormbook*, 1-14. Online: [http://www.wormbook.org/chapters/www\\_mechanosensation/mechanosensation.html](http://www.wormbook.org/chapters/www_mechanosensation/mechanosensation.html). DOI: 10.1895/wormbook.1.62.1
- Majmudar, T., et al. (2012). Experiments and theory of undulatory locomotion in a simple structured medium. *J R Soc Interface*, 9(73), 1809-1823.
- Olivares, E. O., Izquierdo, E. J., & Beer, R. D. (2017). Potential role of a ventral nerve cord central pattern generator in forward and backward locomotion in *Caenorhabditis elegans*. *Network Neuroscience*, 2(3), 323-343. DOI: 10.1162/netn\_a\_00036
- Varshney, L. R. et al. (2011). Structural Properties of the *Caenorhabditis elegans* Neuronal Network. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 7, 2.
- Wen, Q. et al. (2012). Proprioceptive coupling within motor neurons drives *C. elegans* forward locomotion. *Neuron*, 76(4), 750-761.
- White, J. G. et al. (1986). The structure of the nervous system of the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans*. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 314(1165), 1-340.

## Acknowledgements:

This research study was supported by the scientific grant agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and of Slovak Academy of Sciences VEGA 2/0043/17: *Computational model of integration of chemosensors and motor modules in C. Elegans neural network.*

**Škorvagová, Eva. *Preventívne a intervenčné programy v kontexte sociálno-patologických javov – preventívny program, Slničnice nádeje*. Žilina : EDIS, 2016. 90 s. ISBN 978-80-554-1228-3**

**Škorvagová, Eva. *Prevention and Intervention Programmes in the Context of Socio-pathological Phenomena – Prevention Programme, Sunflowers of Hope*. Žilina : EDIS, 2016. 90 p. ISBN 978-80-554-1228-3**

The book offers a closer insight to the topic „Prevention of Social Patological Phenomena“. However, the author emphasizes her concern in practical use of the book, not the theoretical analysis of specific concepts. The book consists of 4 main chapters. After a brief introduction, the first chapter describes the prevention and intervention activities within the workframe of a school psychologist. The second chapter provides information on the basic aspects of socio-pathological phenomena in the context of actual national and international research. This chapter contains 5 subchapters with different methods of prevention. The third chapter explains the concept of “Slničnice nádeje” (Sunflowers of hope), the intervention programme. In the fourth and final chapter, the reader is presented with a summary and discussion of possible future applications, advantages and disadvantages of the concepts described in the book.

The author has an informational and formal style of writing combined with a reader-friendly and easy to follow descriptions, aiding the reader to grasp the concept of the socio-pathological phenomena described. After the first chapter describing the work and intervention principles used by the school psychologists, it concludes with the basis of every long term intervention. It does so by applying the principles of tolerance and unity thought to be prevention (primary, secondary, tertiary). This helps introduce and accept new following programmes and interventions in schools, and can contribute to help change the work and mindset of teachers, students, and parents preparing them to the different type of work or activities.

The second chapter also contains empirical data obtained through various researches, based on the statement “When every society pays attention to children, their upbringing, education, social status, and conditions where they grow up and are prepared to join the society”, it is necessary to observe and describe socio-pathological phenomena. Not only is it important to evaluate these data but it is inevitable to minimise if not eliminate the negative impact socio-pathological phenomena have on children. This chapter provides data about negative phenomena such as abuse of alcohol, illegal substances, tobacco, but also bullying, school skipping, lying, aggressive behaviour, emotional abuse, etc. For instance, we get a closer look on local data obtained in the capital, Bratislava compared with data harvested in nearby villages. The author gives the reader a closer look on the percentage of students who have encountered bullying, verbal aggression or an alarming rise of aggression among youngsters. From the data published within these studies, the author assumes that high number of negative phenomena among youngsters needs to be moderated by creating and implementing functional, long-term educational, and prevention programmes. The author also poses a question about the antecedents of this behaviour and why it is on the rise. The teachers, for instance, expressed their opinions on why the numbers are high and mostly agreed on the factors such as family,

the general crisis of values, decay of morals, impact of media, and inappropriate leisure time activities. While students picked options such as boredom at school, impact of the friends, inappropriate leisure time activities, and inappropriate approach of the teachers towards the students. The book opens a discussion while knowing the norms, that both students and teachers are using inappropriate behaviour patterns. From the scientific point of view the author emphasizes a significance of the fact, that both teachers and students use risky behaviour, which can be labelled as not coping with situational conflicts.

The subchapter “The road to emotional maturity” gives the reader a perfect image of how the group prevention programme in students (aged 12 – 15) and teachers is being used with very satisfying results. This programme was implemented at Slovak schools since the beginning of a school year 1999/2000 and continues to positively reinforce the emotional aspect of child’s personality. It contains 10 topics, using roleplay and various exercises contributing to gradually realize the Self, use self-reflection and teaches how to seek and boost emotional maturity within a group. Another subchapter shows the reader how the educational prevention programme of multicultural tolerance development trains the students how to step up against violence in schools. It has been scientifically proven to lower anxiety, depression, and antisocial behaviour. The last subchapter highlights the intervention programme “Akí sme” (The way we are). It was designed by D. Fedakova and M. Dobeš from the Slovak Academy of Sciences and is used at schools. This tool/brochure is available to download for free, and any school psychologist or teacher can use it during their classes. It was designed to strengthen the relationships among students, show them their weaknesses, to cope better with their problems, to create a safe environment at school where they can discuss their feelings, their problems with their peers, but moreover with parents and teachers. The programme was also designed as a tool to provide a space for expressing their emotions and solve the disagreements in a constructive way. It contains a wide spectrum of activities such as games, role plays, discussions, self-discovery activities, group activities, energisers and a lot more. On a qualitative level of data analysis, the programme founders found out a positive impact, children learnt how to show and express their emotions, to listen actively to each other in class, to care more about the others and to be less negative.

Throughout the whole book, the reader can have a look at colourful scans and photographs of different activities used within these prevention programmes. The book contains the scans of writing, drawings, hand-made products or children during the different activities. This gives the reader a very useful insight and inspiration for further use. It can be incredibly interesting to have a look at the drawings and verbal expression of evaluation of activities (e.g. “During the training programme, I learnt how to handle anger/how to help the right people/how to calm down” in children’s hand script with a drawing).

The third chapter, “Slnečnice nádeje” (Sunflowers of hope), offers a detailed description of the educational prevention programme aiming to help gain skills (mostly soft skills), and develop skills already acquired by students. This tool was designed to show students how to be more prosocial and emphatic. It should teach the participants the following: lessen the appearance of socio-pathological phenomena, faulty behaviours (theft, skipping school, runaways from home), gain the attention in a constructive way, minimize the behaviour demanding attention and power, obtain skills to react and give feedback, to realize their weaknesses, to strengthen

self-consciousness, self-confidence, etc. The reader then goes through the whole process of the intervention programme, every activity is described in detail, also some of the activities have illustrations included. The activities deal with conflict, communication and emotions, drawing student's own coat of arms, game of news reporters and various other interesting activities. Then there is an evaluation of the styles of behaviour in the interpersonal conflict where each style is represented by an animal (shark, orientation at self, fox, tortoise, etc); a nice way for children to identify with and get to know themselves better. At the end the authors of the tool created a sociometric chart and evaluate the relations within the class. They conclude that the significant impact of the programme can be observed and that the aims proposed at the beginning were fulfilled.

In the final last chapter, the discussion and summary offers a conclusion and reminds the reader with the true importance of creation and implementation of the preventive and intervention training programmes in schools. The author explains how inevitably important it is for the prevention and intervention activities and programmes to be conducted. However, it is also necessary to evaluate their effectiveness.

This book is definitely a useful tool for all psychologists, teachers, and youth workers who want to understand the nature of the negative and pathological social phenomena, and help educate the smart and skilful youth.

Veronika Pastrnáková, [pastrnakova@saske.sk](mailto:pastrnakova@saske.sk)

## **Report on the 21st Social Processes and Personality Conference, 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018, Stará Lesná**

From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 an international scientific conference was held at the Congress Center Academia of SAS, in Stará Lesná. The 21st conference was organised by the Institute of Social Sciences of the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The conference has been held on a yearly basis, however, since a mutual agreement of the scientific committees of both Social processes and Personality conference and Conference Personality in Context of cognitions, emotionality and motivations, it has been decided that these events will be held in turns, on a bi-yearly basis.

The conference programme consisted of presentations from almost 50 speakers, based in institutions in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland. There was also a poster section held, which gave a further opportunity for researchers to discuss their work in a more personal and face-to-face way. During the course of the three conference days there were sections dedicated to various topics of current research and issues in social psychology and other subjects, and a poster section which contained 31 posters.

The symposiums themselves were dedicated to a single broad topic, yet various perspectives were given offering new possibilities and angles from which these issues can be approached. On the first day of the conference the participants were welcomed with a short speech by prof. Výrost of the Institute of Social Sciences. Then the conference itself opened with the first section conveyed by prof. Výrost containing presentations ranging from clinical perspectives on individual care by prof. Mareš, to the challenges to the psychological and research practise presented by the GDPR regulations in a presentation given by Fedáková and Kentoš. Among presenters in this section were; prof. Lovaš with some complex findings on the role of attachment to various objects, Urbánek with new perspectives on the function of the dissociation to the relation of trauma and suicide, Paulík's insights into the predictive power of work satisfaction in the meaningfulness of work, and the effects of the educational environment on career indecisiveness presented by Sollárová and Kaliská.

The unifying theme of the second symposium, which was named Cognitive failures: Possibilities of measuring and interventions, was the identification of various types of possible failings in the way of cognitive processes and thinking. Čavojová et col. presented the attendees with an instrument to measure non-spiritual nonfactual statements, which was aimed at identifying the tendencies of the likeliness of believing in such constructs. Further to this line of inquiry Peter Halama followed with the proposed questionnaire to measure these, along with its psychometric properties.

Lukáš Pitel followed by taking a closer look at the relationship between the education of parents and the tendency to adopt certain cognitions regarding the health of university students, which has some interesting results in terms of perceived locus of control. Kostovičová and Klemová next tested the presumption on whether judgements made in a different language can negate the effects of certain biases in thinking. The last contribution in this symposium was an inquiry by Bašnáková and Čavojová into the sensitive topic of how well scientifically versed



actual scientists are; with the unexpected results that within the test sample there were quite significant differences among the scientific understanding of key concepts and methodologies. The third and the last symposium of the first day of the conference was on the controversial issue of the reliability of psychological knowledge and research practise, named Reproducibility of (psychological) research and good research practise. In this methodologically and statistically aimed segment the contributors highlighted the tendencies, whether conscious or unconscious, which could be detrimental to the empirical studies within various disciplines of psychological research based on empirical data. Baník, Adamkovič, Kačmár, Martončík and Ropovík all presented convincing cases for why data manipulation is not simply an insignificant, fringe element of research practise, but quite possibly a mainstream tendency in current trends. The high attendance of this symposium was a testimony to the energy and conviction that these authors brought to the table, along with the lively discussion that followed.

The second day of the conference continued the section-based structure of the previous day, with the first segment tackling the difficult topic of developmental psychology and its related constructs. From various perspectives, the changing family structure and its effects on children were looked into by Gillernová. In the subsequent lecture, aggression measurement tools for early-school children were presented by Šírová et col. This was followed by Pelcák & Špráchalová's focus on adolescence in regards to psychological difficulties and depression with the aim of linking these constructs to various behavioural aspects present at this developmental age. Further developing the understanding of these developmental stages was the study of Poliach & Salbot, which was concerned with identifying the personal values of university students and its changes within a cross-section project design.

The last entry in this segment was a presentation by Kordáčová about the challenges and possibilities of old age, along with the dangers of related misconceptions and prejudices.

The following section was concerned with the problems and research challenges arising from studies within the broad conceptual framework of social relations. Mlčák & Wenclová presented a study aimed at gender differences in terms of prosocial behaviour and empathy. Following this was the proposed diagnostic of social competences by Niederlová, linking the competences with certain personality traits. Exploring the link between emotional intelligence and experiencing loneliness was a study presented by Baumgartner & Urbanová, revealing the possible connections between these constructs. The darker side of generativity was the topic of interest for Millová and Geraniosová, linking the largely positively perceived concept of generativity with some elements of the "dark triad" of narcissism, machiavelism and psychopathy. The following presentation by Bobek proposed a method of socio-mapping as an interesting alternative to the common socio-metric approach. The last entry in this segment, presented by Kandrát, was the conceptualization of psychological distance as a computer-assisted method of judging the attitudes towards various psychological constructs,

The last section of the conference day saw the phenomena of ethnicity being the linking element between various presentations. The presenters and their studies were concerned with the manifestations of ethnic perceptions in various forms. Kentoš and Výrost presented a study on the perceptions of safety within the context of ethnicity, showing varying levels of victimization of ethnic groups. Hřebíčková followed with a probe into the bicultural identity of Vietnamese

Czechs, and various elements which could be affecting the acculturating and culturating tendencies.

The following presentations gave reports on the effectivity of various intervention programmes. Andraščíková & Lášticová as well as Petřík & Popper presented studies on the effectivity of interventions based primarily on reducing the negative prejudices towards members of ostracized minorities. The last entry of the day was by Linkov, and it was a probe into the possible reasons for language ostracism within East-Asians living in the Czech Republic.

After the oral sessions, the poster section was held, in which the participants had the opportunity to present their research work in a less formal manner. It was a good opportunity for meeting colleagues with shared interests. After this section the societal evening took place, which furthered the opportunities for research as well as social engagement with other fellow researchers.

The sessions held within the last day of the conference were on various topics, ranging from the specific technical and personal skills of rescue workers by Gurňáková, Sedlár and Uhrecký, to indications and challenges posited by army training and selection by Vrtišková, and the personality of the psychologist by Vendel and Lazorová. The final session of the day was a lecture by the Polish Authors Toruj and Czarnejko, which informed the attendees about the state and the goals of psycho-lexical research on individual differences.

At the very end, prof. Výrost gave a short speech in which he thanked the presenters as well as the audience, and invited them for next year's conference: Personality in the Context of cognitions, emotionality and motivations.

The conference was a successful presentation for many young researchers, as well as many established names within the context of Czecho-Slovakian (and others) psychology, highlighting the many trends and challenges in current research practise, as well as possible pitfalls and constructive criticisms. The invaluable information exchanged occurred not only during the official sections, but also during breaks and social gatherings. Conference contributions will be published within the book of proceedings, which will be published in the spring of 2019.

Juraj Martonyik, [martonyik@saske.sk](mailto:martonyik@saske.sk)