

THE COLLABORATION OF ŠTEFÁNEK AND HODŽA

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At the beginning of the 20th century, the Slovak people, without political or economic power, faced the prospect of national extinction. Yet within two decades, they won liberation from the Hungarian Kingdom and participation in the new state of Czechoslovakia. This was the result, in part, of the efforts of a small activist group of leaders. Particularly productive and energetic were Milan Hodža (1878—1944) and Anton Štefánek (1877—1964).

Their collaborative activities were especially prominent in the areas of journalism and agrarian organization. Members of a new generation, they were realists and recognized the Slovak national movement had to establish a popular base, to politicize the people. Their journalistic enterprises, particularly *Slovenský Týždenník* and *Slovenský Denník*, were specifically aimed at the agrarian masses. Their commitment to this goal, often at great personal expense and travail, was a key factor in the politicization of the people. They were also actively involved in agrarian development and laid the foundations for agrarian democracy, later of prime importance in Czechoslovakia.

Through their joint goals, activities, and problems they became close friends, but they reflected certain philosophical differences. Hodža was a pragmatist, always aware of the factor of power, shifting tactics and means as opportunity arose. Štefánek was philosophically and strategically more consistent. Thus at the outbreak of World War I Hodža had to move from his policy of alliance with Francis Ferdinand to Czech-Slovak cooperation, to which Štefánek had been committed throughout their association. Their activities converged by 1917, and aided the incorporation of the Slovaks into Czechoslovakia.