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Polish-Slovak Political and Military Relations in 1938-1939

This dissertation addresses the most challenging period in Polish-Slovak relations, a topic that continues to resurface as unresolved or burdened by stereotypes, prejudices, subjective views, and, ultimately, biased assessments. The dissertation follows a chronological-thematic structure. To answer the research questions and verify the hypotheses posed, the most commonly used historiographical methods were employed: source and literature analysis, as well as descriptive and synthetic methods. The work consists of five chapters, supplemented by an introduction, conclusion, appendices, and bibliography.

The first chapter, titled "Antecedents. Sources of Conflict," outlines the disputed issues between Poland and Slovakia, placing them in the broader context of borderland relations. It also examines Polish diplomacy's stance on Slovak autonomy. The author seeks to analyze currently debated topics (settlement, language, ethnographic and historical arguments, national consciousness), discuss Poland's awareness and enlightenment campaigns, and answer whether the territorial claims forced by Poland were justified or one of the major mistakes in Polish foreign policy during the interwar period. Continuing these reflections, the author seeks answers to the following questions:

- Why did Poland desire an independent Slovakia, and did Slovakia's lack of response to Polish expectations lead to the decision to pursue territorial claims?
- Can the hypothesis be proposed that the territorial claims were meant to demonstrate the prestige of the Polish state and army, in light of an anticipated conflict with Germany?

The chapter also addresses Poland's aspirations for a common Polish-Hungarian border, a third source of conflict that is discussed in more detail in the third chapter. The second chapter, titled "The Polish-Slovak Crisis in the Autumn of 1938," presents the circumstances and course of Poland's territorial claims in Spiš, Orava, the Čadca region, and the Low Beskids. Chapter three, "Polish Activity in Carpathian Ruthenia and Its Impact on Polish-Slovak Relations (November 1938 - March 1939)," describes the Polish sabotage operation "Łom" on the Slovak-Carpatho-Ruthenian border and its impact on Polish-Slovak relations, as well as Poland's attempts to continue sabotage efforts in Carpathian Ruthenia (the so-called Prešov operation), aimed at establishing a common Polish-Hungarian border. This coincided with the formation of the Slovak state under German control. Chapter four, "The State of Threat on

Poland's Southern Border Due to the Political and Military Situation in Slovakia from March 14, 1939, to August 31, 1939," discusses several issues influencing this state of threat. Key topics include: the assessment of the threat to Poland based on intelligence gathered along the Slovak border, the organization of Slovakia's armed forces under German supervision, the social mood and Slovak attitudes toward the new political reality, border incidents on the eve of the war, and bilateral diplomacy during the period of war threat. The final chapter, "Slovakia and the September Campaign of 1939," presents the military confrontations between Poland and its southern neighbor. This chapter covers the following topics: the course of the fighting along the Tatra front, battles in the Beskid-Bieszczady region, the participation of Slovak aviation in the Polish campaign of 1939, the role of Colonel Roman Sushko's Ukrainian Legion, the treatment of Polish prisoners of war in Slovak captivity, the "cleansing operations" conducted by the Slovak army in occupied Polish territories, the occupation and transfer of conquered territory, and the related Slovak military ceremonies. It also discusses the reorganization of the Slovak army after the cessation of hostilities and the Ribbentrop-Černak Pact. A key component of this chapter is a collection of maps illustrating the course of the battles, which are included in the appendices.

The dissertation concludes with a summary, a bibliography listing the sources used, and appendices. The appendices include maps, as well as details on the command staff of Slovak infantry and artillery regiments, an overview of the billeting of various components of infantry divisions and aviation units, and a list of codenames used in Slovak military orders.