

# **V4 – History Mirrored:**

**Your hero, my enemy,  
my victory, your loss**

Case study of historical burden

Martin Ehl, Krakow 2013



# 20<sup>th</sup> century in detail – what you know and what you never heard of: selection of events

• 1918

• 1919

• 1920

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• 1938

• 1943

• 1944

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# 1918

- Break up of Austro-Hungarian empire as result of the First World War
- Tens of thousands fighting in exile for independence in **Legions** (CZ, PL) BUT Hundreds of thousands fighting **on the other side** – 2014 will be 100 years anniversary: who will commemorate whom?
- Creation of independent states (supported mainly by the USA): Poland, Czechoslovakia on the side of winners
- Hungary on the side of losers

# 1919

- Czechoslovakia (Eastern Slovakia) + Hungary: **communist uprisings** and short-lived communist republics
- **CZ/PL war** over Silesian border region (important as industrial base)
- Law and order restored: in CZ through democratic means; in HU through authoritarian regime of admiral Miklos Horthy

# 1920

- Trianon treaty: Day of definitive **Hungarian defeat**; Hungarian kingdom under regent Horthy stripped of 2/3 of its territory and 1/3 of inhabitants
- CZ, PL consolidation of powers: **CZ first elections**

# 1938

- CZ was **the last democracy** in the region, all over were authoritarian regimes
- Betrayed by Western allies, CZ had to cease a big chunks of its territory to neighbours
- PL, HU got back big parts of formerly disputed regions
- SK became in 1939 Nazi satellite state, but **for the first time in history** Slovaks had their own sovereign state
- In Sept 1939 Slovak troops participated in attack on Poland

# 1943

- The end of Stalingrad battle: **SK, HU troops among defeated**
- CZ treaty with the USSR on cooperation, creation of **CZ unit** in the USSR and its first battle of Sokolovo
- **PL units formed** from refugees in the USSR in Persia and moved to the West
- News about Katyn massacre

# 1944

- **Pro-communist PL troops** started to liberate Poland, puppet government created
- **SK anti-Nazi uprising**, which overshadowed all previous military cooperation with Nazi
- Horthy's regime overthrown by **radical antisemite and pro-Nazi Arrow Crosses movement**, very active participation in holocaust

# We could continue...

- ... almost indefinitely this way (CZ, PL on the winners side in 1945; Hungary (again) on the losers side)
- **V4 history is full of such contradictions** through which we see history (and not just recent one) very differently

# Overburdened with history

- Timothy Snyder: Bloodlands – Europe between Hitler and Stalin

Table to  
commemorate  
victims of  
different  
regimes in  
church of  
Krasnystaw,  
Eastern Poland



# My Hero, Your Enemy

- Conference of historians in 2011
- Other part of common history with different explanations and evaluations of the role of important personalities
- **Examples: What do you know about?**
- Edvard Beneš
- János Esterházy
- Józef Piłsudski
- Gustáv Husák
- Jozef Tiso
- Miklós Horthy

# Edvard Beneš



CZ: Hero, who won the war /  
The one who sold CZ to  
Soviet Union / Beneš as  
Austrian (very average  
person without any vision)  
– in last years **revision of  
his role**

HU, GER: Enemy, who  
expelled us from our home

# János Esterházy

HU: Hero, who defended our rights and nation against Czechoslovak and later Soviet regime; the only HU deputy voting against anti-Jewish laws

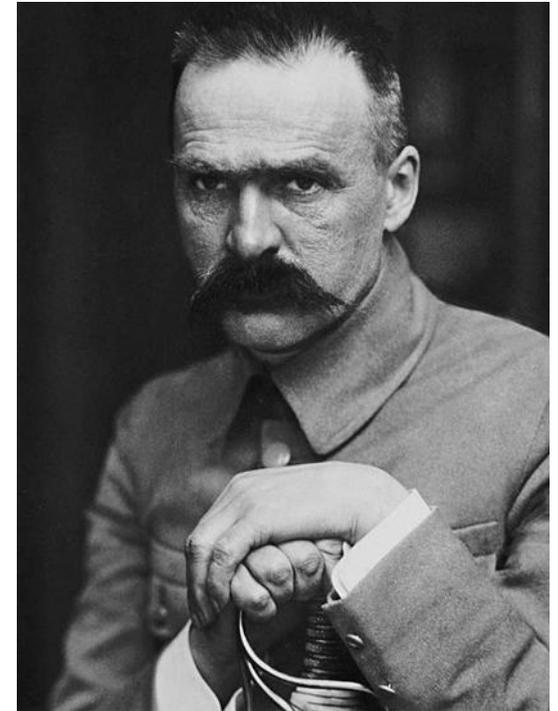


CZ/SK:  
Influential politician who undermined Czechoslovak security and territorial integrity

# Józef Piłsudski

PL: One of the most important Poles in the history, founder of modern Polish state

- CZ/SK: Polish dictator, who undermined democracy in Central Europe between the wars, as result Poland participated in occupation of CZ in 1938 (he died in 1935)



# Jozef Tiso

SK: **Patriot**, who founded first ever Slovak independent state, unfortunately as Nazi satellite



CZ, PL: **War criminal**, who collaborated with Hitler to break up Czechoslovakia and sent troops to attack Poland in 1939



# Miklós Horthy

HU: **Savior** in 1919,  
stable regime after  
Trianon tragedy,  
defender of Jews  
against Nazi, revision  
after 2010 to more  
positive picture

CZ/SK/PL: **Dictator**,  
who allied with Hitler,  
who was not able to  
defend Jews, who  
participated in CZ  
occupation in 1938

# Gustáv Husák

SK:

The most powerful Slovak in Czechoslovakia, during his times prosperity and investment and influence



CZ: Opportunist who only wanted power and pacted with Soviet occupants in 1968; too much privileges for Slovaks in federation

# Other views on history

## The Soviet Story

- Film about history from different angle
- Baltic countries have special view of history
- Latvian director Edvins Snore has made a very unusual view on the history of Central Europe in 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Example: How Germany and Soviet Union cooperated in attack on Poland (time 30,00)

**Any questions?**

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