

SUMMARY

Anton Hruboň's monograph reveals one of fascism's faces in interwar Slovakia. The book is based on a very broad heuristic footing but also finds an original methodological tool for interpreting fascism. The author's approach reflects international debates on fascism within past decades and brings a new insight on the phenomenon of fascism – a syncretism of traditional and constructivist approach – which provide inspiration for other comparative case studies.

Hruboň expresses his scepticism of constructivist abstractions as a “totalising” heuristic tool on the field of fascist studies. He admits that constructivism has brought fresh air into discussion on generic fascism, yet considers it as too narrowing and distant from the social reality due vague terms that the scholars of this approach tend to favor. Focusing on the modern theory by Roger Griffin, the foremost expert on fascism, as well as Griffin's critics, the author provides a basic analysis of current debates, especially in the Anglophone world, which have sparked static debates on general methodological problems concerning fascism much more than German historiography.

Hruboň productively combines theoretical and empirical approaches and provides a well-balanced and readable account on the history of the National Fascist Community (*Národná obec fašistická* – NOF), the most significant fascist party in interwar Slovakia (as well as Czechoslovakia). Drawing on Griffin's work, he analyses the NOF's ideology, but refuses to argue only party's ideological aspect. Based on an archival research Hruboň notices its minor successes, failures and turbulences in a wider historical perspective, letting the reader dive into the paradigmas of the Czechoslovak politics and their European milieu.

The NOF was founded in March 1926 as a result of a merger process of minor nationalistic movements. Though it has often been considered to be a “Czech party”, its fascist representatives always emphasized the party's nationwide and Slavic character.

The party was rooted mainly in the Czech lands, but from the beginning the fascists tried to expand their member base in Slovakia as well. Their initial position was not the best. In the second half of the 1920s right-wing parties like Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* – HSĽS), the Republican Party of Agricultural and Smallholder People (so-called *agrárna strana*) or the Slovak Natio-

nal Party (*Slovenská národná strana*) had a stable number of supporters. The NOF, expressing similar nationalistic values, had been attempting to draw the electorate of these traditional parties to its side. For many years, this effort did not yield success. The Fascists were failing to find an appropriate program that could reach a notable response within the Slovak society. Fascists' radical ideas counted on dissolving all political parties and parliament; suppressing German, Hungarian and especially Jewish influence in politics, economy and public life; fundamental reforms of the state administration, etc. The inexplicit ideology of the NOF, lacking the accent on Slovak question, failing to clarify their attitude towards the question of autonomy for Slovakia proved to be one of the main reasons why fascists never gained more support than just little over 2 percent in 1935 general elections.

In the core chapter of the monograph, Hruboň analyses the curve of the NOF's dynamics in the late 1920s and 1930s and highlights the main determinants of the party's advances and setbacks. In 1938, after the HSLS forced the Czechoslovak government to recognize autonomy for Slovakia, the *Ludáks* became the mainspring of Slovak politics for the following seven years. Given the circumstances the NOF, after an agreement of its leaders, was dissolved – or by their words, “willingly merged” with the HSLS. This act meant the end of an “authentic fascism” in the twentieth century Slovakia.