

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The existence of Slovakia as a small and newly independent country in the central part of Europe does not get much attention by many people, especially those who live outside Europe, as the new country often possesses many weaknesses and has no significant role in the world competition. Despite of those factors, the writer still believes that it is worth to know and to study more about the development of this country especially after its split with the Czech Republic in 1993, after these two countries were being together as a federation of Czechoslovak since 1918. It deserves more attention because it is interesting to know how it could survive in the middle of big European countries especially the Czech Republic which is considered to be more mature and developed as they both shared partly the same history.

A. WRITING OBJECTIVE

Nowadays, Slovakia is known as an independent state with more than 600,000 of Magyars (Hungarian) big minorities living in the southern part of the country. It is an interesting phenomenon because in 907, the Germans and the Magyars conquered the Moravian state and the Slovaks fell under Hungarian control from the 10th century up to 1918.¹

The Germans then established an Empire called Hapsburg which collapsed in 1918 following the World War I and the Slovaks then joined Czech lands of

¹ <http://www.infoplease.com/6e/a/0107067.html> (accessed on September 2nd 2007)

Bohemia, Moravia, and part of Silesia to form the new joint state of Czechoslovakia. In 1939 Germany occupied Czechoslovakia again and turned Slovakia into a puppet state led by Monsignor Josef Tiso as a Prime Minister. The country was liberated from the Germans by the Soviet army in the spring of 1945, and Slovakia was restored to its prewar status and rejoined to a new Czechoslovakian state.²

In 1993, Slovakia finally became an independent state with many minorities inside it, but for the Magyars—Hungarian which become the minority in Slovakia—it is a special case. From various points of view, relations between Slovakia and neighboring Hungary are among Slovakia's key foreign policy relationship.³ The Slovaks and Magyars have been living together for over a thousand of years in the area of the Danubian Basin. They have cultural connections and share common history in the past, with the Czech Republic and Poland.

After the break up of the Czech-Slovak Federation, Slovak-Hungarian relations acquired a new dimension, and undoubtedly became the most problematic and most sensitive of all Slovakia's relations with its neighbors.⁴ It possibly becomes the reason why the Hungarian Coalition Party is given places or seats in the Slovakian parliament, although that thing seemed impossible to do under the power and dominance of Vladimir Meciar, who ruled as a Prime Minister from 1992-1998. However, it is still important to have representatives of

² <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107967.html> (accessed on September 3rd, 2007)

³ Duleba, Alexander, Lukae, Pavol and Wlachovsky, Miroslav. 1998. *Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic*, Bratislava, RC SFP, p.42

Magyars inside the government to make the relationship between Slovakia and Hungary stable, because the number of Magyars is big in Slovakia, about ten percent of the total population. Later this final paper will elaborate more about the involvement of this Hungarian Coalition Party, the reason behind the involvement and what Slovakia could possibly gain from this involvement.

Based on the descriptive above the writer would like to give title to the final paper "The Involvement of Hungarian Coalition Party in the Slovakian Coalition Government (1998-2004)".

B. BACKGROUND

As a new country which gained independence after its split with the Czech Republic on January 1st, 1993, Slovakia has been trying to apply many changes within the country as well as gaining international respect—to secure its national interest. To exist among the developed European countries, like it or not Slovakia had to make its own way to compete in order to survive in the hard challenge ahead. With the demise of communist power, a strong Slovak Nationalist movement resurfaced, and the rival relationship between the Czech Republic and Slovakia increased.⁵ After the general election in 1992, the decision was made that two fully independent countries would be created. Nevertheless, a growing number of Czechs and Slovaks (and Hungarian ethnics living in Slovakia) are openly regretful to the split.⁶ However, now Slovakia had been freed from the communist domination, which brought many risks to its economic and political

⁵ <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107967.html> (accessed on September 3rd, 2007)

⁶ Bodo, Phil. 1992. *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce*. East/West Letter Volume 1, No. 4, p. 1

stability. Many things have to be done about it considering its neighbor, Czech Republic, had been few steps ahead from Slovakia.

Before its split, Slovakia already had its own government and it conducted Parliamentary election every four years and another once in four years election to choose the President. In the 1992 parliamentary elections, Party of Movement of the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), led by Vladimir Meciar won in Slovakia. He was well known to be a leader who was very nationalist, not very into the cooperation with other countries and moreover he was still a communist. He then became the Prime Minister of Slovakia after the split, from 1992 until 1998.

This was a problem because there are about 600,000 of Hungarian minority population, Magyars, living in the Southern part of Slovakia. The dominance and authority of Vladimir Meciar had been putting them into the difficult position, for Vladimir was a nationalist leader. The Magyars worried about their future because under Meciar, the tensions between them and the government escalated; the Hungarians minority feared an increase in Slovak nationalism would result in discrimination against Slovakia's minorities⁷. The escalation happened soon after the split—Slovakia has big influence upon the small regions which have minority inhabitants, and it shares border with Hungary—and Meciar being nationalist had triggered it all. In 1996, Meciar made an attempt to redraw the boundaries of electoral constituencies so that Hungarian voters would have ended up a minority in each and every area.⁸

⁷ Barta, Phil. 1992. *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce*, East/West Letter Volume 1, No.4. p. 1
⁸ <http://www.khronika.sk/.../1996/19960901.htm> (accessed on September 2, 2007)

Besides being responsible for the tension escalation between the government and the minorities, Meciar was also being a leader who was not supportive towards the development and cooperation with other countries. Meciar's past as a communist and his current support of nationalist tendencies have damaged his, and Slovakia's, reputation regionally and internationally.⁹ By doing that he created such unfriendly atmosphere for the foreign investors. Not only that Meciar was not open to other countries, but also he and his government made direct attacks on freedom of the press and opposition voices.¹⁰ Meciar increased and forced big tax on the newspapers and magazines until about 400 percents, and it was thought to be a hit and it certainly was designed to break the back of the independent press; however, only one newspapers which was qualified, which was the nationalistic newspapers owned by Meciar's party.

Knowing and being aware of those situations, the Hungarian minorities, Magyars, realized that it became so significant and important for them to make their party stronger to gain more legal acknowledgment and representative for about 600,000 Hungarian populations living in Slovakia. They had their representatives in the Slovakian Parliament even before the split, but it was just a few people, and with the dominance of HZDS led by Vladimir Meciar it was even harder for Magyars to have representatives inside the Slovakian Parliament, therefore in 1998 Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) was established by several small parties. In 1994, small Hungarian ethnic's parties only managed to gain

⁹ Barta, Phil. 1992. *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce*, East/West Letter Volume 1, No.4. p. 2

small amount of vote which caused waste of votes and it got worse after 1996, when Meciar's government drew the boundaries of the electoral constituencies.

Surprisingly, in 1998 Parliamentary elections, Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), could gain 14,000 more votes than all parties in the coalition did in 1994. The total vote it gained was 9,12% and it got 15 seats out of 150 seats available. This party was in the fourth position, the best they had ever achieved during the history of the Parliamentary election, because they have always been considered to be a minority party.

In Slovakia, one of the requirements to form a government for a party is to gain at least 51% of the votes, but the Parliamentary election in 1998 resulted in no party gained that many votes, so those parties needed to form a coalition so that the joined number of votes could be enough to form a government. The winner in the 1998 Parliamentary election was HZDS led by Vladimir Meciar, but it was quite shocking that no party was willing to make coalition with him except the Slovak National Party (SNS). Unfortunately, their coalition had not enough percentage or votes to form a government.

On the opposition side, an agreement was made among four parties, including SMK, party of Hungarian minorities, to form a government. Those four parties were Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) and Party of Civic Understanding (SOP). From that coalition, new prime minister to replace Vladimir Meciar was

C. RESEARCH QUESTION

By examining the background of the problem, the writer would like to question on: *“Why did SDK (Slovak Democratic Coalition), SDL (Party of the Democratic Left) and SOP (Party of Civic Understanding) agree to involve SMK (Hungarian Coalition Party) – a party of the Hungarian minorities – in the Slovakian coalition government after the 1998 Parliamentary elections?”*

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are important to analyze the problems in the research question. Therefore, to analyze the question above, the writer would like to propose two theories and concepts, rational actor and fusion, so that later it could lead to find out the hypothesis.

A. Rational Actor

In order to try and find out how the decision makers decide and launch the policy, the writer tries to use one of three methods of decision making process proposed by Graham T. Allison, which is rational actor. In making the decision, there are supports and demands from outside of the main actors or decision makers which are going to be identified later on.

This model is based on the idea of the existence of comprehensive rationality and ideal behavior as means to look for the most ideal choice among all the alternative choices about what to do or decide. In other words, when the decision makers are about to decide policy, they will use the wisest choice in the sense of relation between the means and the goals. And later on the decision makers also must be ready to make some changes or adjustments in the policy

they make. The decision makers are considered to be rational and generally think that their decisions—especially those which is related to foreign policy—are made rationally, means they will think about the cost and the benefit in long term period.

The limitation about what it means to be rational has the specific meaning. So the decision making is based on the four steps as followed:

1. Objective and valuable policy making which is surely aimed to the maximum result achievement.
2. Choosing among the given alternatives to achieve the goals.
3. Cost and benefit consideration upon the alternatives taken.
4. Choosing the alternative which gives the maximum benefit.¹¹

Allison mentioned that the rational actor is considered to represent the efforts to combine the action with the rational consideration. Then he also mentioned that the rational actor of the decision makers is the actor who is able to explain in detail what their aims and goals are. He will also be able to explain the goals from the available alternatives and identify the consequence which might emerge from every choice or decision before he makes the decision.¹²

According to Brown and Marcum, rational actors are simple goal-oriented, and their goals may entail, for instance, increasing individual wealth or improving the welfare of others.¹³ The decisions made are the results of long future consideration instead of long term one. The decision makers need to calculate

¹¹ Spainer, Uslaiter. 1982. *American Foreign Policy Making and Democratic Dilemmas*, CBS College Publishing, New York, p.226.

¹² Allison, Graham T. 1971. *Essence of Decision*, Little Brown, p. 38

about the future and tried to think about the consequences of the choices they are about to make in the long term period. Brown and Marcum defined rationality as something which refers to actor's purposive choice of the most efficient means for the accomplishment of a desired end. Arthur Stein noted about being rational as followed,

“The most basic decision-making explanations are purposive ones. Human behavior is goal-oriented, chosen for a reason. Goals, objectives, purposes, and interests explain behavior. Behavior is a function of purposive calculated human choice. Actor's perceived interests matter. The alternatives actors think important and the calculations they make also matter. Thus, knowledge of aims and the nature of calculation become critical to explaining chosen behaviors. Explanation necessarily depends on the goals actors have and the nature of the calculations that they make. Indeed, such models are often described as rational actor explanations.”¹⁴

In the rational actor concept, the cost and benefit considerations were made and applied by the decision makers—in this case are SDK, SDL and SOP—upon the alternatives which were to be chosen. In this final paper topic, there were two possible alternatives for those three parties, whether or not to involve SMK inside their coalition government.

Parliamentary election in 1998 was won by HZDS party led by Vladimir Meciar, then he made coalition with SNS, but the number of votes would not be enough to form a coalition government. On the opposite, SDK led by Mikulas Dzurinda formed a coalition consisted of SDL and SOP, and the total numbers of vote joined together was not enough either. So if these parties wanted to form a

¹⁴ <http://www.libraryoftheology.com/encyclopedia/Decision-Making.pdf> (accessed on May 5, 2009)

coalition government, it had to involve and make fusion as well with SMK so that their votes were enough.

B. Fusion

The concept of fusion is about political parties which join together in order to get or achieve the same goals although those political parties may have significantly different background and principles. In this case the fusion happened is called electoral fusion. Electoral fusion is an arrangement where two or more political parties support a common candidate, pooling the votes for all those parties. By offering to endorse a major party's candidate, minor parties can influence the candidate's platform. ¹⁵In some countries, small political parties can't fulfill the requirements of the threshold; that is why those parties need to make fusion with other political parties in order to join the election. When no party gains enough votes as what is required to form a government, then few parties could fuse themselves in order to form a coalition government.

It is not easy to form a political party even in a democratic and republican country, as it may disturb the unity of the country itself. It is because a political party tends to represent its own people or members instead of the whole nation if it is later able to sit in the parliament. Fusion is needed in this kind of situation to keep the numbers of the party limited and therefore those political parties are hoped to fulfill the needs of the country—to keep the balance between local and national interest.

Some countries banned this system, such as the United States, because after all, this concept gives benefit to the small political parties which actually do not deserve to join the general election because they do not fulfill the threshold, such as the minority political party which does not have many members or followers. However in some other countries this concept does work because those small parties which cannot pass the threshold can work together to achieve the same goal and benefit the whole nation eventually.

If the political parties wanted to fuse themselves together, it means they realized that it was important to secure their interest to achieve the goals. If they had similar goals, together they could achieve it better and in a peaceful way. Underhill (1982) proved that, if parties may fuse but not split, then it is always possible to find some synergistic fusion of parties, for any configuration of party weights in which no party controls an overall majority.¹⁶ Such a fusion means that the expectation of the fused party is greater than the aggregate expectations of its component parts before fusion.¹⁷ However, in the newly independent country, sometimes the party systems are still unstable, and if it happened, such dynamics would lead to party fusions that continue to occur until some party controls a majority.

Before 1998, there were a lot of small political parties in Slovakia which could not pass the threshold to get seats in the Parliament. It was simply because Vladimir Meciar's government had changed the election laws to be stricter. It had forced small parties which could not pass the election threshold to fuse them and

¹⁶ <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/retrieve.php?id=128>. (accessed on May 3, 2008)

formed a single coalition party. According to the new election laws each party inside an election coalition was forced to gain five percent of the votes, otherwise the alliance could not be able to get seats in the Parliament.

For SMK, the result of the 1998 Parliamentary elections was unpredictable because this party had always been considered to be a minority party and not very important and not giving any significant advantages to Slovakia. But the fact proved the other way around, SMK became very significant in the government making in 1998. Without this party joining the government of coalition, there would not be any government in Slovakia that time. And the only possible coalition was with SDK, SDL and SOP.

In the coalition government, SMK wanted to bring out the interest of their minority population, especially because before 1998, this party or some of its members before the fusion, although had ever been inside the government, hardly got their aspirations and opinions addressed by Meciar. It has to be noted also that SMK was not very favorable and was disliked by the Slovak merely because their aim tended to represent the interest of their own people, but they could get many votes because Magyars are big minority in Slovakia, therefore the other three parties could not neglect this significance. That is why, although the other three parties inside the coalition government—SDK, SDL and SOP—did not fully agree with the involvement of SMK, they still had a consideration about it right after the Parliamentary election 1998. It was an important decision because actually before the election these three parties had had the informal agreement that they would make a government of coalition to defeat Vladimir Meciar's

dominance, but the result said differently, their numbers of votes were not enough to do so.

E. HYPOTHESIS

By examining the theoretical frameworks and data mentioned previously, the writer could draw some hypothesis as followed:

1. By involving the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) in the ruling government of Slovakia in 1998, Vladimir Meciar's dominance over the country could finally be replaced.
2. By involving the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) in the ruling government of Slovakia in 1998, the European Commission had an impression of good dialogue between the government and Hungarian minorities.

F. RANGE OF RESEARCH

It is very important to have limitation of the time in which the research is going to be done, in order to avoid the topic from being expanded and out of context. Since the main issue of this final paper is about the involvement of the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) inside the Slovakian government, the writer would like to limit the time of research to be from 1998 up to 2004. In 1998 SMK first involved in the ruling government, and in 2004, Slovakia finally became one of the members of EU thanks to the involvement of this party.

G. METHODS OF RESEARCH

The writer gained the information by an extensive reviewing of relevant published materials from books, articles, journals, reports, newsletters, official

websites, and other sources on a wide variety of topics related with the subject of this final paper.

H. SYSTEMATIC OF WRITING

Chapter I: Introduction. This chapter outlines the background of the research, what are exactly the problems to answer, purposes and significations of research, analyze the theories and methods to be implemented, and gives the hypothesis as well as the systematical of writing.

Chapter II: This chapter will discuss the background of the problem

Chapter III: This chapter will give explanation about SMK and one of the importances of involving this party in the coalition government, in terms of giving contribution to the ousting of Vladimir Meciar.

Chapter IV: This chapter will discuss about the Slovakia's struggle to be European Union member and the other importance of involving SMK in the coalition government in terms of getting good assessment from the European Union.

Chapter V: This chapter will give the conclusion and summary