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## **“Sister Republic” in the Heart of Europe: Czechoslovakia and the United States, 1918-1939<sup>1</sup>**

The independence of Czechoslovakia, based on the idea of common Czechoslovak nationality<sup>2</sup>, was announced in Independence Hall in Philadelphia in October 1918 by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, later the President of the country. This symbolic act became quite useful in the promotion of the new democratic republic and the bilateral relations between two countries in the years to come. Masaryk, as many other European leaders, had gathered quite a bit of inspiration from the US political system and democracy, so – at least for the tactical reasons – considered his new country as a sort of the “sister republic” to the great American one. The idea of “sisterhood” between two republics was used by Czechoslovak politicians and diplomats as an effective tool in policymaking and searching for the support of Americans during the interwar period.

Czechoslovakia was created as a successor state after the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire and entered upon its new existence as well-supplied with industry, because it inherited the so-called “pearl of Austria”. The newly established independent republic became, as many journalists believed, “the most beloved pupil of the Allies”. Czechoslovakia’s leaders attached the importance to its relations with the United States, which were based on Woodrow Wilson’s policy and his involvement in east central European matters and policymaking during the First World War and the Paris Peace Conference. Czechs and Slovaks, as well as Poles, counted on the support of Washington, whose diplomatic and economic help they needed and expected. They attempted to develop relations with the United States that were based on the

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- 1 This article is a revised version of a paper delivered on November 21, 2009 during the conference “Rediscovering of Eastern Europe” held in Białystok University. Prof. Krzysztof Michalek attended the conference and delivered the paper at the same panel. Three days later he was killed in a tragic car accident.
  - 2 I use the term “Czechoslovak” or “Czechoslovaks”, according to the official version as a political concept of “uninational ethnic combination” of Czechs and Slovaks. J.V. Owen, *Slovakia, 1918-1938. Education and the Making of a Nation*, Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985, p. 53.

Wilsonian policy recognizing the needs and aspirations of small nations and later of so-called national states in east central Europe. Certainly, there was no equality in bilateral relations between Czechoslovakia and the United States, so Czechoslovak politicians tried to accommodate their policy into the main stream of the US policy. The fascination with America in the "Old World", disrupted and destroyed by the war and revolutions, was deepened and expanded in the 1920s.

We should also remember the activities of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), which promoted America and its values in many ways and "spread the American dream" in the whole Europe<sup>3</sup>. During the First World War, the two million American soldiers in expedition forces in Europe, with their equipment, fancy gadgets, canned food, and cigarettes, became the most effective, intentionally or not, propagators of American wealth and abundance. They also became the visible symbols of American ideals, democracy, and freedom with its great leader, President Woodrow Wilson. America and Wilson became for a time the chief exponents of democratic ideology and moral principles in politics, especially in the eyes of small central European nations<sup>4</sup>. For millions of central Europeans, including Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles, Wilson also became a symbolic hero, to whom they owed their gratitude for the American support and the restoration of their independence.

The American President became one of the most popular and cherished politicians in east central Europe after the First World War. Many streets, schools, buildings, and institutions were named after him, and many monuments were dedicated to his memory. The main train station in Prague and several buildings in the capital city, as well as in other towns were also named after Wilson. He was, second to President Masaryk, the most admired hero and the "founding father" of Czechoslovakia. On many occasions Czechoslovaks showed their gratitude to America and Wilson for the moral and diplomatic support of their independence, as well as for the humanitarian aid they received. His portrait hung in all governmental offices in Czechoslovakia<sup>5</sup>.

The positive, sometimes quite naïve, opinions about Wilson showed a real gratitude and appreciation by Czechs and Slovaks. It is not easy to say if such adulation was fully justified, or to what extent. Certainly, the American President played an active role in the creation of the new states in east central Europe, but later it was largely exaggerated, especially in the press. He became the symbolic hero ("liberator",

3 E. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945*, New York 1982.

4 See: H. Parafianowicz, *Woodrow Wilson i jego legenda w międzywojennej Polsce*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 2001, nr 1, s. 59-70.

5 "Current History" 1921, No. 5, p. 844; R.J. Caldwell, *The Economic Situation in Czechoslovakia in 1920*, Washington, D.C. 1921, p. 16.

“founding father”, “new Messiah”, “moral judge” etc.) for millions of people, mostly because of the sociological need for such a myth. He fulfilled this role in the best possible way. Some of those opinions, however, reflected the style of writing and the level of journalism. Other comments by Czechoslovak officials were also motivated by tactical reasons. The image of the American President as a devoted friend of the Czechoslovak Republic seemed to be politically useful in the years to come.

There was another American hero recognized and cherished in Czechoslovakia after the First World War, the humanitarian Herbert Hoover. The American Relief Administration (ARA) organized by him and the aid for millions of European children, mothers, orphans, sick people etc. helped them to survive despair and hunger. Czechoslovaks, as other recipients of American aid, appreciated Hoover’s food mission and were grateful for it. The ARA activities contributed also a lot to promote the American charity, idealism, generosity, and the superiority of its economic and political system and a better way of life<sup>6</sup>.

Occasional pamphlets, books and works of fiction created also a very positive image of America in east central Europe. Some publications of YMCA, YWCA, as well as the Quakers literature about ARA activities only strengthened the image about the best of America – its democracy, idealism, charity, and generosity in sharing of its wealth. Such a belief that other nations could and should learn and replicate America’s own ideas and experience were widely spread in Czechoslovakia. Alice Masaryk, President Masaryk’s daughter, was also active in the promotion of Americanism and cordial relations with the United States<sup>7</sup>.

On the other side of the ocean, in the United States in the early 1920s, a very positive image of Czechoslovakia was established. In daily press, periodicals, and magazines there was a lot of information about Czechs and Slovaks, their history, civilization, culture, and their role in Europe. The wave of interest in the Slavic world in American academic circles brought about initiatives to establish in 1919 advanced studies on the Czech language and literature. Professor John Prince in the Slavic Department at the Columbia University, devoted to propagating this idea, presented Czechoslovakia as a good example of a democratic society with a fascinating long history and also as “a promising factor in the readjustment of Central Europe”<sup>8</sup>.

It should be added that such comments, circulating in the “New York Times”, the “Washington Post” and many local titles, were very useful in creating of a posi-

6 For more on it see my article: *Mit amerykański i amerykanizacja Czechosłowacji po I wojnie światowej*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 2000, nr 3, s. 19-33.

7 On activities of Masaryk’s daughter, see: *Alice Garrigue Masaryk, 1879-1966: Her Life as Recorded in Her Own Words and by Her Friend*, comp. by R. Crawford Mitchell, with a special introduction by R. Wellek, Pittsburgh 1980.

8 “New York Times” 1919 (October 5), II, 4:1.

tive image and an attitude towards Czechoslovakia and its people. The new republic in the “heart of Europe” since the early beginning of its existence became well known in American society as the highly advanced country in the east central Europe, with a high level of industrial development. Some journalists, impressed by its flourishing economy, described the country as sort of “European California”<sup>9</sup>.

It is impressive that Czechoslovakia had established such a good image so quickly. The industrial representative of the Department of Labor, Robert J. Caldwell, after his visit to central Europe wrote also a very positive and optimistic report, favorable if not flattering about conditions in Czechoslovakia. In his words:

This nation of 14,500,000 enterprising, industrious, and liberty-loving democratic people, so well led by their wise and universally beloved President Masaryk, constitute democracy’s bulwark against the assaults of radicalism, and in all of the turbulent region from the boundary of France to the coast of California, Czechoslovakia stands as the way to all the vast hordes in the dark places<sup>10</sup>.

Many American journalists and visitors, after their trips to Czechoslovakia, made some public comments and very positive remarks about its political system, prosperity, and its potential for fruitful (promising) cooperation with America. Charles H. Grasty was no exception when he wrote that “the Czechoslovak Republic is a well doing industrial country with remarkable people, Yankees of Central Europe”<sup>11</sup>.

Similar opinions were presented quite frequently in the American media, above all in the press, and it may be somewhat surprising that many of them coincided so well with the opinions held by the Czechoslovak politicians. This correlation was not incidental, but it was mainly due to the efforts of politicians and a consequence of the deep and systematic work of the Czechoslovak opinion-makers in and outside the country. Prague officials tried to convince foreign leaders that Czechoslovakia had all the prerequisites for becoming the most consolidating factor in central Europe and thus be the strong barrier against any revolutionary movement. They also presented Czechoslovakia as “a bridge between East and West” and “the cultural center of the Slavic world”. In the years to come Czechs propagated Prague as an important stabilizing factor in central Europe, the more so that the new country – after disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – aspired to fulfill this gap and to take advantage of it. The role of Czechoslovakia (or its potential) in policy-making in the region became a sort of competition and challenge for Poland, which pretended to play there even more active and significant role, as influenced by its geographical location between Germany and Soviet Russia. I believe this hidden

9 “New York Times” 1920 (June 1), 17:6.

10 R.J. Caldwell, *The Economic...*, op. cit., p. 20.

11 “New York Times” 1921 (April 21), 4:2.

and underestimated rivalry between the neighboring countries for being the most important and stabilizing factor in central European policy was a serious problem, besides the quarrels over the borders, in the bilateral Polish-Czechoslovak relations during the whole interwar period.

In the newly formed Czechoslovak government some politicians, above all, President Masaryk and the Minister of the Foreign Affairs and later also his successor, Eduard Beneš, knew how important it was to create a good image of the country and how to take advantage of it. Czechs and Slovaks in the United States also became very active and mostly united in supporting their homeland at the beginning of its existence. They were truly enthusiastic, cherished the independence and were proud of the re-born country<sup>12</sup>. Their leaders not only sought political support in the American establishment but also offered some financial help to the “sister republic”.

The Czechoslovak government was deeply involved and its officials focused a lot of attention on the creation of a “good information policy” about the country or, as the others named it, making good propaganda. Since the early 1920s various booklets and pamphlets were published on the new republic, its progress, and history etc.<sup>13</sup> sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such publications, addressed to a foreign audience, were considered by the officials as a successful way to promote Czechoslovakia’s purposes. Government leaders tried to encourage foreigners to trade and invest in Czechoslovakia, which – according to their arguments – “is the natural center of Europe, not only as regards railways and economic importance. Owing to its natural wealth and the energy of its inhabitants, it is capable of competing, in an economic respect, with the most advanced states”<sup>14</sup>.

President Thomáš G. Masaryk was widely known in the United States as a philosopher, thinker, politician, and – what was important – he was highly esteemed by the American public opinion. His contacts with intellectuals and business circles, and personal connections (through his marriage with an American Charlotta Garrigue) with some influential Americans were very useful for political purposes. Influenced by his wife and American friends, he became Americanized in many aspects, also in terms of principles and practices of American democracy and its “founding fathers”. He used to recall his admiration, above all, for Thomas Jefferson and Abraham

12 In the years to come it was changed. Since mid-1920s the autonomous aspirations of Slovaks became louder and more visible (but it is another question).

13 Alexander Brož published several books: *The Rise of Czecho-Slovak Republic*, London 1919; *The First Year of Czecho-Slovak Republic*, London 1920; *Three Years of the Czechoslovak Republic: A Survey of Its Progress and Achievements*, Prague 1921. It is worth noticing that since 1920 the name of the country in the title was changed.

14 *The Czechoslovak Republic: A Survey of Its History, and Geography, Its Political and Cultural Organization and Its Economic Resource*, comp. by J. Cisař, Prague 1922, p. 9.

Lincoln, and the influence of their writings on his own political philosophy<sup>15</sup>. Such a “sisterhood” between Czechoslovakia and the United States became in many ways an effective tool in policymaking of the small, democratic “sister republic”, which looked for the support and guidance of the large American one. On many occasions Prague’s officials emphasized that Czechoslovakia’s democracy, like that of the United States, was based on the principles of liberty and justice.

Czechoslovaks, as it was already mentioned, were truly grateful to Americans for their support of its independence and President Masaryk showed on many occasions a deep gratitude to Woodrow Wilson and his countrymen. The Wilsonian legend survived in Czechoslovakia long after he had become unsuccessful (after the failure of the ratification of the Versailles Treaty) and almost forgotten in his homeland in the early 1920s. President Wilson’s death and funeral in February 1924 were commemorated with requiem masses and ceremonies in Czechoslovakia, as well as in the other countries in east central Europe. In a letter to his widow, Edith Galt Wilson, President Masaryk wrote: “We are grateful to Wilson and the American Nation for helping us so magnanimously during the war and the Peace Conference in recovering our liberty. Personally I am grieved at having lost a real friend”<sup>16</sup>.

A few years later, on October 28, 1928 in a message on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence President Masaryk said:

Our State was restored because our constitutional rights were recognized by the Allies and because the nation at home and abroad placed itself in opposition to our adversaries and to the upholders of the old regime and the old Europe. We fought in the Allied armies; our legions formed constituent parts of the forces in Russia, France and Italy, and our citizens volunteered for service in the Serbian, British and American armies. Not long ago we erected in Prague the Wilson monument and yesterday the Denis monument was unveiled; we are, and shall remain, grateful to the Allied nations for the assistance and friendship, which they were manifested towards us also since the War<sup>17</sup>.

Such words of gratitude and gestures addressed to the political friends could be considered as words of courtesy, but also as a tactic and expectation for cordial cooperation in the future.

The Czechoslovak Republic was very fortunate with the American diplomats and officials in Prague. The first American Minister was Richard Crane, the son of a businessman, philanthropic activist, supporter of the Slavic world, and friend of Masaryk,

15 J. Carter, *Masaryk Is an Apostle of Democracy*, “New York Times” 1927 (December 11), IV, p. 5; E. Beneš, *Democracy Today and Tomorrow*, London 1939, p. v; J.O. Crane, S. Crane, *Czechoslovakia. Anvil of the Cold War*, foreword by C. Lamont, New York 1989, p. xxv.

16 *Czechoslovakia’s Tribute to the Memory of Woodrow Wilson*, Praha 1924, p. 5.

17 *President Masaryk’s Message to Czechoslovakia on the Tenth Anniversary of Independence*, “Slavonic Review” 1928-1929, Vol. VII, p. 374.

Charles Crane. He was accredited on 11 June 1919 and since the very beginning became a true friend and admirer of the new born republic and a strong supporter of its policy. He had been active in the Prague English Club in popularizing the idea of more advanced cultural cooperation between America and Czechoslovakia<sup>18</sup>.

In many reports to the Secretary of State, Crane wrote about Czechoslovakia's contribution to Western Civilization and her special place in the peaceful reconstruction of east central Europe. He also presented the new country in the "heart of Europe" as a firm barrier against the spread of communism from one side and as the bulwark against Germanization from another. Crane was highly impressed with Czechoslovakia's efforts to rebuild itself commercially, industrially, and financially<sup>19</sup>. His opinions and positive remarks on the country of his diplomatic mission were known in the American establishment and some of them were transferred to business, industry, and the US public opinion. We can find a lot of his sympathetic comments and quotations from his interviews on Czechoslovakia's policy in the Czech and Slovak periodicals, as well as in the "New York Times".

Charles Crane's family contributed significantly to establishing close relations between two countries. Since the fall of 1922 his younger son, John Crane, came to Prague to be "the observer of making history" and assistant (helper) to President Masaryk, who personally planned and explained his duties. According to his own words:

As soon as I became acclimated, I would handle the president's social duties in this milieu, take over his foreign correspondence, particularly that with Americans, and facilitate visits of American friends and journalists to the exciting new Czechoslovakia of the 1920's. For the present, I would be in charge primarily reading, summarizing, and clipping the international press in English and French<sup>20</sup>.

John Crane worked closely with president's secretary Vladimír Kučera, who "doubled to cover reports about Central Europe" for the Associated Press. Both of them cooperated with Jan Masaryk and Eduard Beneš and they visited President Masaryk quite often<sup>21</sup>. These close associates of the president were responsible

18 *Richard Crane Papers*, Box 6, f. 21, Lauinger Library, Washington, D.C. The English Club had existed since 1912 and propagated by lectures, regular meetings and discussions, the English language, literature and history of Great Britain. After the First World War the Club became the information center for the guests and visitors who were interested in English-speaking countries, most of all, in the United States and Great Britain.

19 National Archives (NA), *Decimal File*, 1910-1929, RG 59, 660 f. 1111/1, Reports from January – May, 1921.

20 J. O. Crane, S. Crane, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. XX.

21 *Ibidem*, p. XXI. The Masaryks-Cranes relations became even closer since December 28, 1924 when the President's son Jan Masaryk married Frances Crane, daughter of Charles Crane and sister of the American minister in Prague, Richard Crane.

mainly for the image of the republic, which suppose to be – according to his own words – “the Mecca of democracy” and “freedom center” in central Europe<sup>22</sup>.

It should be mentioned that Masaryk devoted enormous time to foreign visitors, including especially many Americans – businessmen, writers, scholars, journalists, artists etc. His countless audiences in the castle in Prague, famous and legendary Hradčany, and also in the castle in Lány, became very popular and well-known to larger audiences. Masaryk took any occasion to say a few words on Czechoslovakia, its contribution to the European civilization, and its peaceful policy etc. Certainly, all his talks and interviews were commented largely in the media in Czechoslovakia and quite often also in the American press.

The Prague officials undertook a challenging, yet quite successful, initiative to establish a magazine on central European affairs for the English-speaking readers. “The Central European Observer” (CEO) was supported financially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of his later editors was Aleš Brož, an influential and experienced press attaché in Great Britain. Since the appearance of the first issue of the weekly in 1923, it published all useful information on Czechoslovakia, interviews with President Masaryk and Beneš interviews and their comments on the political events etc. It is worth noticing that, in order to reach foreign readers, CEO was distributed and disseminated through diplomatic channels. Obviously, the weekly became, for years to come, the best way to promote Czechoslovakia.

From the beginning of its existence the Czechoslovak Republic attempted to establish closer relationships with the United States, not only political and commercial, but also cultural. These attempts involved on the one hand the Red Cross, YMCA, and ARA activities and on the other steps to develop more frequent contacts with the American universities. In the summer of 1921 professors exchange program started and, as a consequence, visits to Czechoslovakia of Prof. A.J. Andrews, the President of the Vassar College, Prof. MacCracken, Prof. Paul Monroe (Columbia), Prof. Albert Putney, and some others took place<sup>23</sup>.

In the early 1920s a number of students from Prague obtained scholarships to America through the Institute of International Education in New York. Vassar College offered in 1920-1922 five stipends to Czechoslovakia. In the following years a few more stipends were funded by the Czechoslovak National Alliance and some more by the American foundations<sup>24</sup>.

In post-war Czechoslovakia there were many discussions about creating a special institution for the promotion of cultural relations with America. This idea probably originated within the university circles of Prague, as the correspondence of Lewis

22 S. Bonsal, *Unfinished Business*, New York 1944, p. 80.

23 “Czechoslovak Review” 1920 (October), p. 384-385.

24 NA, American Legation, Prague, 1923, Vol. V. Correspondence, Einstein, File No. 842-891.



Einstein, the second American Minister in Czechoslovakia, with the Department of State, seems to indicate. In January 1923 a plan for the promotion of bilateral relations with America was discussed in Prague's establishment. With the approval of the Ministry of Education and support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its head, Eduard Beneš, it was suggested that an American institute for cultural and educational cooperation between America and Czechoslovakia should be created. In the following months of 1923 there was more discussion of this idea. Einstein was actively involved in it and asked the Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes for the support of the project in the State Department<sup>25</sup>.

Lewis Einstein was very fond of the Czechoslovak plan for the closer cooperation between the two republics. He recorded that many Americans, not only those of Bohemian background, but intellectuals and businessmen as well, gradually warmed the idea of the American Institute in Prague. The Minister hoped to obtain some donations from the Carnegie Foundation to promote its activity. Einstein valued Czechoslovakia's good will, Beneš's abilities and his policymaking. After many years he recalled:

Dr. Beneš possessed two seemingly contradictory talents; one of these he could call objectivity, and the other was propaganda. He was a born propagandist and quite unable to meet anyone, however insignificant, without trying at once to win him over to his point of view. (...) His mind was always precise, and no one could be more practical. When he adapted his argument to his audience, no detail was too elementary to be remembered<sup>26</sup>.

The idea of the American Institute soon found more admirers and supporters also in America. The President of the Institute of International Education, Prof. Stephen Duggan was also very active in the promotion of this project. He discussed it with many Czech and Slovak activists in the United States and with the Czechoslovak Minister at Washington, Dr. Bedřich Štepanek. He got an enthusiastic support from all of them, which encouraged him to promote a development of the bilateral educational relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia. As he wrote to Einstein: "I believe that there is no foreign country with whom our educational relations are better than with Czechoslovakia, and I am sure that as long as you continue to be our Minister of Prague this happy state will be preserved"<sup>27</sup>.

In Einstein's correspondence there are many interesting comments about the concept and purposes of the American Institute in Prague. He was truly a strong supporter of it, not only as an institution for the promotion of cultural and educational cooperation between Czechoslovakia and America, but mainly as a research center for

25 NA, American Legation, Einstein, File No. 842-891.

26 L. Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, ed. by L.E. Gelfand, foreword by G.F. Kennan, New Haven 1968, p. 200.

27 NA, American Legation, 1924, Vol. VII Correspondence, File No. 806-842.

studying Russia and central Europe. On November 24, 1924 in a letter to the Under-Secretary of State, Joseph Grew, he explained that the Institute “will provide a permanent cultural contact between the United States and Czechoslovakia, and, what to me seems more important, a research center where American scholars can best study Russia and the Slav countries as well as different problems of Central Europe”<sup>28</sup>. Einstein had asked Joseph Grew to talk over this project with the Secretary of State, Charles E. Hughes, whose support was needed. As we see, the original Czechoslovak idea of the American Institute was changed and extended by the Americans. They found the possibilities to use the Institute also, or above all, as a research center for the Americans studying Russia and central Europe, which was needed and expected by Americans for many purposes. Many American intellectuals, academics and internationalists were gathered around the prestigious quarterly “Foreign Affairs” which was very supportive of the idea of closer cooperation between America and the rest of the world, and especially, Europe. They were very fond of the prospect to establish the American Institute in Prague, as well as similar institutes in other countries. Editors of “Foreign Affairs” were in close contact with Masaryk and Beneš, whom they invited to write on central Europe for the quarterly.

A few years later, after many more discussions, most of them in Czechoslovakia, the American Institute in Prague was finally established. On April 29, 1931 the first general meeting of the American Institute in Prague took place, with the attendance of more than 200 people. In the months to come, the American Institute was organized in eight sections: agricultural, commercial, engineering, journalistic, literary, medical, scientific, and student. Each group worked out its own method of keeping in touch with the developments in America and adapting and applying what had been learned abroad to local conditions in Czechoslovakia. All sections organized the meetings with the US visitors and arranged the public lectures and discussions on American history, media, advertising, every-day life, scientific discoveries etc. These gatherings were very popular in Prague and most of them had a large attendance<sup>29</sup>.

The American Institute did much valuable work during the next few years of its existence. The occasional lectures were given there on the American and Czechoslovak history, culture, bilateral relations etc.<sup>30</sup> The work of the Institute was important and useful in the bilateral cooperation, not only in the cultural sphere. Its activities served many different political purposes as well. Czechoslovakia became the best example of an efficient

28 Ibidem. Einstein considered Prof. Nicholas M. Butler as the President of the American Institute and Bernard Baruch as vice-president.

29 *The Year Book of the American Institute in Prague*, Prague 1931, p. 6-20; “The Central European Observer” 1931 (October 16), p. 605.

30 For more on the idea and activity of the American Institute in Prague, see my article: *Instytut Amerykański w Pradze i jego rola w rozwoju stosunków czechosłowacko-amerykańskich w okresie międzywojennym*, „Białostockie Teki Historyczne” 1995, nr 1, s. 55-79.

propaganda in east central Europe. Opinions about this peaceful, democratic and well-ordered country and a positive image of its policy were helpful and useful in consolidating Czechoslovakia's international position in the 1920s and early 1930s.

American diplomats, particularly ministers in Prague (such as Richard Crane, Lewis Einstein, Abraham Ratschesky), consular officers and also military attachés played an important role in the bilateral relations. They promoted not only a positive, friendly image of America and mutual relationships but also encouraged Czechs to learn “American business, its methods and efficiency”, the political system, and even American way of life. In many cases they became quite successful. Czechs and Slovaks were very fond of American technology, mechanization, and standard of living. They highly valued American efficiency, method and organization of work, professionalism etc. and they tried to implement some of them. Obviously, the success of the US food mission, money, and technical know-how cultivated American prestige in Europe, especially in east central Europe<sup>31</sup>.

Americans introduced to the European market Coca-Cola and chewing gum as well as cars, machinery, equipment, evaluated by customers as the best and excellent. The trademark “made in America” for many people in east central Europe, who did not know English, was recognized as standing for high quality products. The Americanization of Czechoslovakia became also quite visible in everyday life. As one journalist wrote: “it begins with the film and ends with fashion”, namely with dresses, shoes, hats etc.<sup>32</sup> Fascination with America, its political and economic system, democracy, prosperity, everyday life, and everything American was widespread in east central Europe, including Czechoslovakia. Only in Poland of the whole region, the fascination with America and the American myth was deeper and more expanded. The Americanization of these countries was quite advanced and became an essential part of the bilateral relations with the United States.

It is interesting that – in spite of the true fascination with Ford cars in the region – in Czechoslovakia this fascination was not so deep. It looks that Czechs were less sentimental and more pragmatic in terms of doing business. Their interest in American cars was limited, mostly because of the competition between Ford and Škoda, a good quality and popular car. To protect their own Škoda Auto Plant and its industry Czechs established – according to the quota system – a limited number in import of the foreign cars. Since mid-1920s this competition, as Americans named it, “discrimination policy” impacted visibly on the commerce relations between the two countries, especially during the great economic crisis in the 1930s<sup>33</sup>.

31 See: idem, *Zapomniany prezydent. Biografia polityczna Herberta Clarka Hoovera*, Białystok 1993.

32 “New York Times” 1927 (September 22), 32:3; 1929 (August 17), 2:8; H. Parafianowicz, *Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych, 1919-1933*, Białystok 1996, s. 190.

33 H. Parafianowicz, *Czechosłowacja...*, op. cit., s. 193-195, 232-236.

The bilateral relations between “the twin republics” seemed to be quite close in the early 1920s. The diplomatic and educational/cultural relations were expanding. But the US policy towards “the Old World” and, above all, the execution of the war debts and the retreat of isolationism, became since mid-1920s a bitter disappointment for the Europeans, including Czechoslovaks. The extremely positive image of America, based on Wilson’s policy, sentiments and wishful thinking, became more and more inadequate to the reality and hard to defend even by their supporters. In cartoons a new image of “Uncle Sam” appeared – a big and fat man with a cigar and pockets full of money. Such a selfish and self-content rich American was also – according to some of the journalists – unconcerned about Czechoslovakia as well as Europe and the rest of the world.

The Great Depression in the 1930s influenced deeply international relations and directly limited activities within the US foreign policy, especially towards east central Europe. But Americans were interested in the stabilization of the region, so the idea of a peaceful revision of the Versailles Treaty was gaining more and more advocates also in the United States. The position of Czechoslovakia was in real danger because of German and Hungarian revisionism, which focused mainly on “the peaceful corrections” of their borders established after the First World War.

Since the mid-1930s Prague became quite alone in the confrontation with revisionism of Adolf Hitler’s Germany and Miklós Horthy’s Hungary. Czechoslovakia’s geographic position, wedged between Germany and the Soviet Union, rendered her especially vulnerable to aggressive revisionism after the death of cherished and beloved “founding father” President Masaryk. The Sudeten Germans loudly complained of the “discrimination policy”, “abuses and maltreatment” in both the press and parliament in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

The consequences are well known and the tragic fate of the Munich conference (September 29-30, 1938)<sup>34</sup> became the symbol of appeasement, which led to destruction of the Czechoslovak independence and later not escaped the war. Yet, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain coming back from Munich enthusiastically announced at home: “it is peace for our time”<sup>35</sup>.

The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, “the sister republic” and “the only true democracy” at the region was bitter and tragic experience not only for Czechoslovakia and its people, but also for the whole world. As John Crane noted: “The only saving grace of the Munich capitulation was that Tomáš Masaryk had died on December 14, 1937, thereby escaping the pain of the sellout by his friends and sup-

34 This subject has been fully explored from the American perspective. See: H. Fish Armstrong, *Armistice at Munich*, “Foreign Affairs” 1939 (January 17), No. 2, p. 197-290; B. Rearden Farnham, *Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis: A Study of Political Decision-Making*, Princeton 1997.

35 R. D. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, New York 1979, p. 166.

porters<sup>36</sup>. To him and all of American friends of Czechoslovakia and many Americans it was a devastating and very bitter experience.

On October 1, 1938 the “Washington Post” in an editorial wrote:

Now, 20 years later, it has come to pass that American democracy, and democracy in general, has buried the Czechoslovak republic, as Masaryk knew it. Americans who took pride in his creation must not shrink from accepting their share and responsibility for the collapse. That responsibility is heavy. It would be cowardly and contemptible our share of the blame to others... What do we – the world’s most powerful nation – have to contribute to the solution of this world problem?<sup>37</sup>

This was a rhetorical question, as we know that in the 1930s American people were determined to keep out of political obligations and a European war.

The dismembered Czechoslovakia was further disrupted on October 5, 1938, upon Beneš’s resignation from the office of President. His tragic and bitter resignation was largely commented in the American press with sympathy and many words of admiration for the “brave and indomitable people”. He was called “an exceptionally able statesman” and “the right-hand of President Masaryk”. According to the “Houston Chronicle” (October 6, 1938) his distinguished career ended, because he had “too much faith in French and British assurances”. The “Wichita Beacon” the same day wrote: “But Benes, who had been able to pilot his nation safely through the post-war storm of Communism and dictatorships, made the mistake of placing his trust in the wrong friends. He was prepared to oppose Germany but he was not prepared to oppose Germany with England and France against him<sup>38</sup>.”

In the end of October of 1938 Beneš went abroad, to England. In February 1939 he left for a few months trip to the United States. In America he, together with Jan Masaryk, continued their addresses and lectures at American universities. They had got a warm official reception given by New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and many signs of “strong sympathy and admiration” there, showed by American Czechs and Slovaks as well as general American audience<sup>39</sup>.

In the United States Beneš experienced the tragic shock of Hitler’s invasion of Prague on March 15, 1939. He received a lot of words of sympathy from Americans and reciprocated to them the best feelings and his admiration and gratefulness for America. On one of his meetings he said:

36 E. Taborsky, *President Edvard Beneš Between East and West, 1938-1948*, Stanford 1981, p. 45-47; J.O. Crane, S. Crane, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 168.

37 *What America Thinks: Cartoons and Editorials Reproduced, with Permission, from American newspapers*, Chicago 1941, p. 533-535.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 605, 609.

39 E. Taborsky, *President Edvard Beneš...*, op. cit., p. 44-45.

In my own life and in the life of my nation the great national leaders of the United States had their important place, which they never have lost and will never lose. Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, as well as all the leaders of the democracy before, during, and after the World War, were also our leaders and our teachers. Our state was reborn to new free life with the assistance of the United States during the World War, and our democratic republic under the leadership of President Masaryk considered itself a small sister republic of the great American Commonwealth. We felt this not only because of the unforgettable assistance of the United States, but also because of the spirit, the ideals and traditions of freedom and democracy, which have inspired the United States of America since their independence, and which inspired also the war and postwar representatives of the Czechoslovak nation<sup>40</sup>.

He declared then that the Czechoslovaks have not deserted these ideals, and will wait for the moment when they will be able to express and cultivate it freely.

The propagation of America in Czechoslovakia, its democracy, ideals, high values, the political system etc. resulted in the creation of a widespread American legend, which became part of Prague official policy in searching for a "political friend". The governmental circles as well as public opinion shared quite common expectations about great "sister democracy" and its political support. To gain the friendly attention of the United States Czechoslovak officials were also trying to present Czechoslovakia (actually, Poland did the same) as a crucial factor for the central European stability and a sort of a bridge between the East and the West.

Czechoslovak leaders wanted to get the US support and did a lot in promotion America and its values at the "sister republic". Similarly to other European countries there was a certain amount of fascination with the affluence of the United States, their innovative technology, mechanization, and American democracy. Political legends of Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover, mixed with the gratitude expressed by Czechs and Slovaks for American help in the reconstruction of the country, established the positive image of the "twin republic". Not a minor role in the process was played by the media (chiefly the press and periodicals, such as the "Central European Observer") and the American Institute, together with charity activities (ARA, YMCA, YWCA) promoting America as such, its prosperity, the achievements of its civilization and political as well as economic system. The Czechoslovak establishment, with President Masaryk and his family, and American Czechs and Slovaks also played a very active role in strengthening cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the United States. Yet, Czechoslovakia became tragically alone and eventually sacrificed in unequal confrontation with the expansionist dictatorship of the Third Reich.

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40 E. Beneš, *Democracy Today and Tomorrow*, op. cit., p. v.