

The Czechoslovak Government-In-Exile in London, 1939-1945

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá Československý zahraniční odboj a vládu v exilu mezi lety 1939-1945. Na začátku líčí historické pozadí a popisuje problémy Sudetských Němců. Poté se zabývá okolnostmi které předcházely Mnichovské dohodě. Dále se zabývá situací v Československu po podepsání Mnichovské dohody a odchodu vlády do exilu do Londýna. Bakalářská práce také zkoumá podmínky exilové vlády v Londýně, složení vlády, aktivity prezidenta Beneše a snahy vlády, aby byla oficiálně uznána ostatními národy jako právoplatná a jediná legislativní vláda Československa. Poté se zabývá poválečným návratem vlády zpět do Československa. Nakonec práce dokazuje, že úsilí členů exilové vlády ale také československých vojáků přispělo ke spáchání atentátu na Heydricha, ke konci druhé světové války a hlavně k anulování Mnichovské dohody, tudíž mohlo Československo získat po válce zpět své hranice.

Klíčová slova:

Československo, zahraniční odboj, vláda v exilu, Edvard Beneš, Velká Británie, Londýn, Německo, Mnichovská dohoda, Protektorát Čechy a Morava

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis examines the Czechoslovak foreign resistance and the government in exile between 1939 and 1945. It starts by providing the historical background and describing the problems of Sudeten Germans. Then it deals with the conditions that preceded the Munich Agreement. Next, it deals with the situation in Czechoslovakia after the signing the agreement and the departure of the government into exile in London. Moreover, the thesis documents the conditions faced by the government in London, the composition of the government, the activities of President Beneš and the government's efforts to be officially recognized by other nations as the rightful and only government of Czechoslovakia. It then deals with the government's return to Czechoslovakia after the war. Ultimately, the thesis proves that the efforts of the representatives of the government in exile but also Czechoslovak soldiers contributed not only to ending World War II but to annulling the Munich Agreement, so that after the war Czechoslovakia could regain its antebellum borders.

Keywords:

Czechoslovakia, foreign resistance, government in exile, Edvard Beneš, Great Britain, London, Germany, Munich Agreement, Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

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INTRODUCTION

After the World War I, European states wanted to somehow guarantee peace and cooperation. In 1925, in an attempt to do so, European leaders held a conference in Locarno. As a result of this conference, the countries of Europe became equal, and the losers of World War I, including Germany, regained full status. When this occurred, Germany began vocalizing its desire to regain the Sudetenland which, although home to ethnic Germans, had been given to Czechoslovakia after the war. The Sudeten Germans were a discriminated-against minority in a predominantly Slavic country.

In the 1930s, Germany's leader, Adolf Hitler, had great ambitions that extended well beyond the borders of Germany. In 1938, at the Munich Conference, which was held without the presence of Czechoslovakian representatives, Czechoslovakia was forced to give the Sudetenland to Germany. In response to these events and under increasing pressure from the Nazis, Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš abdicated and went into exile, initially to Paris and then to London. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, the independence of Slovakia and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, other Czechoslovak politicians and military personnel followed Beneš. Many of them took part in the foreign resistance against Germany.¹ France became the political centre of Czechoslovak foreign resistance, and the Czechoslovak National Committee was created as a predecessor of the exile government. In 1940, the committee moved to London, where Beneš endeavored to get his provisional government officially recognized by the British.

This thesis will analyze the performance of the provisional government between 1939 and the end of the war in 1945. It will document the means by which the Czechoslovak provisional government in London gained official recognition as the true government of the occupied state. It will also demonstrate how the Beneš government-in-exile guided the Czechoslovak armed forces, also stationed in Great Britain, to contribute to the victorious outcome of World War II. It was in part thanks to these efforts that the Allied powers were convinced to annul the Munich Agreement after the war and restore Czechoslovakia to its original size.

¹ Jan Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941" (Bachelor's Thesis, Masaryk University, 2011), 4.

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Many factors between 1918 and 1938 led to the Czechoslovak government going into exile. Of them, the Munich Agreement, looms large, but it would not have happened had it not been for the Treaty of Trianon, which formed Czechoslovakia and trapped a sizeable minority of ethnic Germans within its borders, it would not have happened if Europe had shown lenience to the Germans after World War I., and it would not have happened had it not been for the rise of National Socialism in Germany, which promised to alleviate the misery of Germans and restore the country to its former greatness.

1.1 Czechoslovakia before the Munich Agreement

The First World War brought many changes in the geography of Europe. It resulted in the defeat and break-up of empires and gave independence to territories which had been under their jurisdiction.² Thanks to the peace conferences after the war, there were created new nation-states out of what had been the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Czechoslovak Republic was one of them. The statehood of Czechoslovakia was based on the right to self-determination according to the principle of nationality. But, the newly-created states struggled with the place of minorities, and there was a question how to integrate these minorities into the new state frameworks. Thus, the Sudeten Germans were assigned minority status and formally recognised to Czechoslovakia in 1918.³

Also after the war, France tried to somehow connect states of east-central Europe and states of south-eastern Europe and create barriers against German expansion.⁴ This led up to the conference in Locarno, which had the lofty goal of ensuring peace in Europe.

1.1.1 Treaties of Locarno

In 1925 there was a conference in Locarno, Switzerland, where former enemies from World War I met and signed 9 treaties which should guarantee mutual peace and cooperation.⁵

² Katherine Vadura, "Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic," *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 2, no.1(2005): 1-2, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal/article/view/73>.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴ Detlef Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943*, (Praha:Karolinum,2003), 17-18.

⁵ Moderní Dějiny, "Locarnské smlouvy (16.10.1925)," accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek/locarnske-smlouvy-16-10-1925/>.

The Treaties of Locarno also brought equality to Germany, with the condition that Germany respect its Rhine boundaries with France and Belgium, the so-called Rhine Pact. France achieved the guaranty of its western boundary. As these treaties provided equality for Germany, they also weakened the political power of France. The Treaties of Locarno were also dealing with smaller, permanently- threatened countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland. These states had to settle for arbitrage agreements with Germany, and they lost the sense of certainty and support from the western allies. They would have to rely on a peaceful coexistence with Germany.⁶

Consequences of the weakening French influence and strengthening German influence were as follows. Poland signed a non-aggression and friendship pact with Germany, and in 1935, Czechoslovakia made a deal with the Soviet Union about mutual aid. However, this treaty failed, and after the Munich Agreement, the Soviet Union did not help Czechoslovakia retain the Sudetenland.⁷

1.1.2 The dilemma of Sudeten Germans

After World War I, ethnic Germans, who were scattered throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire, became inhabitants of newly-created states. Sudeten Germans were recognized as a minority in the Czechoslovak Republic, albeit the largest minority. Depending on the structure of new states, ethnic Germans were given political rights or voices in government. Although in Czechoslovakia they had human and political rights, they were never treated equally by ethnic Czechs and Slovaks, which of course led to increasing dissatisfaction among the Sudeten Germans over their lack of self-determination. For them the Czechoslovak Republic probably became a place where the nation and homeland were not compatible.⁸

1.2 The Munich Agreement

The Munich agreement was a final result of negotiations between Adolf Hitler and other deputies of European super powers at that time. September 1938 was crucial for the fate of Sudeten Germans and for the Czechoslovak state. Until then, all attempts to solve tensions with the Sudeten Germans had failed.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943*, 18.

⁸ Vadura, "Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic," 3-4.

Under the threat of war, Hitler demanded the return of Sudeten territories to Germany. Britain and France, desiring to appease an increasingly belligerent Germany, agreed with the transfer of these territories.⁹

1.2.1 Situation before signing the Munich Agreement

On 19 September 1938, the deputies of France (Leopold Victor de Lacroix) and Great Britain (Basil Newton) went to Prague Castle to give President Edvard Beneš a note. That demanded the transfer of Sudeten territories with more than 50 percent of German inhabitants to the Third Reich. Perhaps it had to be, in the name of European peace,- but the Czechoslovak government, especially Beneš, found this unacceptable.¹⁰ Eventually on 20 September, the Czechoslovak government rejected the note.

In response to the decision of the Czechoslovak government, Beneš received from France and Great Britain information which practically meant the termination of their alliance. He was also told that if the rejection of the requirements cause a war, Czechoslovakia would be responsible for it. Only the Soviet Union promised to stand by Czechoslovakia in case of any threat.¹¹ After that, the Czechoslovak government discussed this ultimatum, and eventually they accepted it. On 22 September, the government resigned, and a new clerical cabinet was created by General Jan Syrový, his main aim being act in compliance with Beneš's policy. Also a shadow government was created with the leader Milan Hodža, the purpose being to maintain the connections between the government and the political parties.¹²

1.2.2 Negotiations of Hitler and Chamberlain in Godesberg

While Czechoslovakia was dealing with new political changes, in Godesberg Hitler and Chamberlain were negotiating the fate of Central Europe. Chamberlain, wanting rather peaceful resolution of the crisis in Europe, was setting aside Hitler's requirements.¹³ This displeased Hitler, who wanted to immediately occupy Czechoslovakia. His motivation for occupation was unclear, so the negotiation proved unsuccessful, and the resistance towards Hitler's requirements was increasing in France and Great Britain.¹⁴

⁹ Ibid.,4-5.

¹⁰ Lvová, *Mnichov a Edvard Beneš*, 9.

¹¹ Vadura, "Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic," 5.

¹² Bořivoj Čelovský, *Mnichovská dohoda 1938* (Šenov u Ostravy: Tilia, 1999), 324.

¹³ Lvová, *Mnichov a Edvard Beneš*, 87.

¹⁴ Čelovský, *Mnichovská dohoda 1938*, 312.

Also, the Soviet Union was backing Czechoslovakia. Great Britain advised Beneš to mobilize an army after the unsuccessful negotiations in Godesberg. One of the possibilities that Beneš took into account was that there was a chance of war. Thus, he took Britain's advice and on 23 September, mobilized the army as a prevention against Germany's aggressive intentions.¹⁵

1.2.3 The attitude of Western powers

It was evident that the main aim of Hitler was to gain control over Czechoslovakia, not only the Sudetenland, but the whole country. After the negotiations in Godesberg, France and Great Britain heightened their resolve, not because they wanted to protect Czechoslovakia, but because they wanted to achieve a peace with Hitler. On 26 September 1938, Chamberlain sent a message to Hitler that Europe faced a crossroads. Either there could be peace between western Europe and Germany, or there would be hostility.

Great Britain and France were frustrated with Hitler's intransigence but were still willing to negotiate a peace. They begged him not to invade Czechoslovakia without discussing it with them first.¹⁶ For Czechoslovakia it was an inconclusive situation. If the Czechoslovak government disagreed with Hitler's requests, he would have an easier situation, because western countries would not stand up for Czechoslovakia and if the Czechoslovak government submit to the requirements, Hitler gain practically everything without any shot.¹⁷

In Hitler's letter to Chamberlain from 27 September 1938, Hitler promised to stop the occupation of the borderlands and wanted to persuade Chamberlain that he only wanted the Sudetenland and not the whole Czechoslovakia. In those days, Chamberlain did not much care that the independence and freedom of Czechoslovakia was endangered, he did not care about the fate of Czechoslovaks, and he wanted to reach an agreement with Germany, so he wrote a letter to Hitler and told him that he is persuaded that everything that Hitler asked for, was immediately possible.¹⁸

¹⁵ Lvová, *Mnichov a Edvard Beneš*, 90-96.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-149.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

In the evening of 27 September, Chamberlain also proclaimed it unthinkable to drag European nations into a war over an issue that was basically already decided. So the path to the Munich Conference was open.¹⁹

1.2.4 The Munich Conference (“About us, without us”)

Based on Chamberlain’s initiative, a conference was scheduled for representatives of four European powers – Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy. On 28 September 1938, Hitler agreed to a conference with Great Britain’s prime minister Neville Chamberlain, France’s Édouard Daladier and Italy’s Benito Mussolini. The next day, the representatives arrived into Munich, but the results were predetermined. Hitler’s demands would be accepted at the expense of Czechoslovakia.

The four European powers decided the fate of the Czechoslovak Republic, which was unrepresented at the conference.²⁰ As it is said in Czech, the conference was “O nás, bez nás” (About us, without us). The Munich Agreement was also referred to as a diktat for Czechoslovakia because it had no opportunity to defend the state, and their future was decided by external issues.²¹

On 30 September 1938, the Munich Agreement was accepted, all of Hitler’s demands were implemented, and the Sudeten German prisoners were released. That day, the envoys of the western countries went to Czechoslovakia and demanded the acceptance of the Munich diktat. The reaction of the public was highly, negative and several demonstrations took place throughout Prague. These demonstrations however, had no impact. Beneš and the government had to accept the Munich diktat. The Prime Minister Jan Syrový called it a choice between murder and suicide. If Czechoslovakia refused the diktat, probably it would lead to a war with Germany and no one would support them.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 149.

²⁰ Vadura, “Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic,” 5.

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Štrobl, “Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941,” 13-14.

1.3 Situation after the Munich Agreement

In Great Britain, the agreement was accepted with enthusiasm and with great relief, only a few politicians such as Winston Churchill, criticized Chamberlain's movement against Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain regretted Czechoslovakia and said that the Munich Agreement destroyed an already weak balance on the continent.²³ On 3 October, Great Britain provided a loan to Czechoslovakia for its restoration. The financial help could have been a sign of lasting interest about the fate of Czechoslovakia, but the Czechoslovak Republic saw this more as an apologetic gesture than a serious attempt to help the Czechoslovak economy. The loan was only 8 million pounds instead of the 30 million pounds, Czechoslovakia had asked for.²⁴

1.3.1 The perspective of Edvard Beneš

Once the Munich Agreement was accepted, the government of Jan Syrový resigned. Five days later, on 5 October, President Beneš abdicated. This resignation was a requirement of Germany, because they refused to negotiate with him. As a parting shot, he called Great Britain and France cowards, who were afraid of communism so they ran to hide behind Nazism.²⁵

After the Munich events and after the abdication, Beneš went to Great Britain and then flew to the United States, to Chicago, where he was lecturing. In the meantime, in March 1939, Prague was invaded.²⁶ Three weeks later, Beneš received a letter from Ladislav Rašín, one of his political opponents, informing him about a witch-hunt against him in Czechoslovakia. Even though Rašín suspended himself from these dirty attacks on the former president, he had a different point of view and advocated the policy of crucial resistance to Nazi expansion and to the appeasements of western countries.²⁷

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ Radio Praha, "Martin Brown: A Post-Cold War Perspective on the Wartime Czechoslovak Government in London," accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/books/martin-brown-a-post-cold-war-perspective-on-the-wartimeczechoslovak-government-in-london>.

²⁷ Milan L. Hauner, "Edvard Beneš' Undoing of Munich: A Message to a Czechoslovak Politician in Prague," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38 (2003): 563.

According to Beneš's political confidant Hubert Ripka, Beneš was the one, who suffered the greatest pain after the Munich diktat, and in BBC radio broadcast of August 1942, Beneš admitted that "the undoing of Munich and its consequences has become in the last four years perhaps the only aim of my life."²⁸

1.3.2 Beneš's response to Rašín's letter

In the second half of November, 1939, Beneš responded to Rašín's letter, and it was probably the longest private political letter he had ever written. He expressed his opinions to some accusations, gave advice to active politicians in Czechoslovakia, and made forecasts about an international crisis. He tried to explain that he would never try to prove someone guilty for the events of September. He admitted the same part of responsibility as the government's, but it was also true that he had the greatest influence and the government could undertake nothing without his counsel.²⁹

He wrote about western countries, suggesting France had caused the betrayal because of indecisiveness, fear of responsibility, and a lack of courage. In those days, everybody was afraid of war, so it was not an excuse for France. Chamberlain did not want a war because of ignorance and a lack of understanding. Beneš confessed his responsibility and recognized, that he had sacrificed himself according to his conscience, which his patriotic duty required. He was prepared for everything, for war, settlement with Germans, agreement with Germany, nothing was left out.³⁰

He commented on the attempts to discuss co-operation with Germany, so no one could say, they had not tried. In 1928, he was the first foreign minister to visit Berlin and to offer co-operation. He had several long negotiations with Germany which seemed successful, but then suddenly for no apparent reason, Berlin broke off all the negotiations. He also made an agreement with Italy in 1924 in favour of mutual co-operation. When he offered an extension in 1928 and wanted to visit Rome again, Rome refused.

He also explained his policy of not excluding the war and being prepared for it. He believed, that the best way for Czechoslovakia, France, Germany and the whole Europe to solve the crisis was not to give in, even in the case of war.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 564.

²⁹ Ibid., 566.

³⁰ Ibid., 567-568.

³¹ Ibid., 571.

His goal was to reach an agreement with Sudeten Germans and Slovaks, so that the resistance is more consistent, so the western countries had no more excuses to joining Czechoslovakia. But unfortunately, it was evident, that Paris and London wanted to avoid the war at all costs.³²

Beneš thought about the possibility that if Czechoslovakia refused the diktat and was attacked, there would be a war. He had information that the French would not fight right away, it would have taken a while to make up their minds and it was taken for granted that Hitler would in the meantime occupy Bohemia. Concerning Russia, it would fight only if the France had done so first. The danger was according to him, that the Czechoslovak Republic was abandoned and left out to their own fate. He explained the necessity of asking a question, if it was better to maintain the best possible size of the territory or to risk everything, maybe a loss of the state. Until the last moment, Beneš preferred resistance and thus, a possibility of war.³³

As he wrote, the moment when he signed the mobilization orders and when he knew that Germany would invade Czechoslovakia, then the situation was evident. Several hours later, an information about the meeting of the great powers in Munich had come. Beneš knew, that France and Great Britain decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia and from that moment during the difficult times, Czechoslovakia was standing alone. After that, he must choose an option, which would be better for the country. There were two possibilities:

- 1) War, but Czechoslovakia could not fight alone and also it would cause more losses and devastation.
- 2) The acceptance of the Munich diktat, possibly to get protection from the powers, get economic aid and gain better conditions for fighting.³⁴

The results were clear. In the letter Beneš wrote, that he was struggling over borders of the state, over democracy, resistance to the Nazism and over either resistance or fair settlement.³⁵ For him, the Munich treachery was all of that. Then he left the Prague Castle with awareness, that he tried and had clear and proud conscience.

³² Ibid., 572.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 573.

³⁵ Ibid.

In the end of the letter Beneš mentioned that the Czechoslovak Republic must be prepared to confront all of these options and it should think for the future. He said, that a crime was committed and that Czechoslovakia suffered injustice. According to him, this was a mortgage to be applied against Great Britain and France but the solution was not to destroy it by adopting totalitarian policy or extremism towards Germany.³⁶

He also thought, that putting the hopes in Germany was a nonsense and that Germany would give Czechoslovakia only what they would achieve through fighting.³⁷ Eventually Beneš said, that at least Czechoslovak people were defended, having been betrayed they gain the recognition of the world and preserved the state. He personally was not sure if he would return back to the Czechoslovak Republic, he wrote that he should stay abroad, preparing the ground for the moment, that would come one day.³⁸

In the summer of 1939, Beneš returned to Great Britain and chose London for preparing the exile government, probably because he felt the betrayal from the French side more intensively than from Britain.³⁹ In exile he wanted to continue fighting for democracy in Europe, as he also did during the World War I. He also hoped, that by some adaptation of external and internal politics he could have kept the existence of the Czechoslovak state.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., 575.

³⁷ Ibid., 576.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Radio Praha, "Martin Brown."

⁴⁰ Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943*, 28.

2 CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN RESISTANCE AND GOVERNMENT IN EXILE

2.1 Situation after Munich and beginning of foreign resistance

It is important to know, that not all of the Sudeten Germans were supporters of the Munich Agreement and they were not celebrating the following occupation of the Czech lands. Many Sudeten Germans, who searched in Czechoslovakia for safety, were sent back to the Sudeten German territories. Unfortunately, lots of them were sent into a concentration camps, because of their anti-Hitler opinions. The minority of them managed to escape into exile to Great Britain.⁴¹

After the Munich Agreement, president Beneš abdicate and went to London, he did not want to somehow interfere into decimated Czechoslovakia, but he changed his mind after the events of 14-16 March 1939, when the Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was created. On 14 March, Slovakia was separated from the former republic and was announced independent.⁴² In May 1939, the British Government recognized the autonomy of Slovakia and defined the country as an area under the German occupation, with which Britain was not in a state of war. The public press was advised not to write much about Czechoslovakia.⁴³ This occupation was practically a completion of the Czechoslovak liquidation and also liquidation of its foreign policy.

Beneš wrote letters to Roosevelt, Daladier and Chamberlain and protested against the German progress. Roosevelt's attitude was, that the USA did not recognize the occupation by law, France also refused to recognize the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. As a base for his activities, Beneš used the organisations of Czech people living in the United States and a part of Slovak associations, which asked him to take up the leadership of the foreign resistance.⁴⁴ Already with his first public speeches, he brought up theses which should have been crucial for his exile policy. He thought that Czechoslovak policy sacrificed parts of its areas, in the name of preservation of peace in Europe.

⁴¹ Vadura, "Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic," 6.

⁴² Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 16-17.

⁴³ Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943*, 32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

According to him, the Munich Agreement was never a valid international document because it was implemented under the threat and the rules were broken by Nazis in March 1939, so the first Czechoslovak Republic (before the Munich) still existed in law and had the legal continuity.⁴⁵ On 3 September 1939, the Second World War began and it was a moment for which Czechoslovak politicians were waiting. They saw the war against Germany as a way how to again establish Czechoslovakia in its original borders.⁴⁶

2.1.1 The question of international recognition of the Czechoslovak exile organisation

Right before the outbreak of the Second World War, the most important leading personalities in exile- Edvard Beneš and Czechoslovak Envoy in Paris Štefan Osuský agreed on creation of the Provisional Government in exile and wanted to achieve the recognition of this government by France and Great Britain. This creation of the Provisional Government was really complicated and lengthy. Beneš set some goals, which should be reached in a short period of time. Primarily he wanted these:

1. To establish an army in France.
2. To reach an agreement with France and Great Britain about the Provisional Government, so it would have international law existence.
3. He wanted to create a military-political government with strong influence of the army.
4. If the negotiation with the Powers would be successful, there would be created a clerical government and the function of its members would be accomplished, when the homeland was set free.⁴⁷

Beneš suggested that this Provisional Government would be small and for other politicians in exile he wanted to create an organ called the National Council, which would advise and control the Provisional Government. The members of the government were Beneš as Prime Minister, Osuský as Foreign Minister, Outrata as Minister of Finance and General Ingr as Minister of Defense.⁴⁸ To achieve the recognition, Beneš started the negotiations with Great Britain.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jan Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," *Prague Papers on History of International Relations* (1997): 173.

⁴⁷ Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 24.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

He had a meeting with Lord Halifax, the British foreign minister, because he wanted to create an organ which would act on behalf of Czechoslovakia and which would represent the state abroad. He asked Halifax, if it would be possible to create the Czechoslovak army units in Great Britain, but unfortunately Halifax had no intention of recognizing such government.⁴⁹ But Beneš did not give up and create a memorandum about the constituted Czechoslovak Government, which handed to the Foreign Office. He wanted to create also the National Council as was mentioned before, but the British attitude remained the same.⁵⁰

Because Beneš was not really successful in Britain, the centre for the Czechoslovak resistance became Paris, where the stronger position had Czechoslovak Envoy Osuský, because representatives of the French Government had the negative attitude towards Beneš. So Osuský negotiated with the French Government about establishing the Czechoslovak army units there, the army should have been under the Provisional Government and it seemed that the French Government accepted this note, the preparations for creation of the Czechoslovak Government in exile began. But France introduced their own idea, that the Czechoslovak units would be under the leadership of Osuský, so this would put the power into his hands. Of course, Beneš and his companions disagreed and started a campaign against Osuský and the misunderstandings among him and Beneš increased. In the end, on 2 October 1939, there was signed a treaty by Osuský and French Prime Minister Daladier about establishment of the Czechoslovak units under the leadership of the Provisional Government, which was more a merit of Osuský than Beneš.⁵¹

2.1.2 The National Committee

Unfortunately, after some time it was clear that the Government was not recognized and France had no intention to recognize the Government headed by Edvard Beneš. So Beneš came to France, but Daladier refused to receive him because Beneš was not welcome in France. So instead of the Provisional Government, there was created the Czechoslovak National Committee on 17 October 1939 by Beneš, General Eduard Outrata, General Sergej Ingr, Jan Šrámek, Hubert Ripka and General Rudolf Viest.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 174.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 175.

Osuský did not take part in this, but of course France refused to recognize even the Committee without him. But the compromise was reached and Osuský became the last member of the Committee. The Committee was officially recognised on 14 November and its main aim was to represent the Czechoslovak people abroad. This was the first international recognition and it was a basis for the whole Czechoslovak liberation movement in the West.⁵²

The chairman of the Committee was Beneš and even though the seat was in Paris, Beneš was staying in London. Other members divided competences among themselves. The vice-chairman was Jan Šrámek- a former leader of the Czechoslovak Catholic Party, Osuský had an important position in the Foreign Affairs. Also there were developed the special organs called “Správy” (Departments). The most important was the Military Department with General Ingr as its head, a part of this was also an espionage group headed by Colonel Moravec, who closely cooperated with Beneš. Beneš also created the Propaganda Office and the Presidium which was similar to presidential office in Prague.⁵³

Unfortunately, there were some problems with the Committee because many of the Czechoslovak exile politicians were not satisfied with its composition and its international status. The main politician, who was dissatisfied was Milan Hodža, the former Prime Minister in Czechoslovakia and a representative of the Slovak Agrarian Party. Before war he was preparing the legal proposals for Slovak independence and these ideas influenced his policy in exile. And because Hodža did not get any post in the Czechoslovak National Committee, he started to organize an opposition against Beneš and he saw himself as the only representative of Slovak nation in exile.

On 22 November 1939, the Slovak National Council was established with Hodža as a head and Ján Pauliny-Toth as a vice chairman. Afterwards, Czechs established the Czech National Council with General Prchala as its head and eventually on 14 January, Czechs and Slovaks agreed on establishing the Czecho-Slovak National Council together.⁵⁴ The main aim was to complete the members of National Committee, they published a declaration about the future Czechoslovak active role in the Central Europe. Their propaganda was publicly known and started to threaten the fragile Czecho-Slovak unity.

⁵²Ibid., 177.

⁵³Ibid.,177-178.

⁵⁴Ibid., 178-179.

Also the French Government named it as a subversive propaganda and intervened against it but both Beneš and Hodža concentrated mainly on Great Britain and the negotiations about the Provisional Government.

In public, the dissatisfaction with the Committee increased. There were many critics and members of home resistance, who criticized mainly the weak legal status and the personal composition of the Committee. Even though Beneš was a member of the Committee, he also acted like an individual person and wanted to create the Provisional Government as soon as the internal situation in Great Britain would change.⁵⁵

2.2 The recognition of the Government in exile

As the time passed, the Beneš's position in the organizational structure of the Czechoslovak government in exile became stronger. He was supported a lot from the Czechoslovak home resistance and he was also in a regular contact with the government in Protectorate, his supporters were also people coming into exile. At home, in Czechoslovakia, he was recognized as a head of the Czechoslovak exile and people wanted him to become the head of the Provisional Government. But again, in spring of 1940, the attitude of British towards the recognition still remained the same. Britain had of course some arguments against recognition and these are the following:

1. Beneš was not able to secure unity among Czechs and Slovaks.
2. The Beneš's influence in Protectorate was not certain, which was connected with the existence of the Slovak Government in Bratislava and the Government in Protectorate of president Hácha.
3. An important argument was that after the war, the situation in central Europe will not be certain, so it was unwanted to take any definite commitments of reconstitution of Czechoslovakia.⁵⁶

According to a legal adviser of Foreign Office in Britain William Malkin, the Czechoslovak existence in law was doubtful. But despites these arguments of Britain, Beneš did not give up. He started to negotiate with Mr. Willian Strang, a leading adviser to the British Government, and started to developing arguments for the recognition.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,179.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,180.

The important fact, which might influenced the decision of the British Government was, that after the occupation of Norway and Netherlands by the German army, the occupation of France in June 1940, Britain lost many of their allies.

In the meantime, Winston Churchill became a new Prime Minister instead of Chamberlain. Churchill was rather an opponent of the policy of appeasement. In Britain, there was more difficult military situation, so he must mobilized the state because of the possibility of war, so maybe the situation for the political requirements of Czechoslovakia was more favourable.⁵⁷

In negotiations about the recognition of the Provisional Government, Beneš tried to somehow stress the number of Czech political refugees and soldiers coming to England, he also mentioned that he is able to secure the Czecho-Slovak unity.⁵⁸ Beneš also mentioned the financial aspects, according to his proposal, the solution of financing the Czechoslovak Government and the army units could be in a form of a loan. This loan would finance the one-year budget and Czechoslovakia would guarantee it by its deposits and gold placed in the Bank of England.⁵⁹ William Strang agreed on recognition, also William Malkin suggested to recognize the Government, but there should be some limitations and reservations, also Beneš should more cooperate.⁶⁰

2.2.1 The procedure of recognition

The procedure was realized by exchange of letters among Beneš and Halifax. Beneš wrote in his letter about the political and juridical continuation of existence of the Czechoslovak Republic, he also wrote that he and the National Committee decided to create the whole system of state machinery, which consists of: The President of the Republic (Beneš), The Prime Minister (Šrámek) and his government, also the National Council as a representative organ of all the Czech and Slovak leaders in exile, and this requests sent to Lord Halifax.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁸ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 183.

⁵⁹ Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 32.

⁶⁰ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 183.

The War Cabinet on 3 July 1940 approved the proposal on recognition of the Provisional Government and on 21 July 1940, Halifax sent to Beneš a letter in which he informed him, that the Britain recognized the Czechoslovak Provisional Government and this was a huge success. This recognition had certainly some conditions:

1. The recognition did not mean that Britain accepted Beneš's theory of the juridical continuity of Czechoslovakia.
2. Britain refused to negotiate about any kind of definitive borders in the Central Europe.

Three days after the recognition, the British radio played the Czechoslovak anthem for the first time, also the public press came up with this information. After the recognition, Great Britain could represent itself as a superpower, behind which stood the exile governments of the occupied states.⁶¹

To this recognition probably contributed also the Czechoslovak fighter pilots and their achievements. Even Sir Robert Hamilton Lockhart, who worked for the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office and was an official diplomatic deputy of Czechoslovakia, said that one of the main reasons of the recognition was the fact that on the battlefields of Britain stood the Czechoslovak army. Thanks to their success in the battle of England, the British politicians saw these pilots as the best promoters of the Czechoslovak thing. The pilots themselves used a slogan: "We fight to rebuild."⁶² After this battle, the pilots gain a good reputation and improved the prestige of foreign resistance.

Afterwards, the Czechoslovak pilots and soldiers were involved into the British war efforts. So the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government can be marked as a miracle and the Czechoslovak pilots helped a lot.⁶³ It is important, that the Government was recognized also by British Dominions such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. It was also recognized by another exile governments of Norway, Belgium, Poland and Holland.⁶⁴

⁶¹Ladislav Kudrna, "We fight to rebuild: Podíl letců na uznání exilové vlády" *Paměť a dějiny* 02 (2014):7, accessed March 25, 2017, <https://www.ustrcr.cz/publikace2/pamet-a-dejiny/>.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶³ Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939-1943*, 67-70.

⁶⁴ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 186.

2.2.2 Situation after the recognition of Provisional Government

Edvard Beneš became a President of the Provisional Government, even though he had not become a President by any procedure known from the Czechoslovak Constitution.⁶⁵ Beneš came up with a proposal to create the State Council, which would be the helping and inspecting organ. With the help of the State Council, he would achieve the Czecho-Slovak unity and maybe the solution of the tension with the German emigrants from the Czechoslovakia. This Council should have had about 30 members, who would be named by the President, because the elections were not possible. So the State Council was created by a constitutional decree of the President.⁶⁶

Of course, Beneš had a big power in his hands. The State Council was directed by him, he became a chief of the army and he was together with the Government a legislative authority. But he also had a responsibility for the problems connected with reconstitution of Czechoslovakia, such as Czech and Slovak relations, Sudeten Germans or Czechoslovak Communists. He wanted to solve these problems by the participation of politicians from pre-war Czechoslovakia.⁶⁷ Probably he wanted to find the suitable Slovak candidates and Sudeten German candidates for the exile organs, which was really complicated but British reservations set during the process of recognition were clear, so Beneš had to negotiate with Wenzel Jaksch who was a leader of the strongest group of the Sudeten Germans. Beneš then reserved a position of vice chairman and the six seats for Sudeten Germans.⁶⁸

Except Sudeten Germans, an important, but the most controversial parts of the Czechoslovak resistance were the Communists. There was a problem, that the large number of the Czechoslovak soldiers and refugees were sympathizers with the Communist Party, under the leadership of Klement Gottwald. The whole Provisional Government was described by the Communists as the social capitulators, coalition of bourgeoisie, bankrupt and full of cowards. The Communist party was against the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 39.

⁶⁷ Kuklik, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942.", 185-186.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 186.

Already the same day as the British recognized the Provisional Government, Edvard Beneš named the members of the Provisional Government. The Prime Minister was Jan Šrámek, Jan Masaryk became the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence was General Sergej Ingr and the Minister of Finance was Eduard Outrata. As the Interior Minister was named a former Slovak Agrarian, Juraj Slávik. The members of the Government were besides others: General Rudolf Viest, Štefan Osuský, the Social Democrat Jaromír Nečas, Jan Paulíny-Toth, Hubert Ripka in Foreign Ministry and others.⁷⁰

2.2.3 The beginning of the functioning of the Provisional Government

On the first meeting of the Provisional Government, president Beneš tried to define the main aim of the Government in exile. According to him, the main goal was to continue with traditions of the First Republic (with the president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk) and also he wanted to create the republic which would adapt to the war conditions and to the conditions which would result from war.⁷¹ So the gains of the Government were to organize the army during the war, to care about the Czechoslovak emigrants and build up the apparatus of the Provisional Government. According to Beneš, the Provisional Government should have been the symbol of unity, concord and peace.⁷²

The exile government also took part on the legislative activities together with the President. This activity was carried out by the Presidential Decrees, which were published on the proposal of the government and with the signature of the Chairmen of the cabinet and other responsible ministers. The similar form of implementing the rules was used also by the other exile governments, for example the Polish exile government. But many of these norms required approval of Britain and the British strictly manifested to the Provisional Government to decrease their legislative activity to the minimum, because the government had only the provisional character.⁷³

On 16 August 1940, there was a meeting of the Government and Beneš set some points which should be a priority of the newly created Government. These priorities were mainly about the positive attitude towards Britain and about backing Britain in every situation.

⁷⁰ Vláda České Republiky, “Československý národní výbor a prozatímní státní zřízení ČSR v emigraci,” accessed March 25, 2017, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/za-premierem-a-vladou/ceskoslovensky-narodni-vybor-a-prozatimni-stani-zrizeni-csr-v-emigraci-17369/>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Štrobl, “Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941,” 39.

So when Britain was in war against Germany, Czechoslovakia was supposed to help them. When Britain wished the positive relationship among the Czechoslovak Republic and Poland, Czechoslovakia should be more friendly towards Poland. Also there was a collective interest that England should have had more positive relationship with Russia. Beneš also mentioned, that the Government should concentrate on solving the economic crisis and the organization in Europe after the war.⁷⁴ These priorities came out mainly from the dominant role of Great Britain and also the Provisional Government had success thanks to the friendly relationship with Churchill.

Churchill in his speech from 30 September 1941 emphasized the quality of the Czechoslovak army and the pilots. He also said, that Britain was no longer tied up by the Munich Agreement or any other German document, which was for Britain unfavourable. This speech was proposed by Beneš, Churchill made a couple of changes but still it had fundamental meaning for the future of the Czechoslovak Republic after the war. Churchill also mentioned for the first time, that the restoration of the Czechoslovak liberty belong to the British war aims.⁷⁵

After that, there was signed an agreement among Halifax and Jan Masaryk concerning the Czechoslovak army in Britain. About 5000 Czechoslovak troops and pilots moved from France to Britain. The army was organized according to the Czechoslovak rules, but it had to correspond with the British ones as well. The army was divided into two parts. The soldiers remained under the Czechoslovak command and the air units became a part of the British Royal Air Force.⁷⁶

The important issues with which was the Provisional Government dealing, were the financial matters. Czechoslovakia made with Britain a special agreement and was given 7 500 000 pounds for civilian and military budget. After the overdraft of money, Czechoslovakia could ask for increase. At the same time, Czechoslovakia promised that towards Britain, there would not be any claims after the war. Also Britain promised to help with the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak economy after the war.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid.,41

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 188.

⁷⁷ Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 42.

On 11 November 1940, Robert Lockhart reported the official statement to the British Government about the Czechoslovak frontiers, but according to the statement of Halifax, all the frontiers including the Munich line would be for Great Britain postponed until the end of the war.

2.2.4 The efforts for recognition of Provisional Government de jure

After long and not so successful negotiations of Beneš with USA about the recognition of Czechoslovak exile government, he came up to an idea that firstly he should negotiate with Great Britain. At first, Beneš thought, that in the near future, United States would help Czechoslovakia to re-establish their state, but he was wrong and his negotiations were not successful at that time. In February 1941, he started another diplomatic steps for recognition of the Provisional Government de jure, which means in the conformity of law.

He himself wanted to be recognized officially as the President of the Czechoslovak Republic. Czechoslovak Government was asked to prepare a memorandum about their war aims, so Beneš used the opportunity and wrote also about his theory of political and juridical continuity.⁷⁸ As a suitable chance to push through his aims, he used the visit of the British Prime Minister Churchill, who visited Czechoslovak military units on 19 April. Beneš told Churchill his plans and he promised to help. In the memorandum, Beneš insisted on his theory of the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic and he also discussed the post war position of Czechoslovakia towards the other European states. Apart from this, memorandum also included the statement that the conditions in Protectorate and the international situation needed the recognition of the Provisional Government and that Beneš should be recognized as the real representative of the state. To persuade British and gain his aim, he also used the facts about the participation of Czechoslovak units in battles against Germany and good relationships with Hácha and the Protectorate Government.⁷⁹

On 23rd April 1941, Lockhart told Beneš that his memorandum was handed to the British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden. Eventually, Eden agreed and the Foreign Office started the preparations for the real recognition.

⁷⁸ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 189.

⁷⁹ Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 44.

A big role in these negotiations played Lockhart, who was permanently backing Beneš. Lockhart also pointed out, that if Britain did not recognize the Government, there is a danger that Czechoslovakia after the war would support rather the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

On 26 May sent Eden the official reply to the Beneš's memorandum, where he wrote that the main obstacle for the recognition de jure, was Hácha's government in Prague. Eden thought that if the government is recognized de jure, Germans could force Hácha to refuse the whole Czechoslovak foreign resistance, which would Germans used for their propaganda and that would lead to the unexpected results.⁸¹ The British wanted to somehow solve the situation, so they proposed that in case of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government, there would be erased the word "provisional" but this would not mean the full recognition. Also the position of the President Beneš would remain unchanged, the Government would be recognized as equal, but they would not be written in the diplomatic list and of course, the exile representatives rejected it.⁸² The whole situation aptly depicted Jan Masaryk, who said that if the Czechoslovak pilots, who died in the battles of Britain are also considered "only provisionally dead."⁸³

The situation changed on 22 June 1941, when was the Soviet Union attacked by Germany. After that the Soviet Government recognized the Czechoslovak Provisional Government and wanted to help with the restoration of Czechoslovakia. On 18 July 1941, Jan Masaryk signed an agreement with the soviet envoy Ivan Majskij. This agreement confirmed that the Czechoslovak Government in London and Edvard Beneš are recognized as the Government and the President of the Czechoslovak Republic. On the same day, the Government was recognized also by British and Anthony Eden expressed his full support to Beneš. The recognition was via a letter, which Eden sent to Jan Masaryk.⁸⁴ The Soviet Union was maybe in an easier position and recognized the Government promptly, because the Soviet Union was not a signatory of the Munich Agreement.

This development also changed the attitude of the United States. Beneš sent a personal letter to Roosevelt, writing that on the British soil there was created the new government and the state machinery was recognized by the British.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 192.

⁸² Štrobl, "Vztahy československé exilové reprezentace s britskou vládou v letech 1940-1941," 46-47.

⁸³ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 48-49.

Beneš also mentioned that if the USA wanted to take the same step of recognition, this would mean the support and the protection of freedom, the preservation of the democratic institutions in Europe and the elimination of the barbarian Nazi regime, which was destroying the people in Europe.⁸⁵ The United States recognized the Czechoslovak Government as a Provisional in 1941, a year later USA accorded the full *de iure* recognition.

These recognitions from Soviet Union, Britain, USA and the other Allied Governments were the huge milestone on a way towards the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia in its pre-Munich frontiers.⁸⁶ After this recognition, for Beneš the improvement of the international status was connected with the repudiation of Munich. Beneš repeated the basic principles of the juridical theory concerning the legal existence of Czechoslovakia and that the Munich Agreement is not valid. He stressed that the Agreement was accepted under the threats from Germany and also was broken by Germans on 15 March 1939, when they occupied Czechoslovakia.⁸⁷

For Britain, the negotiations on the repudiation of the Munich were connected with the problem of the Sudeten Germans, so the British would agree on the repudiation and on the recognition of jurisdiction of the Czechoslovak Government under a condition, that Beneš and the leader of the Sudeten German Social Democrats Jaksch, would reach an agreement, so the Sudeten Germans were given a representation in the Czechoslovak exile parliament and the State council.⁸⁸ On 4 August 1942, Anthony Eden handed to Jan Masaryk a note, which dealt with the fact, that Germany deliberately destroyed Czechoslovakia and the final settlement of the frontiers would be reached at the end of the war. Eden also mentioned the importance of the Czechoslovak resistance, especially mentioned the case of Lidice. Also the France and later Italy declared the Munich Agreement to be null.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Kuklík, "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1942," 195.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

2.3 The assassination of Heydrich and the Government in exile

Because of the change in the war situation, after the attack of Germany on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, in Czechoslovakia there were many supporters of anti-fascist resistance. German secret police was solving sabotages, which was a consequence of the activities of home resistance. The telephone lines were cut more frequently, a German children's home was firebombed and people also boycotted the Protectorate newspapers, when more of 60 percent of them remained unsold. Germany needed to somehow solve the situation, so Hitler called for a meeting in Rastenburg. In this meeting, Heydrich presented the most detailed analysis of the situation in Protectorate and afterwards Hitler appointed him to become the "Reichsprotektor" and on 27 September 1941, Heydrich arrived in Prague. His main aim was to accomplish the Germanization and fight against the home resistance.⁹⁰ Under his clerical cabinet were many Czech people sent to the concentration camps or executed. Heydrich wanted to destroy the home resistance in Czechoslovakia, and it had an impact on the Czechoslovak exile government, which of course wanted to support the home resistance.

Meanwhile in exile, Beneš was solving different problems. The production of the war material and the agricultural products in Protectorate increased, so Germans could create the war reserves, also Beneš's soldiers complained that the home resistance was not enough committed to direct action against Germans. Beneš was obsessed with the necessity to renew the integrity of the Czechoslovakia and he wanted to show the Allies that Czechoslovaks were ready to contribute to the war more actively.⁹¹

Unfortunately, after Heydrich's arrival into Prague were the communications between Prague and London almost cut off and it was necessary to renew the contacts. In Britain began a special training of Czech and Slovak parachutists, who would drop into Czechoslovakia with radio materials. Among the parachutists there would be two men, who would kill Heydrich. The first drops of parachutists were rather a disaster, some of the parachutists were caught by the Gestapo, some of them landed far away from Bohemia. In October 1941, František Moravec decided that Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš would be the two men, who would kill Heydrich.

⁹⁰ Peter Demetz, *Prague in Danger*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008) 102-103.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 165.

They were trained in London in a secret training camp, were informed about the orders and met Beneš who told them goodbye with tears in his eyes.⁹² The group Anthropoid was sent to Czechoslovakia, where they were hidden in modest family apartments and had 5 months for preparing the attack. František Moravec warned Beneš about the consequences of such action, but Beneš considered himself the commander in chief and said that the sacrifices were inevitable.

A Czech carpenter employed in Heydrich's office in Hradčany had a chance to see the Heydrich's schedule. In the schedule was written, that on 27 May 1942 Heydrich was leaving Prague for appointment in Berlin and perhaps in Paris, so the parachutists could wait no longer. In the morning of 27 May, Jan Kubiš and Josef Gabčík with cooperation of others parachutists Josef Valčík and Adolf Opálka took their positions in Prague-Holešovice, at 10.30. a.m. Valčík signaled with a mirror, that car with Heydrich is approaching. Gabčík wanted to use his Sten gun, but it did not work so Kubiš throw a grenade which hit the end of the car and wounded Heydrich, he was hospitalized in Bulovka Hospital and on 4 July died.

The consequences of this attack were fatal. The Gestapo started a huge hunt for the attackers. Around 3000 people were arrested and the half of them died. The cruel terror culminated by wiping out of Lidice on 10 June 1942, because it was allegedly a base of foreign action and wiping out of Ležáky on 24 June 1942, where was found a British transmitter. All the men older than 15 years were shot. Women and children were transported into concentration camps.

The attackers were hiding themselves in a Church of St.Cyrillus and St.Methodius on Resslova Street in Prague. On 17 June 1942, the units of SS occupied the church. The parachutists were bravely fighting against the Gestapo practically without any chances and eventually all of them died, mostly by their own hand. During this terror after Heydrich's death, many people were executed and sent into the concentration camps. The meaning of this assassination ment a huge success of the Czechoslovak army.⁹³

⁹² Ibid.166.

⁹³ Ibid.169-170

3 THE END OF THE WAR AND THE EXILE GOVERNMENT

As it was mentioned before, Beneš wanted to re-establish pre-Munich frontiers. He had an idea how to solve the Sudeten Germans problem, by a population transfer, which was rejected by the Allies. The Sudeten Germans had to be expelled in order to gain the internal stability of Czechoslovakia. Of course, there was opposition and Jaksch questioned, how the expulsion could be justified on the basis of collective responsibility, because the Slovaks were not expelled from the state. He argued that the Slovak population is just as responsible for post-Munich breakup of the state as the Sudeten Germans but Beneš said that the majority of the Slovaks had not abandoned their loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic, unlike the Sudeten Germans. Beneš said that the Germans have the responsibility for destruction of the state and also some of them were collaborators with Hitler.⁹⁴

3.1 The organised transfers of Germans

At the end of the war, Germans were given less ratios than Czechs, they also had to wear a letter N= Němec (German) on them. Some of the Czechs, who had returned from the concentration camps, wanted to return home, to the regions which were after the Munich Agreement settled by Germans. Czechoslovaks had the feeling of hatred against Germans, which was fuelling the Czech nationalism. When the war ended in 1945, Beneš returned to Prague and announced his program for the expulsion. The expulsions lasted until autumn 1945 and the expelled Germans were about three million.

At the Potsdam Peace Conference was agreed that the Czechoslovak Republic would gain their frontiers back and the regions, which were under the German dominance, will be returned back to Czechoslovakia.⁹⁵ After the liberation of the country the Czechoslovak republic approached towards the restoration of the state administration. The problem after the war was, that the Czechoslovak international resistance had two sides. In London there were primarily the representatives of non-communist parties and in Moscow, there were mainly Communists. There was a need to unite both of these groups.

⁹⁴ Vadura "Exile, Return and Restitution in the Czech Republic," 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid.,12-13.

On 5th April 1945 was created so called “Košícká vláda” or “Košícký vládní program” which set the principles of the future policy and moved the orientation of Czechoslovakia towards the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ In newly created government, Jan Masaryk remained the Foreign Minister, and for the function of state secretary, which was an important function, was named a communist Vladimír Clementis.

The Foreign Ministry wanted to continue with the pre-war tradition, so except the members who had return from exile, were again employed members who had stayed in Protectorate and worked there before. In the office of the ministry were many diplomants from the London exile and also the members of the foreign resistance. So the continuity of the ministry from the First Republic was preserved.⁹⁷

In 1946, there was announced a Two-Year Plan, which was basically a planned economy and the main aim was to increase production, obtain a full employment (also employment of women), stabilize the crown’s exchange rate or to control the wage levels. This regime was a guaranty for people in some way, they had employment, insurance, food tickets and other benefits. Nevertheless, in that time became a creation of conditions for another totalitarian regime and the Communists were more and more spreading throughout the government. Also in other countries such as Poland, Romania or Bulgaria Communists eliminated their political rivals. They introduced new ideology, the industrialization plans, the trade was oriented on the East.⁹⁸

Eventually in February 1948, the Communists with Klement Gottwald as its head, made a putsch in Czechoslovakia and grasped the power into their hands and soon gained control over the whole government, because many democratic parties resigned. So in Europe, which was divided into two camps, Czechoslovakia became a part of a Soviet half. With the success of the Stalinist rule and the Communist’s rise to power, Czechoslovakia with its new economic models, political framework, usage of the Communist slogans, became a part of the countries on Eastern Europe and thus entered the new historical era.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR. “1945: Obnova diplomacie nezávislého Československa“ accessed March 28, 2017, http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/historie_a_osobnosti_ceske_diplomacie/kveten_1945_obnova_diplomacie.html.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 255-265.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

So Edvard Beneš lost his state for the second time. The Communist regime nationalized all enterprises, most of the foreign trade was with the Soviet Union. Most of the non-communist parties were eliminated or changed into communist orientation, some of the newspapers were shut down and associations like Sokol were set in and were closely tied up with the state. Many people were marked as class enemies and were imprisoned, including the representatives of the London-based Czechoslovak army.¹⁰⁰

It is said, that the Nazi occupation was a predetermination for the Communist regime. Nazi rules made the Communists rules easier, it created economy coordinated by the state and empowered the working class. Communist regime quickly destroyed and transformed the world and the rules which were functioning before the World War II and before the 1938.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The Czechoslovak Government was in exile more than 5 years and their merits were great. Right after the signing of the Munich Agreement, Edvard Beneš left to exile to London. In 1939, Germany broke the rules from the Agreement and occupied the Czechoslovak Republic, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was created. Beneš went to London, as he wanted to continue with the pre-war system and wanted to re-establish Czechoslovakia and its original borders as soon as possible. He took many negotiations with Britain and France about the recognition of the Czechoslovak exile government. Actually, he had a huge success. He established the government and named its members, also there were created the Czechoslovak army units, firstly in France and then they moved to Britain. These army were backing Britain during the war. As a support of the home resistance, a couple of espionage groups came into an existence. Some Czechoslovak soldiers even became a part of the Royal Air Force of Britain.

In Britain, special groups were trained according to orders of Beneš and the parachutists from the group Anthropoid assassinated Heydrich in 1942. This assassination meant a great success of the Czechoslovak army, because Third Reich lost their capable boss, the Czechoslovak government strengthened its position in exile in negotiations of anti-Hitler coalition. Also this action definitely contributed to the annulment of the Munich Agreement by Britain and France and it was an evidence, that the Czechoslovak government was not reconciled with the occupation.

As the war was coming to an end, Beneš wanted to re-establish the Czechoslovak frontiers. On 1942, the main goal of Beneš's government in exile was fulfilled. Britain, France, Italy and USA recognized the Munich Agreement as null. After the war, in 1945 Beneš and his government came back to Czechoslovakia and started with restoration of the post-war economy. At the Potsdam Peace Conference was agreed that Czechoslovakia would gain their areas, which were under the German domination for over six years, back. Beneš also came up with his plan of expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and during the autumn of 1945 about three million Germans were sent back to Germany.

However, the Beneš's exile government accomplished its main aim, which was the annulment of the Munich Agreement and the restoration of the Sudetenland and even though the Czechoslovak Republic gained their occupied areas back, there was a problem that the government of the newly rebuilt state had to be unified.

The Beneš's government from London had to be integrated with the exile government from Moscow, which had mainly the Communist members. After the creation of the "Košícký vládní program" in 1945, the Czechoslovakia became rather East-oriented. Step by step, the Communists gained the bigger influence in the government of Czechoslovakia, the democratic parties were either purged or changed into the parties with Communist ideology, new political frameworks were created and Czechoslovakia became economically oriented towards the Soviet Union. So the Communist regime destroyed the pre-war rules and the plans of Edvard Beneš on restoration of Czechoslovakia after the World War II.

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