

The Pittsburgh Agreement of 1918

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce pojednává o Pittsburghské dohodě, která byla podepsána T. G. Masarykem a zástupci českých a slovenských immigrantů v roce 1918 v Pittsburgu. Jejím cílem bylo spojení Čechů a Slováků, žijících v Evropě a vytvoření nezávislého Československa. Tato dohoda taky měla dokázat prezidentu Woodrowu Wilsonovi, že Češi a Slováci jsou schopni shody a myšlenka Československa je hodna americké podpory. V první části práce je popsáno historické pozadí vzniku dohody, následuje popis samotného vzniku a v poslední části práce jsou prodiskutovány následky, vyplývající z podpisu a následného nedodržení Pittsburghské dohody.

Klíčová slova:

Češi, Slováci, Československo, Pittsburgh, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Woodrow Wilson, autonomie, nacionalismus, nezávislost, Pittsburghská dohoda, Rakousko-Uhersko, 1. Světová válka, mírová konference, Paříž, Čtrnáct bodů, sebeurčení, nacismus, komunismus, rozpad Československa

ABSTRACT

This work concerns the Pittsburgh Agreement, which was signed in 1918 by T. G. Masaryk and the representatives of American Czech and Slovak immigrant communities. The aim of the agreement was to unite European Czechs and Slovaks, and to create an independent Czechoslovakia. The agreement was also supposed to show the Americans and their president, Woodrow Wilson, that Czechs and Slovaks are able to reach agreement and that the idea of Czechoslovakia is worth supporting. This thesis describes the historical background of the agreement, then the process of its creation, followed by its results. It argues that Masaryk's refusal to follow the terms of the agreement led not only to the formation of a Slovak fascist state during World War II but to the ultimate break-up of Czechoslovakia following the Cold War.

Keywords:

Czechs, Slovaks, Czechoslovakia, Pittsburgh, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Woodrow Wilson, Autonomy, Nationalism, Independence, Pittsburgh Agreement, Austria-Hungary, First

World War, Peace Conference, Paris, Fourteen Points, Self-determination, Nazi, Fascism
Communism, Breakup of Czechoslovakia

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

May 31st, 1918, an older gentleman with a silver moustache and gold spectacles, dressed in a dapper black suit, with a black hat covering his bald head, was heartily welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd that had gathered at the Loyal Order of the Moose Building, located on Penn Avenue, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The man was a Czech professor and politician, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and the purpose of his visit was to sign an important document, a single piece of paper that would supposedly secure not only the creation of a new nation, a Czecho-Slovak State, but its recognition by U.S. president Woodrow Wilson. The crowd consisted mostly of Czech and Slovak immigrants. They cheered and celebrated, because they admired the likeable Czech professor who fought for their interests. But this likeable guy, who was one of the chief signatories of the document later known as the Pittsburgh Agreement, was up to something somewhat devious, which would later hurt the Slovak contingent then trustingly cheering him on.

This thesis documents the situation after the First World War, the American influence on the development of post-war Europe, the Pittsburgh Agreement, and the results of Masaryk's decision to ignore several of its key provisions. This thesis provides evidence supporting the claim that Masaryk, who denied Slovaks their right to autonomy, guaranteed to them by the Pittsburgh Agreement, is at least partly responsible for their later decision to support fascism during the World War II and to break up Czechoslovakia in 1991. Masaryk used and betrayed the Slovaks, whom he needed but whom he also deemed less civilized than Czechs. In doing so, he doomed his Slavic state to failure and left his legacy slightly tarnished.¹

¹ David Grinnell, "L and A Treasures: The Pittsburgh Agreement; Czecho-Slovak Agreement," *Western Pennsylvania History* 90 (2007): 8.

1 AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND WORLD WAR I

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Austrian Hungarian Empire had over 48 million inhabitants of various nationalities: Austrians, Magyars, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Romanians, Croatians, Slovenians, Bosnians and Herzegovinians. Almost all of these nations had their own identities, histories or even languages.² It is therefore of little wonder that within a multinational empire, various voices desired to be heard. Among the nations within the empire, the Ruthenians and Ukrainians inclined towards Russia on the bases of geographic proximity and common (Slavic) language. The South Slav states in the Balkans embraced the idea of Pan-Slavism, which in many ways undermined the power of the non- Slav ruling dynasty, the Habsburgs. Within the Czech Lands, both Moravians and Bohemians tended to have a negative opinion towards the Habsburgs- based on previous experiences. They were not alone. Magyars also rejected Habsburg rule. In 1867, the Habsburgs succumbed to pressures and adopted a program of “dualism with the Magyars,”³ which meant autonomy for Hungary and an opportunity for the Magyars to rule several Slav states within the empire. Although Slavs were larger in numbers, the Magyars successfully oppressed them.⁴ Possibly the worst situation could be found in the Slovak Lands, where Slovaks were beginning to lose “their national ideals and aspirations.”⁵

From the economic perspective, the Czech Lands were important, for they “were the main suppliers of the monarchy’s industrial and consumer goods.”⁶ Not only did beer and sugar come from the Czech Lands. Significant industrial development was under way, and “by 1910, the industrial workforce in the Czech Lands accounted for 40 percent of the economically active population.”⁷ Therefore, the Czech Lands, albeit slight in area, were important to the empire.

Politically, the Czechs had long been seeking autonomy. With the new Habsburg heir presumptive, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, appeared a new chance, as he was married to Sophia Chotek, a Bohemian countess, who acquainted him with the situation in Bohemia.

² Albert Mamatey, “The Situation in Austria- Hungary,” *Journal of Race Development* 6 (1915): 206.

³ Holger H. Herwig, *Germany and Austria- Hungary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 10.

⁴ Mamatey, “The Situation in Austria- Hungary,” 211.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶ Richard C. Frucht, editor, *Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the People, Lands and Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 267-268.

Ferdinand was reportedly “sympathetic to the demand of the Czechs for Bohemian autonomy.”⁸ Regarding his political opinions as well as personal characteristics, Franz appeared to be “something of a dark horse,”⁹ and even the highly-educated did not know what to expect of him.¹⁰ His ideas for the empire, however, would remain a mystery, as he and his wife were assassinated while visiting Sarajevo in June 1914. This event ultimately led Austria Hungary to declare war on Serbia, which due to geopolitical alliances throughout Europe, gradually resulted in the First World War.¹¹ When war broke out, Czechs and Slovaks were divided, with some fighting for the empire and others taking up arms against it. Some Czechs and Slovaks saw the war as a pathway to independence. These soldiers refused to fight for the emperor and instead created “Czecho- Slovak legions in the Allied armies.”¹²

In response to the question over empire, “the Czecho-Slovak National Council was formed, the main purpose of which was to unify Czechs and Slovaks worldwide.”¹³ A Czech sociology professor, Edvard Beneš, represented the National Council in Paris in 1915. There, he tried to persuade “leading intellectuals” to support Czech independence.¹⁴ Beneš argued that a new Czech state may be convenient even for France, as it would create a *cordon sanitaire*, a “barrier between Germany and the East.”¹⁵ Meanwhile, another Czech professor, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, travelled to London to secure the recognition of the National Council by the British. He then went to the United States, where he paid visits to cities where Czech and Slovak immigrants lived and tried to persuade them to support an independent state of Czechs and Slovaks.¹⁶

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sydney Brooks, “The Future of Austria- Hungary,” *North American Review* 200 (1914): 195.

⁹ Brooks, “*The Future of Austria- Hungary*,” 194.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Spencer C. Tucker, edit., *World War I: Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC- CLIO, 2005), 446.

¹² Louis E. Van Norman and George Peet, “The Czecho-Slovak Nation,” *North American Review*, 208 (1918): 865.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 230-31.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 231-32.

2 CZECH AND SLOVAK IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Concerning Czech immigration, “approximately 350 000 highly skilled and literate Czechs arrived before World War I.”¹⁷ They found homes and established communities in New York, Maryland, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska or Wisconsin, and later on, in Texas, and often tried to make a living as farmers. Czechs generally immigrated to the United States with the objective to start a new life in a new land. They planned to stay, so they often brought their families to America with them.¹⁸ The main motive seems to have been economic opportunity. In other words, Czechs were mostly economic migrants, trying to achieve the American Dream. But even if they became wealthy, they tended to remain within the local Czech community.¹⁹

Unlike Czechs, most Slovaks lacked education as well as money and immigrated to the United States for a myriad of reasons, including the overpopulation of Slovak lands and the Magyar-Slovak issues. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were about 3 million Slovaks in Austria-Hungary. Mainly agrarians, a lack of available land often caused them to seek alternative means of support.²⁰ Many saw the United States as a solution, “where a technologically advanced and rapidly growing industrialization easily absorbed them.”²¹ Their objective was not to settle in the United States permanently, but rather to earn enough money to return home and buy a piece of overpriced land.²²

Although Czechs and Slovaks, immigrated to the United States under different circumstances, they often settled down in similar areas. The city where the largest number of Czechs and Slovaks could be found, approximately 136,000, was Chicago. One Slovak city was Pittsburgh, which about 35,000 Slovaks called home.²³

¹⁷ Gregory C. Ference, “Slovak Immigration to the United States,” *Nebraska History* (1993): 132.

¹⁸ Joseph Slabey Roucek, “Passing of American Czechoslovaks,” *American Journal of Sociology* 39 (1934): 612.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 615.

²⁰ Ference, “Slovak Immigration to the United States,” 130.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Roucek, “Passing of American Czechoslovaks,” 614.

3 TOMAS GARRIGUE MASARYK

An important figure in the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia was the Czech professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Born in 1850, he grew up in and near the Moravian city of Hodonín, the son of a coachman on the imperial estates.²⁴ Coming from a poor family, he was predestined to be a blacksmith, but thanks to the efforts of his mother, Tomáš started to study in Brno and later in Vienna, Leipzig and Prague. While in Leipzig, he met Charlotte Garrigue from the United States, whom he married. Years later, this union became advantageous, as Masaryk needed American allies to secure an independent state.²⁵ Masaryk's intelligence and diligence ultimately led him to become a professor of philosophy at the Czech University of Prague (now Charles University) in 1882.²⁶

During his studies, he joined the Young Czech Party, which led to his election to the government of Austria. He soon began propagating the idea of Czecho- Slovak integrity, and concerning Austria-Hungary, he was an upholder of the idea of a federal arrangement with "self-governing entities."²⁷ As a politician, he travelled to various countries—for example to Russia-, where he was interested in the socio-political scene. In 1908, his opposition to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary led Masaryk to travel to Zagreb and later to Vienna. For his actions, Masaryk was "labelled as a traitor."²⁸ When World War I began in 1914, he fled.²⁹ He lived in Switzerland, England, and the United States, all the while laying foundations for an independent state of Czechs and Slovaks.

²⁴ Karel Čapek, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk*, transl. M. H. Heim (North Haven: Catbird Press, 1995), 36.

²⁵ Ian M. Randall, "Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850- 1937): European Politician and Christian Philosopher," *Political Theology* 7 (2006): 442.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

4 THE END OF WORLD WAR I AND THE CREATION OF NATION STATES

World War I did not end until the fall of 1918, when Germany and its allies capitulated. Only afterwards could the peace talks and the formation of new nations begin. The war changed Europe. Austria-Hungary and czarist Russia were no more, while a democratic revolution took place in the Ottoman Empire, which had once controlled much of south-eastern Europe and the Middle East. From the remains of these once-giants, new nations arose. With dreams of independent states, Poles, Serbs, Slovaks, Croatians, Czechs, and Jews, all began jockeying for position. Such dreams led the intelligentsia, “statesman, diplomats, bankers, soldiers, professors, economists and lawyers,”³⁰ to converge on Paris, where the future of post-war Europe was to be decided. Leading the decision-making process were the democratically-elected leaders of the victors: British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, and French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. These men would decide on adequate punishment for the losers, and on the fate of various national dreams.³¹

For Wilson, a Southern Democrat with a Ph.D. in history from Princeton, a white supremacist, and a highly-religious man, the European situation was important and complex. Although his decision to go to Europe for the peace conference was widely criticized, Wilson stuck to his guns, convinced of the necessity of being in Paris to help to determine the fate of the Western world.³² Although, Wilson at first “feared that if that Empire were broken up and small nations established, it would be a menace to world peace,”³³ he ultimately favoured the recognition of emerging nations. After a number -of discussions with Democratic Congressman Adolph Sabath,³⁴ -who cooperated with Masaryk and Beneš, Wilson grew to embrace the concept of self-determination,³⁵ the God-given right of people to create their own state and choose their own government.³⁶ As a

³⁰ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, xxvi.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.

³³ Guido Kisch, “Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe,” *Journal of Modern History* 19 (1947): 236.

³⁴ American Jewish Committee, “List of Jewish Members of the Congress of the United States,” *American Jewish Year Book* 13 (1912): 215.

³⁵ Kisch, “Woodrow Wilson,” 237.

³⁶ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 11.

result, even before the Paris conferences, the United States officially recognized the Czech National Council, then led by Masaryk and Beneš. The next step in the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia was to convince the British and French that such a nation should exist.³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., 233-34.

5 MASARYK AND BENEŠ

The first Czechoslovak republic would probably never have been without two Czech men- professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and his student Edvard Beneš. Masaryk was highly religious, his beliefs and morality resembling American puritanism. And it was these values that Masaryk incorporated while creating the Czechoslovak state, believing that social reforms are the right way. He generally disagreed with the philosopher and socialist Karl Marx, and furthermore, he perceived Marx's social democracy as a threat. As Masaryk once mentioned, he wanted to "bridge the great gulf between social democracy and the remaining elements of the nation and to work for positive social reforms."³⁸ Not being a supporter of absolute equality, he rather promoted the idea of peaceful individualism, identical conditions for all people and the prohibition of one nation using another as a base for strong, independent state.³⁹

Like Masaryk, Beneš was also born to poor parents but gravitated towards education. Before he was influenced by his professor's (Masaryk's) ideas and became rather philosophical, Beneš studied linguistics at the University of Prague. His language skills became a crucial factor in persuading the peace conference to support a future Czechoslovak state. After Prague, Beneš studied and lived in Paris, where he embraced the western lifestyle. During the war, Beneš saw the opportunity for a Czech nation and began to cooperate with Masaryk, even serving as his agent when the government of Austria began to question Masaryk's affairs. But soon, Beneš himself fell under suspicion, forcing him to flee to Switzerland, where he met up with Masaryk. After the end of the First World War, it was Beneš who constantly reminded the Allies, how helpful Czechs and Slovaks had been during the war effort. He highlighted the operations of the Czechoslovak Legion, and it was largely thanks to his diplomatic efforts, as well as language skills, that the Czechoslovak state gained recognition from Britain and France.⁴⁰

³⁸ Robert J. Kerner, "Two Architects of New Europe: Masaryk and Beneš," *Journal of International Relations* 12 (1921): 31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

6 MASARYK'S TRIP TO THE STATES IN 1918: CHICAGO, PHILADELPHIA AND PITTSBURGH

During World War I, an illegal organization called the "Mafia"⁴¹ was established in the Czech lands. After Masaryk fled to Switzerland, the leader of the Mafia became Beneš, and the main aim of the organization was to secure smooth cooperation between revolutionaries in the Czech lands and their brethren abroad, until the end of the war, when the first negotiations could take place. In 1918, when the war ended, Masaryk decided to take matters into his own hands and made a trip to the United States, with the objective of gaining support from Czech and Slovak communities, as well as the recognition of American representatives. He envisioned a democracy with a democratically-elected government, but he knew very well that votes from Czech and Slovaks in Europe would not be enough. A sizeable percentage of Czechs and Slovaks, mostly Slovaks who did not trust Masaryk, had doubts about the need or rectitude of a Czecho-Slovak state. He perceived that, without the support of Czechs and Slovaks living in America, he might not get the majority of the votes needed to form a democratic state.⁴² When Masaryk arrived in the United States in 1918, it was not his first visit. He had been there many times, for both personal and academic reasons. Masaryk was interested in America and he even stated that, "it would not be a bad thing for Europeans to become a little bit more like Americans."⁴³

Masaryk's first stop in the United States was Chicago, the largest Czecho-Slovak city in America, where he was welcomed. Chicagoans were curious about what was happening in Europe and supportive of peoples they perceived as underdogs. In Chicago, Masaryk gave a speech, in which he talked about his previous lecturing experiences in America and about the current situation in the Czech lands. He mentioned Czech soldiers who refused to fight for Austria-Hungary, and also people who managed to escape to America in search of democracy and freedom.⁴⁴

Concerning Slovaks, there were two main groups, one that favoured Masaryk and his ideas and a second group that felt insecure and cautious. Masaryk's supporters welcomed

⁴¹ Robert J. Kerner, "The Winning of Czechoslovak Independence," *Foreign Affairs* 7 (1929): 310-11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 312-15.

⁴³ Čapek, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk*, 232.

⁴⁴ Tomas Tatinec, "Statecraft and Leadership in Europe: The Case of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3 (2014): 69; George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk and America, Testimony of a Relationship* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988): 29-30.

him open-armed, strengthened by successes of the National Council, and believed that independence was near. Others did not trust Masaryk and feared the loss of their autonomy. That group, led by Jozef Husek, the editor of the Slovak *Narodne Noviny* (National News),⁴⁵ tried to defend the Slovak identity. Their efforts culminated in Pittsburgh, where Czech and Slovak representatives stated negotiated and ultimately signed an agreement, which became known as “The Pittsburgh Agreement.”⁴⁶

A few months later, in October 1918, Masaryk arrived in Philadelphia, home to Ruthenian immigrants,⁴⁷ who were also interested in joining a Czechoslovak state. In Philadelphia, Masaryk publicly read out “a *Declaration of Common Aims* of the newly created Mid-European Union,”⁴⁸ a political organization, that was supposed to determine nations within central Europe. The organization did not last long, but it did manage to interest Americans in Europe’s affairs and in the necessity of protecting individual nations.⁴⁹ With his “Fourteen Points,”⁵⁰ President Woodrow Wilson discussed the organization of post-war Europe, favouring the creation of nations based on self-determination. At that time, it was a new and somewhat dangerous idea that a small nation, rising from the ashes of empire, might be independent. Wilson’s secretary of state, Robert Lansing, argued, that “it will raise hopes which can never be realized and it will cost thousands of lives.”⁵¹ But Wilson believed he was right, and he decided to help Masaryk, with whom Wilson often agreed with, to build his state. Wilson’s ideas stemmed from American exceptionalism, the common American belief that only Americans could save Europeans.⁵² It also stemmed from the long-held belief that the United States was a “city upon a hill” or a beacon of light, a God-blessed nation tasked by God with showing the rest of the world the way.

⁴⁵ Mark Stolarik, “The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia, 1914-1918” (M.A thesis, University of Ottawa, 1967), 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ruthenia is a relatively-small territory east of Slovakia, in modern-day Ukraine.

⁴⁸ Arthur J. May, “H.A. Miller and the Mid-European Union of 1918,” *American Slavic and East European Review* 16 (1957): 473.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 487-88.

⁵⁰ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 11.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 14.

7 THE PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT

Along with the end of World War I, Slovaks faced an important decision: to stay part of Hungary or to unite with Czechs and Ruthenians and create an independent Czecho-Slovak state.⁵³ A group of Slovaks, consisting mainly of American immigrants and led by Jan Jancek, the “engineer” of the National Council, supported the Czecho-Slovak connection.⁵⁴ In Pittsburgh, there was a large number of Slovak immigrants, and when Masaryk came there in 1918 to convince them to cooperate, they cheerfully welcomed him. They believed that an independent state was the right solution, and over the years they had establish a number of organizations supporting this idea, for example the National Slovak Society, the Slovak League of America, and First Slovak Evangelical League.⁵⁵ To set the sceptics at ease, Masaryk signed in Pittsburgh an agreement with representatives of these organizations, promising that “Slovakia shall have its own administration, its own diet, and its own courts. The Slovak language shall be the official language in the schools, in government offices, and in public life generally.”⁵⁶ Not only did men representing Czech and Slovak immigrant organizations sign this agreement, but also journalists, such as Milan Getting, later the Czechoslovak consul in Pennsylvania.⁵⁷ Masaryk was aware that without the Slovak population being part of his new country, there would be a dangerous amount of Germans, living mostly in the border areas. He calculated that with Slovaks, the number of Czecho-Slovaks would be considerably higher, -almost three quarters of the total population, with only one quarter of Germans.⁵⁸

Concerning a Czecho-Slovak state, there were two options for Slovaks. They could unite with Czechs completely and become one nation (similar to America’s melting pot), or they could create a state with two equal nationalities (America’s salad bowl).⁵⁹ Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka was a highly-admired Slovak leader, and his concerns about Slovak autonomy remained even after the signing of the Pittsburgh Agreement. He claimed that

⁵³ Theaddeus V. Gromada, “Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists,” *Slavic Review* 28 (1969): 445.

⁵⁴ Stolarik, “The Role of American Slovaks,” 81.

⁵⁵ Grinnell, “L and A Treasures,” 8.

⁵⁶ Gromada, “Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists,” 447.

⁵⁷ Grinnell, “L and A Treasures,” 8.

⁵⁸ James Ramon Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1939-1938* (University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, 1994), 18.

⁵⁹ Jaroslav Krejci and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996): 8.

Czechs and Slovaks are separate nations, and although they would cooperate in one state, each of them should have autonomy.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Gromada, "Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists," 446.

8 MASARYK'S MEETINGS WITH WILSON

During the formation of the Czechoslovak state, Americans played an important role. American president Wilson was the most important, but behind him, there were two other men, his advisors who made the connection with Czecho-Slovak representatives possible. After they convinced Wilson that it was necessary for him to communicate and even personally cooperate with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, things started to move in the right direction.

8.1 Woodrow Wilson

President Woodrow Wilson was born in 1856 to a Southern family, from Virginia. Ever since he started his education, it was obvious that Wilson was extraordinarily clever and ambitious. He graduated from Princeton University, and later served there as a history professor and a university president. Wilson managed to change the perception of the university, through the process of rewriting the curriculum and through increased funding. As a result, the most ambitious and the smartest Americans started to visit Princeton University. Wilson, keenly interested in politics and a member of the Democratic Party, received its nomination for president in the 1912 election. Wilson's platform (he supported democracy, the regular oversight of large business, and he wanted to help those badly affected by the immense economic growth of the Gilded Age) was popular among a large number of Americans. Not only did he win in 1912, but he was re-elected in 1916.⁶¹

8.2 Colonel Edward House

Born and raised in Texas, Edward House was grew too familiar with violence, although he himself never took part. Instead, House studied human psychology and learned to manipulate minds. House joined the Texas Democratic Party and recognized Wilson's potential.⁶² He made himself available to Wilson and soon became Wilson's advisor, confidant and assistant- his right hand, as claimed Wilson himself, his "alter ego."⁶³ After the end of War, Wilson took House to Paris. House played an important role in the Paris peace conference, where the future of an independent states was decided and also, he

⁶¹ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 4-5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5.

worked with Wilson on his Fourteen Points and on the idea of the self-determination of small nations.⁶⁴ House was a part of the creation of the Czecho-Slovak State, because he was in touch with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's son Jan Masaryk, a Czech diplomat in the United States, and supported Czecho-Slovaks. And as his right hand, Wilson was highly-dependent on House's ideas and opinions.⁶⁵

8.3 Charles R. Crane

Charles Crane was born to the family of a successful businessman in Chicago, a city with a large Czech immigrant population. Although he did not receive a university education, he was interested in business, politics, travelling, and contemporary world issues, and he was known for his innovative approaches.⁶⁶ Crane was a Russophile and its culture, and after several meetings with Masaryk, also a supporter of the Czecho-Slovak fight for independence. During 1912, he supported Wilson's presidential campaign. Crane then became one of the president's advisors and decided to help Masaryk and the future Czecho-Slovakia. He presented the case to Wilson, which resulted in Masaryk's official visit to Washington.⁶⁷

8.4 Correspondence and Meetings

Before Masaryk's meetings with Wilson, they corresponded. In his first telegram, dated December 13, 1917, Masaryk wrote, that America did a great thing in declaring the war on Austria, arguing that Austria was an "organization of violence,"⁶⁸ which abused smaller nations, and America, in declaring war, was taking the first step to the restoration of democracy and freedom in Europe. When Masaryk visited the White House in June 1918, the discussion focused on the current situation in Russia and on the possibility of intervention. Masaryk thought intervention was not a good idea, but he needed American help for the Czecho-Slovak Legion, then in Russia, and having problems with Bolshevik units. Wilson was still not willing to accept the end of Austria-Hungary, but that situation

⁶⁴ Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 155-156.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁶⁶ Norman E. Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1858-1939* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013): 1-2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶⁸ Kovtun, *Masaryk and America*, 55-58.

changed in autumn, when Americans saw the progress of the war. In the next letter from September 1918, Masaryk thanked Wilson for his recognition of the National Council and nation itself and praised American principles of democracy, which, he argued, were the basis for democracy in Europe. A few days later, Masaryk again visited the White House and discussed with Wilson the situation of the Czecho-Slovak Legion, still in Russia, and the recognition of the National Council by Britain. The last pieces of correspondence dealt with ideas about the reconstruction of Europe and about the shape of modern democracy. Officially, the Czechoslovak Republic was created, when “on October 28, in Prague, Czech politicians gently but firmly took power from the demoralized Austrian administration.”⁶⁹ The last meeting between Masaryk and Wilson took place on November 15, 1918 in Washington D.C., just one day after Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia. Then Masaryk departed for Prague, returning home for the first since having gone into exile.⁷⁰ Back home he busied himself with affairs of the state, but his correspondence with Wilson via letters and telegrams continued for more than four years.⁷¹

⁶⁹ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 234.

⁷⁰ Norman Stone and Edward Strouhal, *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918-88* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989): 75.

⁷¹ Kovtun, *Masaryk and America*, 57-62.

9 THE TREATY OF TRIANON THAT FORMED CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The recognition of the National Council by the Allies and the appointment of the first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, were both important steps, but another essential aspect was the borders of the newly-created state. At the peace conference in Paris, it was Edvard Beneš who announced Czechoslovak claims. Beneš wanted to push the borders in certain areas, because of the threat of its future neighbours. In his statement, he highlighted the Czechoslovak fight against Austria-Hungary and its inclination towards the western world. First, he wanted to extend the borders in the area, where Bohemia neighboured with Germany and Austria, the Sudetenland. Beneš argued that possession of the Sudetenland was necessary because it would serve as a buffer zone and it was also economically important because of “sugar refineries, glasswork, textile mills, smelters and breweries.”⁷² Without the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia would not be economically self-sufficient. In Paris, Beneš promised that the Sudeten Germans could have their own representatives, education system and religion. Beneš also wanted to gain the southern parts of the Carpathian Mountains (formerly part of Hungary), claiming that people living there are mostly Ruthenians, Slavs closely connected to Slovaks. In fact, the proposed addition would create a border with Romania.⁷³

The biggest problem appeared to be the settlement of the borders of Hungary. The heated negotiations began in Paris in 1919 and lasted almost until the end of 1920, thanks largely to internal issues in Hungary: a briefly-successful communist revolution and infighting. It was the right time for Czechoslovaks to step in. Czechoslovak forces were sent to Hungary to help in the fight against Bolshevism, which they perceived as a huge threat. On the basis of this help, Beneš requested large swaths of Hungarian territory, but he “only” gained Bratislava on the Danube River.⁷⁴

Concerning Poland, the decision about the border city Teschen took a while. The small city was significant for its large coal mines, and both newly-formed states demanded the city

⁷² MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 236.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 238.

of Teschen for themselves. In response, the brokers at the peace conference split the city but awarded Czechoslovakia the wealthier part, with the rail station. Poland received the part with coal mines.⁷⁵

In June 1920, the Treaty of Trianon was signed by the representatives of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, and it was this treaty that officially ended the war with Hungary and created the independent state of Czechoslovakia. The borders for all three newly-created states were set, and the countries were told to order their soldiers back home. In the end, Czechoslovakia gained the Sudetenland, southern parts of the Carpathians, half of the city of Teschen and the city of Bratislava. The Hungarians, as well as Germans, were not happy about the post-war arrangements, but there was nothing to do but wait.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid., 240.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 267-69.

10 MASARYK AS PRESIDENT

When Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk became the first Czechoslovak president, he was 68 years old. Although he was highly-educated, an experienced negotiator, and politically astute, the experience of being a president of an independent state was something completely new to him. The situation was even more complicated, as the new state consisted of Czechs, as well as of other nationalities: Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Germans. As the president, he had to lead the way, and he believed that the right way was “to de-Austrianize themselves.”⁷⁷ Masaryk wanted to teach his people how to be independent, finally living without the yoke of Austria-Hungary oppression. And this went for politics as well.⁷⁸ In 1918, Czechoslovakia was a representative democracy, meaning citizens could choose their government representatives. The main power was in the hands of the president (Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk) and the parliament, and the power was centralized in Prague, which turned out to be a problem for a particular group of Slovak nationalists. The president did not rule the country by himself- he had a board of advisors, called the Castle.

The foreign minister was Edvard Beneš.⁷⁹ He had successfully managed to involve Czechoslovakia in world politics, and now he had to deal with the army. Citizens did not want military parades, and they did not want a republic focused on soldiers and guns, all of which reminded them of Austria-Hungary. But Beneš had to consider national security, so he had to show the people the difference “between anti-militarism and pacifism.”⁸⁰ He argued, that the military was neither a threat nor a tool of destruction, and that pacifism requires an army to keep the peace.⁸¹

The economic situation of Czechoslovakia corresponded with the historical development. The western part of the republic, which consisted of the Czech Lands and the Sudetenland, was highly industrially developed and economically stable. These parts had long been centres of industrialization, production and trade. The eastern part, consisting of

⁷⁷ Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 113.

⁷⁸ Daniel E. Miller, *Foreign Political Compromise: Antonín Svehla and the Czechoslovak Republican Party, 1918-1933* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁰ Martin Zückeret, “National Concepts of Freedom and Government Pacification Policies: The Case of Czechoslovakia in the Transitional Period after 1918,” *Contemporary European History* 17 (2008): 333.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Slovakia and Ruthenia, was underdeveloped and mostly agrarian, yet the Slovaks were out of available land and the conditions in the mountains were not suitable for cultivation on a large scale. As a whole, Czechoslovakia was economically stable and well-balanced, the only decline stemming from the Great Depression of the 1930s. The republic's division into industrial and agrarian parts also corresponded with the distribution of inhabitants. In the Czech Lands, almost half of the population lived in cities, although in Slovakia only one-quarter did. Almost 60 percent of Slovaks and Ruthenians, worked in "agriculture, forestry and fishing."⁸²

Concerning religion, the biggest disputes emerged between Czechs and Slovaks. Both of them had developed under different circumstances and were influenced by different political situations. Slovaks, who had long been under the influence of Magyars, were predominantly Catholics, whereas Czechs were a mix of faiths (Protestant, Catholic and Jewish). In everyday life, it meant that Czechs, for example, decided to get rid of crucifixes and holy statues in public places.⁸³

Concerning education, Czechs were mostly well-educated, both in German and Czech languages. Slovaks lacked education, and there was a high rate of illiteracy. That situation was a consequence of the previous development within Austria-Hungary. In the western parts of that empire, illiteracy was low, especially in the Czech Lands. As a result, only 2 percent of Czechs older than age 10 were illiterates. By comparison, in the Slovak Lands, almost half were illiterate, largely because the Magyars in power banned Slovak schools and institutions, and the opportunities to receive an education in Hungarian were few.⁸⁴

⁸² Miller, *Foreign Political Compromise*, 2-4.

⁸³ Petra Bolfová, "Czechs-Slovak Relations between 1918 and 1989 as a Prerequisite to the Dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic," *Politické vedy* (2013): 91.

⁸⁴ Krejcir and Machonin, "Czechoslovakia, 1918-92," 6.

11 MASARYK VS HLINKA

Even though the independent Czecho-Slovak state was now official, there were certain problems within the republic itself. In October 1918, the Slovak National Council, an organization of Slovak political representatives, gathered in the city of Turčianský Svätý Martin and decided that they wanted to be a part of the Czechoslovak State. But there were still some who protested, the most famous being Hlinka, a patriot priest who believed that Czechs and Slovaks are two different nations and argued that each of them should have its own right for self-autonomy and self-government. Soon after the Pittsburgh Agreement, he became worried that these rights would be denied, because the signers were only local representatives of Slovak communities in America, with no real power at home. In December 1919, Hlinka founded a political party, called the Slovak People's Party (Slovenská Ľudová Strana) and started to propagate the idea of Slovak nationalism. He was against the centralization of power in Prague and demanded the fulfilment of the points stated in the Pittsburgh Agreement. He even tried to get to the Paris Peace Conference, to demand Slovak rights, arguing, that the centralization of power in Prague would be the beginning of Czech oppression of Slovaks. The Czech government did not want Hlinka to make a splash in Paris, so they stopped his delegation from attending. So the delegation went to Poland instead. In 1919, after the decision to give Czechoslovaks half of the city of Teschen, Poles were angry and wanted to help Slovaks gain their autonomy. Poles did not care whether Slovaks wanted to be independent or a part of Poland or Hungary. They just wanted to punish the Czechs who had negotiated the deal. In Warsaw, Hlinka met with the head of Poland, Józef Pilsudski, who offered to help the Slovaks get to the Peace Conference by providing them with fake passports, money and contact with other delegations. The Slovak delegation did finally manage to get to Paris, but it was too late. The Treaty of Saint Germain, which ended the war with Austria and "determined the structure of the succession states of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire,"⁸⁵ was already signed, and there was no mention about Slovak autonomy.⁸⁶

The only way Slovaks could gain the rights guaranteed them in the Pittsburgh Agreement was to convince Masaryk. But, Hlinka was right from the very beginning- Masaryk did not intend to give Slovaks autonomy. Masaryk just needed the votes of

⁸⁵ Gromada, "Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists," 450.

American Slovaks, because he was aware of the fact that votes gained in the Czech and Slovak lands would not be enough on which to establish a democracy.⁸⁷ As Masaryk himself claimed, the document that he signed was morally but not legally binding, a fact which presented Slovaks with a major legal hurdle: no binding guarantee of autonomy.⁸⁸ Furthermore, because of the fake passports, Hlinka and his Slovak delegation found themselves briefly imprisoned in Czechoslovakia in 1920. Pilsudski, who was struggling in Poland, abandoned the Slovaks to their fate. Once out of prison, and no longer able to rely on the Poles, Hlinka sought cooperation where he could, with autonomists within Czechoslovakia.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 452-453.

⁸⁸ Krejcir and Machonin, "Czechoslovakia, 1918-92," 10.

⁸⁹ Gromada, "Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists," 453.

12 THE RESULTS OF MASARYK'S DECISION TO IGNORE THE PROVISIONS OF THE PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT

12.1 The Pittsburgh Agreement and the First Republic

The Pittsburgh Agreement was officially signed in May 1918, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk stated there that “Slovakia shall have its own administration, its own diet, and even courts. The Slovak language shall be the official language in the schools, in government offices, and in public life generally.”⁹⁰ For a while, this agreement appeased Slovaks, who wanted assurance, that the new state would be a unity of two nations, each of them having autonomy. After the first months of the new republic had passed and the power was still centralised in Prague, Hlinka's party started to demand rights stated in the agreement. But Masaryk did not agree, saying that the agreement was not legally binding, because the Slovak signers had no authority in their countries.⁹¹

The Slovak People's Party started to protest, and Hlinka tried to find ways to gain the autonomy, but he was not successful. In 1920, while in prison, his party became part of the “Constituent Assembly,”⁹² a gathering, the aim of which was to create a new constitution for Czechoslovakia. Hlinka's supporters saw it as a great opportunity to gain more autonomy in the area of administration and provincial legislation. But Czech delegates argued that Slovaks were too poor and uneducated to govern themselves. It was decided that Czech guidance was essential for Slovak survival. The Slovak demand for autonomy went ignored, and all important decisions would be made in Prague, the official capital of Czechoslovakia.⁹³

But the radical part of the Slovak People's Party, with its leader Vojtech Tuka, did not want to surrender. He demanded complete autonomy over Slovak affairs with the only relations to Czechs being the president and foreign affairs. These ideas were even too radical for father Andrej Hlinka, who decided to distance himself from them. But he found Tuka's determination fascinating, and let him continue to work in the party. After 1920, Tuka increasingly gained control over the People's Party and created a declaration, called

⁹⁰ Gromada, “Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists,” 447.

⁹¹ Krejcir and Machonin, “Czechoslovakia, 1918-92,” 10.

⁹² Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid* 28-29.

the Žilina Memorandum.⁹⁴ This document, addressed to foreign governments, documented the oppression of Slovaks by Czechs. France and England ignored it, but Germany and Italy responded favourably. Tuka was in contact with fascist representatives of Italy and Nazi supporters from Germany, and he managed to strengthen their cooperation. In the parliamentary election in 1925, the Slovak People Party gained almost 35 percent of the votes, which was confirmation of its popularity among Slovaks. On the other hand, Tuka himself started to be perceived as a threat. His ideas became even more radical and revolutionary, which eventually led to his arrest in 1929. He was accused of “intrigues against Czechoslovakia and espionage.”⁹⁵

12.2 Slovak Nationalism and the End of the First Republic

During the First Republic, there was a big change for the education of Slovaks. Many schools and other educational institutions were opened, making it much easier for Slovaks to gain secondary and higher education. Slovaks became literate, educated and able to hold higher positions, earlier occupied mostly by the Czech intelligentsia. But Czechs did not want to leave their posts, even more so during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Connected with education was the idea of nationalism. More and more Slovaks started to realise that they should be considered as an independent nation, and that the idea of self-determination should work for them as well as for Czechs. Slovaks still could not forgive Czechs for ignoring the Pittsburgh Agreement, and for many years preceding the end of the First Czechoslovak Republic, they tried to find a way for Slovak autonomy.⁹⁶

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, as president of Czechoslovakia, was repeatedly re-elected, but in 1934, poor health forced his resignation. As his successor, he recommended his confidant and foreign minister, Edvard Beneš. Beneš became president of Czechoslovakia in 1935.⁹⁷ Soon after, great changes began taking place in Czechoslovakia. Among them, the Sudeten German Party “became the largest party in the Czechoslovak parliament.”⁹⁸ At that time, due to the Great Depression, unemployment was high, and many Sudeten Germans started to look to Germany for help, where the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler,

⁹⁴ Ibid 30-31.

⁹⁵ Ibid 32-36.

⁹⁶ Eugen Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1973), 28-31.

⁹⁷ Tatinec, *Statecraft and Leadership*, 76; Masaryk died in 1937.

Germany's political leader, was in power. Hitler's successful fight against unemployment charmed them, even though the regime appeared to be dictatorial and there was little place for freedom. Hitler, heeding the calls of Sudeten Germans for help, decided that Germany was the rightful owner of the Sudetenland and began negotiations to have it reinstated to the Third Reich.⁹⁹ When the Munich Conference took place in 1938, Czechoslovak representatives were not invited, and the resulting agreement was approved without their knowledge.¹⁰⁰ This agreement between representatives of Germany, England, France and Italy, called the Munich Agreement by the world but the Munich Betrayal by Czechoslovakia, gave Hitler the Sudetenland. England and France wanted to save their countries from the potential threat of Hitler and believed that "the sacrifice of one country"¹⁰¹ would be enough. They were wrong.

Only six months after the Munich Agreement, the Czechoslovak Republic was no more. In March 1939, Adolf Hitler ordered the invasion of Czechoslovakia (what was left after the Agreement), establishing "the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" and an independent fascist Slovak state.¹⁰² For Slovaks, this was their long-awaited chance for autonomy, even if it meant cooperating with Nazi Germany and Hitler.¹⁰³

12.3 Slovak State

After the Munich Agreement, Slovaks gained more autonomy, but still there was a group of Slovak separatists who wanted complete separation from Czechs. They were in contact with Hitler who promised to support Slovakia if they decided to gain independence.¹⁰⁴ In 1938, at the time of the Munich Agreement, Germany forced the Czechoslovak government to give Slovaks autonomy, and it was the right sign for Slovaks. When Czechs did not want to confer upon them the rights stated in the Pittsburgh Agreement, Slovaks realized maybe it was time to forget about Czechs and focus on

⁹⁸ Juergen Tampke, *Czech-German Relations and the Politics of Central Europe: From Bohemia to the EU* (London: Springer, 2002) xvi.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Munich after 50 Years," *Foreign Affairs* 67 (1988): 165; Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, 28.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Bolfová, "Czecho-Slovak Relations," 94.

¹⁰³ Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, 34.

¹⁰⁴ Krejcir and Machonin, "Czechoslovakia, 1918-92," 26.

Germany.¹⁰⁵ The Slovak People's Party supported Germany and perceived the connection with Hitler as a great opportunity for gaining independence. They took the final step in 1939, right before the occupation and the creation of the Protectorate. Slovaks separated from Czechoslovakia, and with the support of Nazi Germany, as Hitler promised (unlike Masaryk), they created an independent Slovak fascist state. For Slovaks, it was the first time they had autonomy and could mind their own affairs, albeit with German supervision.¹⁰⁶ The relationships between Czechs and Slovaks worsened. Czechs in the Slovak state were persecuted and had to flee back to the Protectorate, often in a fear for their lives.¹⁰⁷ The head of the new state was another Catholic priest, Jozef Tiso, and the capital was Bratislava. He was close with Hlinka and a supporter of the Slovak People's Party. Tiso was also its chairman in 1938.¹⁰⁸ Tiso's vision of the new state was utopian. He named it "New Slovakia,"¹⁰⁹ and his main aims were to unite the Slovaks, to help the newly-created state with its development and progress and generally, to stabilize the situation. Tiso started to propagate his New Slovakia ideas, which echoed Nazi ideology.¹¹⁰

The future of the newly-created Slovak state was not incredibly bright. Some Slovaks started to be concerned with what happened between them and, and after initial euphoria over the new state, guilty feelings appeared. But the government had an immediate answer to these feelings. They claimed that Slovaks should be grateful that they were spared from being a part of the protectorate, and they should be grateful to finally have the rights which Masaryk had long denied them.¹¹¹ The propaganda proved unrealistic. The support of Hitler was not a sign of his good will towards smaller nations, but rather a strategic move. Through the break-up of Czechoslovakia, he intended to start the break-up of Europe. He knew that in the Slovak state, Germany would find a useful ally. With its strategic position in the centre of Europe and their hatred towards Magyars and partially even Czechs, Hitler viewed Slovakia as a good war associate. Germany did not wait long- only a year later, the

¹⁰⁵ Stolarik, "The Role of American Slovaks," 111.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Henry Cox and Erich Frankland, "The Federal State and the Breakup of Czechoslovakia: An Institutional Analysis," *Publius* 25 (1995): 76.

¹⁰⁷ Bolfová, "Czecho-Slovak Relations," 94.

¹⁰⁸ James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013): 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, 38.

German military attacked “Poland through Slovak territory,”¹¹² and the Second World War had begun.¹¹³

12.4 Post-war Czechoslovakia

The next development of both Czechs and Slovaks was closely connected to the results of the Second World War, which ended in 1945. During the war, Slovaks fought on the side of Nazi Germany. Therefore, at the end of the war, Slovaks were counted among the losers and their state broke down along with their ‘protector’ Germany. Although the combination of Czechs and Slovaks in the First Czechoslovak Republic did not end very well, after the Second World War Czechoslovakia was restored. There were certain changes, for example, concerning political parties. An organization called “The National Front”¹¹⁴ took charge of the political parties and decided which could continue and which would be banned. Some were accused of supporting Nazi Germany during the war (Agrarians and Slovak’s People Party) and had to cease their activities, and the total number of parties competing to have seats in the new parliament was low. In the end, only six parties formed the government: “the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party, the Czechoslovak People’s Party in the Czech Lands, the Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Slovakia.”¹¹⁵ The communist parties started to gain the attention of more and more people because they offered organizations for children and adults. Through that process, their ideas started to spread and became popular throughout Czechoslovakia. Especially in Slovakia, the Communist parties were favoured, as the percentage of democrats was extremely low, as a result of the ban on the interwar Slovak’s People Party, the largest party in Slovakia during the First Republic. The end of this party left a vacuum that the communists filled. Moreover, Czechs and Slovaks were generally attracted to their eastern neighbour, as they perceived the Soviet Union as the one who liberated them from Nazi oppression. And, the

¹¹² Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 161.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ James Ramon Felak, *After Hitler, Before Stalin: Catholics, Communists, and Democrats in Slovakia* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2009): 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

Russians were Slavs, which appealed to those who admired Masaryk, who embraced the idea of Pan-Slavism.¹¹⁶

Concerning Czech and Slovak relations, little had changed since the beginning of the war. President Edward Beneš, having returned from exile in London, wanted everything to return to normal, which applied also to the centralization of power and the creation of a single unit- two problematic issues between Czechs and Slovaks. But his efforts were destroyed by problems within his administration and by the increasing power of the Communists. When the “Košice Agreement”¹¹⁷ was created in 1945, it gave Slovaks more autonomy than Beneš had expected and created many opportunities for Slovak self-government. Proportional representation became valid in the restored state, which meant that “a percentage of positions in all federal agencies and governing bodies be reserved for Slovaks.”¹¹⁸

In 1948 the Communist coup took place. In practise, it meant that a long period of isolation had begun. During the next four decades, Czechs and Slovaks were not able to travel abroad, books, music and films from the western world were banned, and people who did not respect strict rules were persecuted. Any connections with those living in the west had to be broken, and the only ‘friends’ were states within the communist bloc. The main representatives of the Communists in the Czechoslovakia tried to persuade people that anything coming from the west is bad, and they even tried to tarnish the image of Woodrow Wilson. In an official statement, the Communists claimed that Wilson was not the hero of the Czechoslovak fight for independence, but rather a villain who was connected with corrupted rich people and racists, and whose main aim was to weaken the Soviet Union. The Communists were extremely thorough, ordering the removal of all Wilson statues, changing the names of streets and public places. By all means they tried to cut down any connection between Czechoslovakia and the United States, because they were afraid of the influence of the western world. But many Czechs and Slovaks did not buy into propaganda and tried to escape to the west. Some of them were successful and emigrated, some stayed in Czechoslovakia and created secret underground organizations

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁷ Cox and Frankland, “The Federal State,” 77.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

cooperating with their colleagues abroad. A high number of these people were persecuted and imprisoned, but it was their only chance to attempt to change things from the inside.¹¹⁹

In 1960 a new Communist constitution appeared and it gave Slovaks even more rights concerning their nationality, such as “in education, language and cultural activities and Slovaks again started to find ways to increase their autonomy. It was reflected during a short period in 1968, when new reforms took place in the Czechoslovakia. The secretary of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubček tried to install “socialism with a human face,”¹²⁰ a concept which was supposed to guarantee Slovaks autonomy within one federal state, to free the market and to bring back to life organizations which previously had been banned. His attempts culminated in spring 1968, known as the “Prague Spring,”¹²¹ when Czechs and Slovaks started protesting in public. But, their stances differed. Czechs wanted a free economy, to restore contact with the outside world and to gain more civil rights. They were quite satisfied with the organization of Czechs and Slovaks in one state and generally did not want to change anything. Slovaks, on the other hand, desired a federal reorganization, and it was the main purpose of their protests. The Czech requests were swept away by the Soviet intervention in August 1968, and all hopes for improvements were gone. But Slovaks finally got what they wanted when in 1969, the republic became a federal state. But under the Soviet Union, the official autonomy meant nothing, and the situation did not change until 1989.¹²²

12.5 The Breakup of Czechoslovakia

1989 was a year of changes throughout Europe. Socialist Czechoslovakia was included, for after a peaceful demonstration, called the “Velvet Revolution,”¹²³ it escaped from behind the Iron Curtain. A student nonviolent demonstration in Prague was attacked by the state police. This got the ball rolling, and soon, the communist government resigned. The Soviet Union itself soon disintegrated. When the communist regime was gone, it was high time for Czechs and Slovaks to think about what to do with the newly acquired freedom. For the first time in more than 40 years, a democratic government was created,

¹¹⁹ Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1961): 481-491.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 79-80.

and the president became an activist and playwright, Václav Havel. Concerning the Czecho-Slovak issues, a problem appeared while constructing the new name of the republic. It was no longer a socialistic state, so even the name had to change. Slovaks insisted on a hyphen between the two names instead of their connection, so the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic became the Czecho-Slovak Republic. But even that was not enough, and in April 1990, the final name became the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. Still, Slovaks were not satisfied, as they were afraid the situation from the First Republic would be repeated. Many of them remembered well Masaryk's denial of their rights, which he promised them in the Pittsburgh Agreement. They feared the contemporary Czech representatives would take a page from Masaryk's playbook. Furthermore, the level of unemployment was two times higher in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands, and Slovaks were generally afraid. Likewise, a large number of Czechs wanted to shed Slovakia "because of its minority problems (especially the Hungarians),"¹²⁴ and because of the low level of development within the Slovak lands. But it took two more years of negotiations between Czech and Slovak representatives until the breakup could occur. The dissolution was recognized on 25 November 1992, and set for 1 January 1993. That day marked the end of the 75-year Czecho-Slovak journey. That day, Slovaks finally received what they desired for such a long time -their own rights and autonomy -, all the things that Masaryk promised in the Pittsburgh Agreement but never actually gave them.¹²⁵

¹²³ Sharon L. Wolchik, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution," *Current History* 89 (1990): 413.

¹²⁴ Cox and Frankland, "The Federal State," 84.

¹²⁵ Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (1999): 647-648.

CONCLUSION

The independent Slovakia was established on 1 January 1993, and with this step, the long-running Slovak fight for independence was finally over. But, this process was not an easy one.¹²⁶ From the beginning, Slovaks were willing to create one state with Czechs, but under certain circumstances, which included autonomy, the right to have their own language, educational system, etc. And, they trusted Masaryk that he would fulfil his promise to provide them with these rights. But Masaryk's intentions were quite different. The most important one was to impress and convince Woodrow Wilson and Americans about the importance of an independent Czecho-Slovak State. He wanted to achieve this goal any way he could, even at the expense of betraying of Slovaks later.¹²⁷ Slovaks, calmed by the promise of independence, celebrated the creation of the independent Czechoslovak Republic, but early it did not take long before they realized that the promise would not become a reality. Masaryk used the promise of autonomy only as a tool to achieve his goals, and after he did so, he had no intention of granting Slovak autonomy. Furthermore, Masaryk unconsciously 'helped' Slovaks to later become fascists, as they followed Hitler, who actually gave them the autonomy that Masaryk did not.¹²⁸ After the fascist failure, the Czechoslovak Republic was restored and continued (with certain modifications) through the Communist period until its peaceful conclusion in 1993, when Slovaks finally achieved their long-desired autonomy.¹²⁹ In conclusion, Masaryk's and America's influence on the development of Czechs and Slovaks was large and not only in a good sense. Masaryk was an important figure who performed countless good deeds for Czechs and Slovaks, but the Pittsburgh Agreement was not one of them. By his decision to ignore certain provision of the agreement, he sent Slovaks on the wrong path and tarnished his legacy. Without him though, there might not be the two republics- the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic- as we know them today.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Krejcir and Machonin, "Czechoslovakia, 1918-92," 10.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Cox and Frankland, "The Federal State," 84.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 86-87.

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