

Masaryk in America

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce stručně pojednává o životě Tomáše Garrigua Masaryka, jeho práci a politickém boji za samostatnost Československého státu v Americe. Práce je chronologicky uspořádána dle jednotlivých amerických návštěv, současně s některými událostmi první světové války. První polovina práce se zabývá Masarykovým životem, včetně faktů o jeho rodině, studiích, manželství a rané politické i pedagogické aktivitě, následované prvotními návštěvami USA. Práce poté dále pojednává o průběhu války ve vztahu k Masarykovi a jeho politických snahách v zahraničí v rámci řešení České a Slovenské otázky. Budoval povědomí o této problematice v západní Evropě, především pak v Americe, s cílem dosáhnout uznání Československa jako samostatného státu. V závěru se práce stručně věnuje Masarykovu odkazu ve Spojených Státech; o stopě, kterou po sobě svým působením zanechal a jak si ho Amerika připomíná.

Klíčová slova: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Woodrow Wilson, Edvard Beneš, Československo, Amerika, Rakousko-Uhersko, nezávislost, Slované, Československá deklarace nezávislosti, První světová válka

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis briefly presents the life of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, his work, and the political struggle for the independence of the Czechoslovak state in America. The thesis is chronologically arranged according to individual visits to America, along with some of the events of the First World War. The first half of the thesis deals with Masaryk's life, including facts about his family, studies, marriage, and early political and educational activities, followed by his first two visits to the United States. The thesis then discusses the course of the war in relation to Masaryk and his political efforts abroad to resolve the Czech and Slovak question, as he raised awareness of the issue in America to achieve recognition of Czechoslovakia as an independent state. Then, the thesis briefly concludes with Masaryk's legacy in America, his mark on the country, and how America remembers him.

Keywords: Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, Woodrow Wilson, Edvard Benes, Czechoslovakia, America, Austria-Hungary, independence, Slavs, Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, World War I

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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

The foundation of modern Czechoslovakia is inseparable from the figure of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, whose philosophical ideals, political foresight, and tireless advocacy for national self-determination laid the groundwork for establishing a democratic state in Central Europe. Among the various stages of his political career, Masaryk's engagement with the United States stands out as a critical chapter that not only influenced American perceptions of the Slavic question but also contributed directly to the international recognition of Czechoslovak independence.

This thesis explores Masaryk's layered relationship with America, examining how his repeated visits to the United States—initially personal and academic, later fundamentally political—shaped the path for a sovereign Czechoslovak state. Through the summary of his travels, speeches, and connections with influential American figures such as Charles and Richard Crane, Robert Lansing, and President Woodrow Wilson, the thesis traces the evolution of Masaryk's international diplomacy and his ability to mobilize the Czech and Slovak diaspora in support of national independence.

Structured chronologically, the work presents Masaryk's American visits and activities within broader historical developments, including World War I and the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It pays particular attention to Masaryk's efforts to establish the Czechoslovak National Council as a legitimate representative body and his contributions to drafting and promoting the Washington/Czechoslovakian Declaration of 1918. By emphasizing both his ideological compatibility with American democratic values and his pragmatic approach to international politics, the thesis includes Masaryk's unique role in connecting European, first and foremost Bohemian, political aspirations with American ideals of freedom and self-governance. Ultimately, the thesis presents the legacy of Masaryk's American endeavors—securing diplomatic support for Czechoslovakia's emergence and establishing cultural and intellectual ties between the United States and the newly formed republic.

1 LIFE OF T.G.M.

This chapter briefly introduces Masaryk's family and social background, studies, and early philosophical thoughts on Bohemian self-determination.

1.1 Family and social background

Since the 15th century, Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia, among other regions in Eastern and Southern Europe, were part of the Habsburg Empire. That changed in 1867 when the Habsburgs made a compact with the neighboring Hungarian kingdom, which demanded equal status as the Austrian one. Thus, Hungary gained autonomy within the realm, and Austria-Hungary was established as a dual monarchy. Despite their potential efforts for change, other nations had to stay under the powers of this Empire until its fall after the First World War. ¹

Tomáš Masaryk was part of multiple nations from the beginning of his life. He was born on March 7, 1850, in Hodonín, south Moravia, as a firstborn son to a Slovak father, a coachman and a vassal², and a Germanized Moravian mother. ³ Thanks to his family background, he had spoken three languages fluently since he was a little boy - Slovak and sometimes imperfect Czech. However, his mother talked to him in German, but as a child, deep down, he always felt Slovak. His family often moved from place to place, but always within the Hodonín region. His mother had quite an influence on him and his siblings. Despite being only a maid at the lord's house, she was witty, clever, religious, and kind. Maybe thanks to working for the nobility, Terezie Masaryková was determined to help her children rise on the social ladder. She did everything she could to ensure they received a good education. Even though his father had no education, he was progressive enough to let the children go to school and even courageous enough to study with them.⁴ His mind was simpler yet gifted, consisting of agrarian and landscape knowledge, and a deep love for nature that Tomáš inherited from him. Watching how the lords treated his father was the first social impression Masaryk got, with a glimpse of the inequality within the imperial hierarchy. ⁵

¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Ausgleich." Encyclopaedia Britannica, February 1, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Ausgleich>.

² Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, Praha: Melantrich, 1968, p. 31.

³ Gogolák, L.V. "Tomáš Masaryk." Encyclopaedia Britannica, March 3, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tomas-Masaryk>.

⁴ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, Praha: Fr. Borový a Čin, 1936, p. 8-20.

⁵ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 8-20.

While growing up, Masaryk knew little about Prague and Bohemia(ns). For the people in his region, Vienna was the only central city. The Austrian capital was closer than Prague; thus, people, including Masaryk, were leaving for Vienna to study or work.⁶ Before he left to study in Vienna, he received his primary education at local German schools in Moravia, led by the church. Then, he went to a German grammar school in Brno, from which he transferred to an academic grammar school in Vienna in 1872 and later got into university there. He was drawn into a pedagogic direction after trying manual work as a blacksmith. His first thoughts of being a diplomat occurred during his Vienna studies.⁷

In 1877, he met his future wife, Charlotte Garrigue, in Leipzig, Germany, where he continued his studies for a year. She came from a wealthy American family with remarkable roots⁸ and was Masaryk's most significant personal attachment to America. She taught him about American culture, language, and literature, which was later essential for his political agenda.⁹ Later, in 1882, Masaryk came to Prague to teach at the university, where he also obtained his final degree as a Doctor of Philosophy.¹⁰ Because of his Slovak origin, coming to Prague gave him the impulse to learn Czech properly and to become a Czech person. It isn't easy to define whether he was Slovak, Czech, or something in between, as he referred to himself in various ways—sometimes as Czech or Moravian, other times as both Czech and Slovak, or simply as Slovak.

He was quite popular among students, thanks to his knowledge, personality, and how he treated all his students inside and outside the university. People described him as honest, calm, and caring for people, yet spirited. He was even willing to continue discussions after classes at his home, where he invited students to discuss academic or personal matters.¹¹

1.2 Masaryk and politics

As he described himself, he had always been interested in politics, a passion sparked during his youth as he observed the national tensions between Slovaks and people from the Hanácko region. Later at school in Brno, he saw that the situation between the Czech and German

⁶ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 8-20.

⁷ Ibid., p. 32-47.

⁸ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1988, p. VII.

⁹ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 137.

¹⁰ Gogolák, L.V. "Tomáš Masaryk."

¹¹ Skilling, H. Gordon. *T.G. Masaryk Proti Proudě: Proti Proudě 1882-1914*. Lidé A Události Ve XX. Století, Praha: Práh, 1995, p. 27-28.

boys was the same. At first, his approach to this national self-determination tended to be theoretical, but then he actively contributed with some political columns in the press. In 1889, he joined the Young Czech Party in the Vienna parliament. He did not stay long, as he found himself unsatisfied with how the party differed in action in Prague and Vienna, and resigned his seat two years later.¹² He chose to step away from direct political engagement and returned to his academic work, preferring the intellectual and quiet environment of the university.¹³

Masaryk had a keen ability to connect contemporary events with historical context. He believed the Přemyslid dynasty already understood international politics and had its own approach to Germany. He emphasized the strength of Czech history, arguing that the achievements of a small nation surrounded by larger powers were even more impressive. He knew that a nation like the Czech one needs to work more for itself, but not to be subdued.¹⁴

In 1900, he took the initiative and founded his own party, which got him into Parliament for the second time and made him outstanding in the Slavic opposition. He openly criticized Austria's alliance with Germany and its imperialistic politics in the Balkans. He defended the rights of the southern Slavs, such as Serbs and Croats, especially regarding the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁵ Like some other Czech politicians and thinkers, Masaryk shared the thoughts of Austroslavism, a concept of a union in which all the Slavic nations cooperated and demanded a reformation of the empire, ensuring their equality.¹⁶

The issue he was interested in the most was Slavonicity. He was far from happy with the current situation of Slavic nations within the empire.¹⁷

He openly spoke against the Vienna government, defending the Czechs' rights to have their own government and autonomy. In his words, no government could oppress them to the point that it would Germanize the Bohemian nation. He said this government was untrue to Bohemians, ignoring their cultural and national efforts to be autonomous and thus purposefully standing in their way to break free. He wanted the empire to recognize that allowing Bohemia self-governance was in everyone's best interest, as a conscious but

¹² Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 104-108.

¹³ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Draga B. Shillinglaw, *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*. (Praha: Královské knihy, 2019), p. 13-14.

¹⁴ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Gogolák, L.V. "Tomáš Masaryk."

¹⁶ Skilling, H. Gordon. *T.G. Masaryk Proti Proudě: Proti Proudě 1882-1914*, p. 182-183.

¹⁷ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 99-102.

oppressed nation would inevitably resist the existing ruling power.¹⁸ He was not afraid to publicly speak his mind and confront any wrongdoing in society, even if it brought him nothing but trouble and dislike from the authorities.¹⁹

For Masaryk, politics was both a science and an art, fascinating yet dangerous. He viewed it as an extension of philosophy, deeply intertwined with morality and religion.²⁰ Masaryk was also quite a polyglot. He could speak Russian, English, French, and a bit of Italian.²¹ He was very familiar with Russian literature and had a noticeable knowledge of it, not only in the context of the literature itself but also in the circumstances of Russia as a state.²² His remarkable knowledge of languages and Russian arrangement was a key factor in his political and personal life, opening many doors for studies and political negotiations. When he left the empire in 1915 due to the outbreak of World War I, it proved invaluable during his exile in Western Europe.²³

¹⁸ Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká Otázka. Naše Nynější Krize: Snahy A Tužby Národního Obrození. Pád Strany Staročeské A Počátkové Směrů Nových*. 8. vyd. Politické Myšlení, Praha: Svoboda, 1990, p. 230.

¹⁹ Skilling, H. Gordon. *T.G. Masaryk Proti Proudě: Proti Proudě 1882-1914*, p. 14.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

²¹ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 137.

²² Ibid., p. 99-102.

²³ Gogolák, L.V. "Tomáš Masaryk."

2 A SLAVIC MAN COMING TO AMERICA

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk set foot on American soil four times for various lengths of stay. Each time he did so, it was linked to a different matter, yet every visit was crucial to Masaryk's eventual goal of national determination.²⁴

2.1 First visit

His first visit was the only one he made without an academic or political background. He came to New York in March 1878 to marry Charlotte Garrigue, whom he had met in Germany a year prior. She was his first connection to America, and Masaryk honored her by accepting her last name as his own.²⁵

This visit was mainly personal, but apart from this, some things caught Masaryk's eye regarding intellectual manners. When he joined American society, he was surprised by women's social and familial status. Women could freely access education, become priestesses, and join committees at schools or universities. Masaryk was smitten with their appearances and expressions, as they completely differed from what he had known from home. In America, he encountered women as free spirits—more equal to men, certainly not confined to the role of housemaid with a man as her master, as was often the case in Central Europe.²⁶

Masaryk left everything behind when he sailed to America to marry Charlotte, including his livelihood in Vienna. However, he decided to take this risk and cross half the world to marry an American woman. Shortly after the wedding, they both sailed back to Europe with some funding from her father.²⁷

2.2 Second visit

Masaryk came to the US again, twenty-four years later in 1902, at the invitation of a philanthropist, Charles Crane, the founder of a new Slavic department at the University of Chicago. Crane visited Prague in the summer of 1901 to meet with Masaryk. By this time, Masaryk was already a well-established professor and intellectual in central Europe, known for his progressive views on philosophy, politics, and social reforms. Mr. Crane visited

²⁴ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. VII.-IX.

²⁵ Ibid., p. VII.

²⁶ Skilling, H. Gordon. *T.G. Masaryk Proti Proudu: Proti Proudu 1882-1914*, p. 165-166.

²⁷ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 47.

Masaryk at his house in Prague; Masaryk, at first, thought of Crane as some journalist, and almost turned him down. Charles Crane had been interested in the Slavic question for a while because he had business in Russia and knew about the Slavic struggle among German-speaking neighbors. He knew the situation well and was eager to get Professor Masaryk to his Slavic institute. To be able to do so, Crane insisted on being introduced to Tomáš Masaryk based on a recommendation from a French Slavist Louis Leger from Collège de France.²⁸

Recognizing Masaryk's insights and expertise, Charles Crane invited him to present a series of lectures at the University of Chicago. While the exact date had not yet been determined, it was expected that within the next two or three years, Americans would have the opportunity to hear about Bohemia and its history from one of its most distinguished figures.²⁹

Before Masaryk departed for the New World, he was visited by Leo Wiener, who was also one of the people who laid the foundations for Slavic studies in America. Wiener wrote an article about him, published in the (New York) *Nation* on August 15, 1901, saying that Tomáš G. Masaryk was a political economist who received training in some of his field's most precise intellectual traditions. He believed self-discipline and constructive action were far more effective than simply condemning all foreign influences. Masaryk was deeply devoted to Bohemia and aspired to see it gain a respected position in Europe among other prominent states. However, he maintained that this could only be achieved through a rational understanding of political, social, and intellectual matters. Rather than simply hating the Germans and Austrians, Masaryk argued that Bohemians should strive to compete for political influence with them on an equal footing.³⁰

Masaryk was given the space and the opportunity to present the Slavic question, as well as the issues of the Czech people and other small nations of Europe, through a series of thirteen lectures, covering seventeen topics in a range of three weeks. The courses began on June 24th, 1902, lecturing four times a week in the afternoon, bearing the official name "The History and Philosophy of a Small Nation."³¹ The lectures were merely scripted; Professor

²⁸ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Draga B. Shillinglaw, *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*, p. 13-14.

²⁹ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 2-3.

³⁰ Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue, and Draga B. Shillinglaw. *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*, p. 25.

³¹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. 2. vyd. Klub Čtenářů, Praha: Odeon, 1991, p. 60.

Masaryk had only a few notes in his journal, and for a long time, there was no hard evidence that these lectures or the whole course took place. Masaryk's lectures focused on a wide range of topics, including philosophy, sociology, and the challenges of modern democracy.³²

These experiences set a base for Masaryk's ties with the United States and provided him with a platform to advocate for the Czech and Slovak movements. The lectures were never officially published in America or Europe. The only published version in which the lectures were preserved was in a Czech newspaper called *Slavie*, published in Wisconsin, with thirteen copies dated between June 27 and August 26, 1902. They were all noted as a Czech translation delivered by Slavia's journalist, who personally attended those lectures.³³ In the first two lectures, he briefly introduced the Slavic nations and how they can be distinguished, some differing so slightly that they could almost be seen as a single nation, which complicated official population counts. Regarding the Czechs, he noted the significant German minority in Bohemia and raised the possibility of viewing Czechs and Slovaks as one people. Then he discussed how Bohemia evolved regarding religion, state, ownership, democracy, and freedom. He generally said that different Slavic nations have the same cultural background and manners.³⁴

Masaryk was potentially trying to present the resemblance between the Czechs and the Slovaks as the first subtle hint of his future aim – joining these nations together. He said that every Slavic nation was against the central parliament of the Empire, especially the Czechs, so they wanted to be independent. According to him, the Czechs were fighting for their “state right” to become what they used to be – an independent state of their own.³⁵

One of Masaryk's central lectures focused on the philosophical and ethical basis of democracy. He emphasized that democracy was not merely a system of governance, but a way of life rooted in moral responsibility and individual character. He argued that democracy could only succeed if its citizens had strong ethical values, and he criticized materialist philosophies that ignored humans' spiritual and moral dimensions.³⁶

Another recurring theme in his lectures was the relationship between religion and

³² Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Draga B. Shillinglaw, *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*, p. 24-25.

³³ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Draga B. Shillinglaw, *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*, p. 33-39.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 122-123.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 33-39.

modernity. Masaryk examined the fall of traditional religious authority in industrialized nations, particularly Europe, and its implications for social integration. He compared this to America, where he observed a more pragmatic approach to religion. Masaryk argued for maintaining a sense of spirituality and morality, even in an increasingly secular and scientific world. He believed spiritual principles were essential for guiding democratic governance and individual conduct.³⁷

Masaryk also explained the impact of globalization and migration on national identity. He highlighted the experiences of Czech immigrants in America, using them as a case study to discuss how diasporic communities could retain their cultural heritage while contributing to their adopted societies. He praised the Czech American community for their strong sense of identity and solidarity and pointed to their success in adapting to American democratic values while maintaining their traditions. This, he argued, was a model for how nations could navigate the challenges of cultural exchange in an interconnected world.

During this visit, he talked in several US cities, including Chicago, New York, Baltimore, and St. Louis. His discussions focused on Slavic studies, Czech culture, and political thoughts, particularly in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This visit helped create his connections with the growing Czech and Slovak diaspora in the USA, many of whom were interested in the idea of national self-determination. This was the first time the Czech and other Slavic nations were systematically and purposefully exposed to the American public.³⁸

Even though Masaryk could not have seen it then, his work was a significant milestone in the future Czech-American partnership.

It was the beginning of American support towards liberating small Slavic nations, and the beginning of Masaryk's path as the Bohemian leader.³⁹ He also used this visit to observe American democracy in practice, which would later influence his political ideas and leadership style. He was impressed by the American model of democracy, political freedom, and social mobility, seeing it as a potential inspiration for the future Czech and Slovak people. He also expressed this admiration in one of the lectures, saying American history proves that the sense of nationality is variable, because the American settlers rebelled against the UK despite having the same language, culture, and rights. Yet, they were bullied and

³⁷ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 6-7.

³⁸ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. VII-IX.

³⁹ "Czechs & Chicago"

sought freedom. That is where he saw similarities, but in the Czech case, there was no mutual language; it was a forced one.⁴⁰

While staying during his second visit, Masaryk was asked about his impression of the American people, which he could not fully answer, as he said he did not have enough opportunities to observe them to form an opinion. However, an interesting topic caught the professor's attention quite quickly, and he believed it should also concern the American people. He was talking about immigration.

He noted that hundreds of thousands of immigrants were coming to the US every year, many of them from less educated parts of the world, including Syrians, Turks, and Greeks. He warned that these immigrants come from diverse political, religious, and social backgrounds, and considered this foreign immigration "a menace to the American Republic."⁴¹

New York received thousands of foreigners annually and tried to assimilate them in every way. Masaryk was particularly worried about the morals and schooling of the children because the sense of education was very dear to him.

The American press reacted quite fast to his point. On May 21st, 1902, an article published in the Washington Post wrote that Masaryk discussed the immigration question, which, he thinks, should concern Americans more than any or all other problems.⁴² Besides this, the post also stated that sometimes a foreigner can do America a favor, and call attention to its imperfections, which Masaryk did. Another newspaper then informed that these notices give Americans the impulse to think, and that Congress should work on a remedy. It was Masaryk's exhibit of interest in many sociopolitical issues, not just in his country but also in the country of his wife.⁴³

This visit marked Masaryk's second time visiting America, a journey lasting for three months, that would further outline his mainly intellectual but also political connections with the New World. Unlike his later visit during World War I, which was essentially political, this trip was primarily academic and cultural. Masaryk traveled across the country, giving lectures and engaging with various Czech and Slovak immigrant communities and American intellectual circles, and spoke on multiple subjects, such as religion, socialism, and Czech

⁴⁰ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Draga B. Shillinglaw, *Přednášky Prof. T.G. Masaryka Na Chicagské Univerzitě V Létě Roku 1902*, p. 126.

⁴¹ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 4-6.

⁴² George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 4-6.

⁴³ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 58-59.

literature and history. With all this, he undoubtedly contributed to spreading knowledge of fundamental Czech national values and aspirations.⁴⁴

In retrospect, Masaryk could compare Bohemian and American ways of almost everything, including the upbringing of children. He said that children in America are freer than they are in Europe, can be naive, and that the relationship between them and adults is warmer. “*That is the influence of republic and liberty,*” he said.⁴⁵ Little did he know how much of a role model America would become to him in his political liberation. Charles Crane, who was the key person at the beginning of this, was also a close friend of President Woodrow Wilson, which would prove particularly valuable to Masaryk in 1918.⁴⁶

2.3 Third visit

In early August 1907, Masaryk arrived in New York as a Bohemian intellectual reinvigorated by his political role. He had just begun his second term in the Vienna Parliament as a representative of the Progressive Party, which he had co-founded in 1900. As a last prewar visit, it was both political and intellectual. This time, he stayed for two months, and his conviction of the importance of Czech Americans strengthened. He believed those immigrants were a significant part of the nation back home and that America might be an inspirational element for its political life. During this visit, Masaryk participated in the Congress of the Religious Liberals in Boston and once again visited the Czech immigrant diasporas in eleven states, accepting their overwhelming invitations.⁴⁷

In his speech in Boston on September 24th, Masaryk addressed the religious situation within the empire. He also discussed the Slavic immigrants, expressing his concerns about both their spiritual and social well-being, which he saw as inseparable aspects of a fundamental human problem. He noted that approximately four million Slavic people were living in the United States and shared some of the observations he had made during his two previous visits.

At first, he recalled his first impression of the immigrants, whom he saw as little more than “living boxes”—uneducated in English, with men working in the industries and no one left to care for the children. Both parents were often forced to work in the mines, leaving the

⁴⁴ “Czechs & Chicago,” online, September 19, 2016, https://mzv.gov.cz/public/ce/e3/a0/2073619_1584890_Noviny.pdf.

⁴⁵ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124

⁴⁷ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. IX.

family structure severely strained. Based on this, he suggested teaching incoming people English as soon as possible to avoid this barrier at work and in families, as sometimes the parents could not speak to their children. Following this, he mentioned communions and pinpointed that the language itself is not enough to assimilate; these immigrant people could not be American in any way if they did not assimilate into the culture and spiritual life.⁴⁸

Before coming to Congress, he gave a speech in front of his Slavic audience. Although they wanted him to speak about the political and social situation of both Bohemia and Austria, Masaryk felt that they should hear about philosophy and religion, as he believed they lacked a spiritual foundation. Despite Americans seeing Slavs as atheists, in this speech, Masaryk wished for mutual meetings with each other to blend these Slavs into American society.⁴⁹ Czech people in the States were not the only ones he earned attention from; he also earned the special attention of some American citizens who recognized and sympathized with his fight against national discrimination. However, the Czech Americans were more outspoken in forming their political opinions than their European counterparts, thanks to the freedom of speech, a privilege Bohemia was unfortunately denied. Therefore, these immigrants publicly supported the independence way sooner than the Czechs at home, which gave Masaryk the base for his actions.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 8-10.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 66.

3 WARTIME

Masaryk was in Saxony when the assassination of Ferdinand de Este, the heir to the Habsburg throne, happened in Sarajevo. It was undoubtedly an international scandal, but no one, least of all Masaryk, could have predicted the consequences it would set in motion. He had to stay in Germany even during military mobilization because he could not use any train to return to Prague. When he finally managed to reach the Bohemian capital, he saw people joining the army with great disgust, and some of them even tried to revolt, but were punished right away. He did not want to stand by, guilty of not acting as a politician, whilst his people were dragged into war; he decided to leave Prague, Bohemia, and fight for the people on his own.⁵¹

He left his family behind in Bohemia, not knowing if he would ever return. He felt that this war could be a chance for Europe to reorganize, and realized he needed to convince other European rulers to support his ideas to defeat the Empire and get liberty for the poor Slavic nations, mainly the Czech one. Masaryk feared that there would be no chances of equal status for the Czechs, Slovaks, and other Slavic nations in the case of the victory of the Central Powers. That drove him to seek support on the other side of the conflict.⁵² He traveled across multiple countries and states in Western Europe in search of support for the Slavic nations because he believed they could not stay under the Austro-Hungarian powers at all. In all the countries, he was recognized as the representative of the forming Czech liberation movement and conducted a campaign against Austria-Hungary and Germany. He had to stay in exile as the conflict began because his homeland became unsafe for him due to his criticism of the Austrian government and demand for Czech autonomy.⁵³ First, he headed to the Netherlands, then, in December 1914, to Italy, from there to Switzerland, and in the fall of 1915, to Paris and London.⁵⁴ At first, the aim was only to gather information about the whole war situation and get in touch with some friends in these states. Unfortunately, the news he was getting from his homeland about growing persecution against his countrymen and a significant risk of his returning, he understood

⁵¹ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 141-143.

⁵² Zídek, Petr, Jana Čechurová, Dagmar Hájková, Jan Hálek, Zdeněk Hazdra, Libor Jůn, Michal Kolář, et al. *Budovatelé Státu: Příběhy Osobností, Které Ovlivnily Vznik Československa*. Praha: Knižní klub, 2018, p. 299.

⁵³ Gogolák, L.V. "Tomáš Masaryk."

⁵⁴ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 269.

there was no going back, and he had to act.⁵⁵ The sure thing is that nobody would be able to act merely on their own on a task as great as trying to liberate a whole nation from the claws of an empire. Masaryk was not alone on this mission – he joined forces with his colleague Edvard Beneš, whom he knew from his time at Prague University, and General Milan Rastislav Štefánik from Slovakia.

As Masaryk headed to London, Beneš and Štefánik stayed in Paris. By this move, they covered the most influential Western European powers.⁵⁶ Masaryk used to think of the Slavic question as an international problem. In those opportunities abroad, he saw a chance to help the cause.⁵⁷ Beneš and Štefánik worked together in Paris immensely for the cause of liberating the Czech and Slovak people from the power of the Austrians. At first, their efforts centered on informational propaganda aimed at introducing the Slavic cause, as the two nations were broadly unknown in Western Europe.⁵⁸

People in Bohemia also revolted, but their situation was complicated. They had to proceed cautiously, as Vienna's pressure to repress them was tremendous. Masaryk knew it and valued the domestic rebellion even more because it would be impossible to take any significant steps without it.⁵⁹ Masaryk did not want to blindly believe that they would necessarily win this fight to become fully independent, but at least believed that in a worst-case scenario, the Czechs would get the support of the Allies to reach a better status in the realm.⁶⁰

A few months later, Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefánik established themselves as the base of the new Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, as an organ of revolt against Austria, fighting for their liberty.⁶¹ They had to brace every Bohemian immigrant colony beyond Bohemia's borders by spreading publicist and oral propaganda of their cause. However, without resources, they could not engage in politics, let alone spark a revolution. The necessary means were ultimately offered and secured by America and Russia. Masaryk understood that

⁵⁵ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*. 2. vydání, Praha: Nakladatelství Akropolis, 1991, p. 215.

⁵⁶ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 269.

⁵⁷ Skilling, H. Gordon. *T.G. Masaryk Proti Proudě: Proti Proudě 1882-1914*, p. 200.

⁵⁸ Zidek, Petr, Jana Čechurová, et al. *Budovatelé Státu: Příběhy Osobností, Které Ovlivnily Vznik Československa*, p. 299.

⁵⁹ Čapek, Karel. *Čtení O T. G. Masarykovi*, Melantrich, 1969, p. 118.

⁶⁰ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*, p. 215.

⁶¹ Zidek, Petr, Jana Čechurová, et al. *Budovatelé Státu: Příběhy Osobností, Které Ovlivnily Vznik Československa*, p. 299.

propaganda alone, at home or abroad, was insufficient to drive their cause forward. That was when he realized they needed an army to defend their nations in the war.⁶²

On November 14th, 1915, this base issued a statement signed by Masaryk, the first official statement of Czech emigrants expressing their support for an independent Czechoslovakian state, in support of the Allied countries, and against the monarchy.⁶³ The strongest base for Masaryk's program were the Czech immigrants in America, who cooperated very closely with the Slovak Americans. After the war started, Masaryk's reputation among his countrymen became evident. Both Czech and Slovak immigrants set the foundation for his revolutionary activities and support. Nevertheless, their efforts to free their homeland were in the long run. The first year of the war was challenging; they had to get together and cope with America's neutrality.⁶⁴

Masaryk had to obtain assistance from his individual American friends, such as Charles Crane, who was the key person, to set the anti-Habsburg agenda before the homeland immigrants could develop it independently. Masaryk wrote to Crane, informing him about the Czechoslovak revolutionaries and asking him for financial support. Crane gathered the sources Masaryk asked for.⁶⁵

Surprisingly, not everyone who wanted to recommend Masaryk and his cause to President Wilson's attention believed in the success of Masaryk's agenda. On the contrary, some people had no interest in dismembering the Empire, thus had no interest in independent Bohemia or other nations, but granted Masaryk the respect for trying. Nevertheless, at this point, the United States had not yet entered the war. Therefore, any idea of an independent state would be rushed.⁶⁶

In March of 1917, when the tsarist leadership in Russia had fallen and was replaced by a provisional government, Masaryk went from England to Russia, hoping to see a shift towards democracy. The task in his hand was to present the campaign in Russia and recruit men from Czech and Slovak prisoners of war to create revolutionary legions as an independent body, which would make it an army of Czechoslovaks fighting against Austria.⁶⁷

⁶² Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 270.

⁶³ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*, p. 215.

⁶⁴ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 11-12.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁷ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 158.

Masaryk made a journey around the whole of Russia, including Moscow and Kyiv, where the soldiers were. During this time, he was in danger due to Bolshevik military attacks. As he described to Karel Čapek (1936), there was much more work to do in Russia than he had to do in London. He had to negotiate with Russian authorities, who did not understand his cause and considered him a traitor to the emperor. He also had to assemble all the soldiers into one united body. Many of them were demoralized and came from varied moral backgrounds, but Masaryk recognized their potential. He knew they were more than capable of fulfilling the task—he just had to get them where he needed them to be.⁶⁸

The recruitment action was effective – the National Council in Paris declared a fundamental mobilization of all Czech men abroad and organized the enlistment. They funded all this with a loan of twenty million francs granted by the US, France, and Russia in August 1917.⁶⁹ An army usually needs a leader, a general. This newly assembled group chose Masaryk as their chief.⁷⁰

Until the spring of 1917, America remained neutral and did not consider stepping into the war. The turn of things came in April of that year, as Germany declared their submarine war, intending to destroy the English merchant ships. Unfortunately, among all the ships Germany managed to sink were a lot of civilian ones, including American steamboats. This was a rough violation of war codes, which led the United States to declare war on Germany on April 2nd, 1917.⁷¹

Masaryk learned of this information during his stay in Kyiv. It meant an essential milestone in the war's course. Upon this news, he wrote a letter to Woodrow Wilson, thanking him for his decision and outlining his idea of the Czechoslovakian program in the context of Europe, as he wanted to crash the empire for good. He also shared some ideas with Wilson about the Central Powers.⁷² However, Wilson had seen a substantial campaign by the American Czechs and Slovaks in January 1917, part of which was a telegram sent to Wilson, urgently asking him and Congress to support the liberation of their countrymen.⁷³

⁶⁸ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 159-170.

⁶⁹ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*, p. 223.

⁷⁰ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 159-170.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 218.

⁷² Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 103-106.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 95.

At that time, Masaryk did not underestimate the significance of America's participation in the war, but did not know how crucial it would be and how significantly America would lead the way towards peace and post-war arrangements, the Czechoslovakian cause included.⁷⁴

A strong connection between Masaryk and America over the years was Emanuel V. Voska, a Czech immigrant who was an active member of various Czech American organizations, whom he met during his lecture journeys in 1902. He was the first to hear Masaryk's decision to fight against Austria.⁷⁵ Voska traveled to Europe as an American citizen before the war broke out, and before coming back, he offered himself to be Masaryk's courier of contacts and information with the West.⁷⁶

The situation in 1917 was far from ideal in various matters. The military progress of the Allies was uncertain, and Russia had its own period of political struggle. However, there was some positive news; Masaryk's revolutionary army, fighting bravely on the Eastern front, was brought to the attention of President Woodrow Wilson in a letter from Ludvík Fišer, the president of the Bohemian National Alliance in the USA. He informed Wilson about the army's existence and loyalty to the provisional Bohemian government in Paris, led by Beneš.⁷⁷

The legions were stuck in Russia, fighting the Bolsheviks. All their victories filled the press around Europe and America. This had an understandably significant meaning to the Czechoslovakian cause. Masaryk got a telegram from England saying how the Czech nation did a massive favor to Russia and other Allies in their fight for the liberation of Europe.⁷⁸ Masaryk was considerably proud of the legions. They fought on three fronts, showing immense bravery and the ability to fight for their nations. According to Machovec (1968), Masaryk gave these legions the credit for winning the Czechoslovak people their freedom, together with the success of his foreign campaign.⁷⁹

Despite the Bolshevik revolution complicating the Russian road to democratization, the creation of the Czechoslovak army was successful. Masaryk ensured its neutrality in Russian domestic conflicts and then secured the transfer of the troops across Siberia to France, where they would fight on the western front against Germany alongside other

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

⁷⁶ George J. Kovtun, *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 11-12.

⁷⁷ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 269.

⁷⁸ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*, p. 226.

⁷⁹ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 269.

Czechoslovak soldiers in France and Italy. When the troops were safely on their way, Masaryk had to cross Siberia to embark on a ship to Japan and from there, sailed to America.⁸⁰

Even the Czech Americans immensely supported the cause, especially after the US joined the war. Over 50,000 Czechs and Slovaks voluntarily joined the army of the States and joined many others who did so in Russia, France, and England. Those in a better financial situation donated money, raising over three million US dollars, alongside supplies and food, which was then sent to Czech troops fighting in Europe.⁸¹

When the US finally joined the war against the whole of Austria-Hungary and the Central Powers on December 7th⁸², President Wilson did not intend to dissolve Austria-Hungary nor intervene in its politics. His approach was considerably pacifist. Later, he proceeded to demand a reform of the monarchy, but still not complete dismemberment. It's unclear how much President Wilson knew about Masaryk's radical activities, as he had never met Masaryk in person nor seen any official documentation, only the letters Masaryk or Czech American organizations had sent him.⁸³

In January 1918, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson delivered a speech in Congress outlining his vision for ending World War I and shaping the postwar settlement in Europe, intending to prevent future conflicts of such magnitude. His proposals, known as "The Fourteen Points", were also aimed at encouraging Russia to remain aligned with the Allies, boosting Allied morale, and weakening the resolve of the Central Powers.⁸⁴ One of the points was especially significant to the Czechoslovakian agenda – it demanded an opportunity for autonomous development to be granted as fully as possible to all nations within Austria-Hungary. At its core, it appealed for the empire to loosen its grip, though it still implied that these nations would remain under its governance.⁸⁵

Masaryk started to realize the growing importance of the US in this war; with the sight of potential victory, he left Moscow on March 7th and crossed Siberia to Japan, and from there, he sailed to America. It took him a month to cross Siberia before leaving the

⁸⁰ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 159-170.

⁸¹ Pekař, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*, p. 224.

⁸² Pynsent, Robert B. *T.G. Masaryk (1850-1937): Thinker And Critic*. Vol. 2. Studies In Russia And East Europe, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 191.

⁸³ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 83-84.

⁸⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Fourteen Points." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 21, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Fourteen-Points>.

⁸⁵ Kozák, Jan Blahoslav. *T. G. Masaryk A Vznik Washingtonské Deklarace V Řijnu 1918*, Prague: Melantrich, 1968, p. 39.

country, despite his efforts to get into America as soon as possible, because he was already expecting some peace negotiations.⁸⁶ Masaryk's Russian journey was a long one, one whole year, but in the end, he was leaving it with the success of the legions under his belt, and that was all he needed. The legions successfully made their way through Siberia, which impressed the American continent.⁸⁷

A few months earlier, in the spring of 1918, Masaryk's associates in America received news from Prague, where, during a public demonstration, Czech citizens openly voiced their desire for freedom, calling Wilson their hero. Following this, Ludvík Fišer, a Czech American organization speaker, had a chance to inform Wilson properly about the Czechoslovak independence movement and its extent. In a letter to Wilson, the Czech American organization spoke about Bohemia's struggle inside the empire and its fight against Austro-German autocracy. According to that letter, ten million Czechs and Slovaks in Prague cheered for Woodrow Wilson with respect and love, hoping that the ideals of freedom and self-determination, which America and Bohemia shared, would bring them their independence.⁸⁸

During March and April of 1918, the situation in Russia was highly discussed in Washington. American politicians could not decide whether to intervene in the Russian turmoil or not. Masaryk had a key ally within these circles—the son of his close friend Charles Crane, Richard, who served as the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. They had been informed of Masaryk's arrival as he was still on the road and desperately needed to hear his opinion, knowingly putting his purpose of advocating for independent nations into the background.

3.1 1918 – fourth visit; the year of Czechoslovakia

Masaryk's previous visits did not have such an essential purpose as the last one. Still, the first three helped him learn and understand the American people, their manners, values, and society in general, and compare it all with Europe. All these visits granted him the advantage of being already known in the circles of academics, some politics, and mainly the Czechoslovak immigrants.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 169-170.

⁸⁷ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 170

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

⁸⁹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. 1991, p. 52.

This fourth and last visit was the one that made history. Coming at the beginning of May 1918 as the leader of the Czechoslovak liberation movement and left in November as the very first President of Czechoslovakia. During this half-year stay, he established himself as a leader of a newborn state in Central Europe. Masaryk's connections with influential figures throughout his political journey in America spanned several years. Undoubtedly, the highlight of this period—both in his political career and his relationship with the United States—was the formal recognition of Czechoslovak independence, granted to Masaryk during his stay in Washington.⁹⁰ Before reaching this achievement, his task there was not easy.

At this time, in the spring of 1918, winning the war seemed very far-fetched. At the same time, Masaryk needed to succeed politically with a program that he and other Central European leaders had constructed. This program requested the split of the Habsburg Empire and the establishment of independent states. These states should have been free to choose their level of democracy. Before the war broke out, Masaryk did not even think that the United States would be of any help to him and his cause, and yet, there he was, in the fourth year of world fighting, trying to get America on his side and help him fight for his small country as well.⁹¹

After leaving Japan, Masaryk arrived in Vancouver on April 29th, awaited by Czech and Slovak delegations and diplomats from the Allied countries. The next day, he got on a train to Chicago, which he reached on May 5.⁹² He did not intend to stay long, just a brief visit for a couple of weeks, which shows he had no idea of the potential victory for his cause and getting full American recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council. The recognition was not yet granted by anyone, not even France or England.⁹³

The general perception of Masaryk as the leader of not only the Czechoslovakian cause and legions but also other Central European nations grew significantly among the American public in 1918. Those who helped him gain this image and support his political agenda were the journalists.⁹⁴ In the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the Czechs were portrayed as a nation that maintained its cultural integrity for centuries despite being oppressed and surrounded by

⁹⁰ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. VII.

⁹¹ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 142.

⁹² Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, p. 20-24.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁹⁴ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 29.

uncomfortable pressure.⁹⁵ The aim was to talk with the political representatives and interact with the public, which was more enjoyable than sitting behind the negotiating table. Among the American Czechs and Slovaks, he found considerable support for the Czechoslovakian claims of independence.⁹⁶

As a representative of the academic world, the University of Chicago President Harry Pratt Judson welcomed Masaryk in Chicago on May 5th as a leader of the Czech people, whom America held in high regard for their loyalty as citizens of the United States. He expressed his support for Masaryk's cause, emphasizing that the ideals of liberty, justice, and freedom were paramount for the Bohemian people. He assured that Americans would do whatever they could to further this cause. Both the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the Czech newspaper *Slavie* reported on the speech.

Masaryk's arrival was accompanied by massive ovations, which filled Michigan Avenue in Chicago, where he was about to give a speech. He started in English, acknowledging and thanking Judson for such a welcome and the opportunity he was given in the past, referring to the invitation in 1902, which was fundamental for everything else. Without it, Masaryk may not have achieved as much as he did, because he would not have had as many contacts and importance to his name. Then he switched to Czech and spoke to the tens of thousands of listeners, eager to hear their hero.⁹⁷ The press played an essential role in Masaryk's popularity, as it vividly delivered the enthusiastic reception by the crowd in Chicago. Thanks to this, the statesmen in Washington were again reminded of his political significance.⁹⁸

Masaryk then arrived in Washington on the 9th of May. In the following days, both Mr. Cranes, Charles, and Richard tried to get Masaryk into a meeting with Wilson, introducing Masaryk as a respected authority. While waiting for an audience with the President, Masaryk visited multiple cities to speak with people and journalists. On May 23rd, Masaryk headed to New York, where the crowds warmly welcomed him, and he participated in a manifestation organized in his honor. It was also the first time Masaryk was greeted by the slogan "Long live our first President." From New York, he returned back to Chicago, making a speech there, just like in every other city he had been to since his arrival.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 24-25.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁹⁷ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 31.

⁹⁸ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 30.

⁹⁹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 138-144.

On May 28th, 1918, he presented his program in Chicago in a meeting with Czechs and Slovaks. He gave an unprepared speech describing his experiences over the last few years and summarized an overview of his revolutionary activities.¹⁰⁰

At the end of May, Masaryk stopped in Pittsburgh, where he was met mainly by Slovaks. There, he talked about his Slovak origin and the equality between Czechs and Slovaks, stating that both countries would be individuals in a potential mutual state. On May 30th, 1918, Czech and Slovak organizations signed a deal with Masaryk in Pittsburgh and declared the request to unite the Czech and Slovak nations in one shared republic.¹⁰¹

Whilst he was in Pittsburgh, the American government released an official declaration by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Lansing. That statement consisted of supporting Czecho-Slovaks and Jugo-Slavs, highlighting the Czechoslovakian efforts and bravery against Austria. The Czechoslovakian National Council led the nation from abroad, and the government of the United States recognized it as an authority, ready to join it in the war against its enemy.¹⁰² This was the first step towards the complete recognition of his movement. Masaryk then shared the news with the Pittsburgh public, composed of his compatriots. He accepted this declaration with joy and claimed that all Slavs were Americans of some sort. In his opinion, Americanization was happening worldwide, as all nations had to accept the principles of liberty stated in the American Declaration of Independence, proclaimed by Washington and characters like Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and all Americans.¹⁰³

After returning to Washington in June, Masaryk discovered that the situation of his cause had slightly improved. The American government finally agreed to support the Slavic nations, including the southern ones.¹⁰⁴

Wilson officially invited Masaryk into his office on June 19th to discuss the Russian trouble, as Charles Crane suggested. This was their first official meeting in person; until then, they had only written to each other. Wilson was a stubborn, opinionated man, but lacked confidence in his judgment about this matter, thinking of an Allied intervention.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 21.

¹⁰¹ Vaněk, Antonín. *Vznik Samostatného Československého Státu V Roce 1918*, Praha: Melantrich, 1988, p. 337.

¹⁰² Kozák, Jan Blahoslav. *T. G. Masaryk A Vznik Washingtonské Deklarace V Říjnu 1918*, p. 35.

¹⁰³ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 48

¹⁰⁴ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 146-147.

¹⁰⁵ Pynsent, Robert B. *T.G. Masaryk (1850-1937): Thinker And Critic*, p. 193.

Masaryk was not received as a leader of a hopefully independent state, but, on the contrary, as a military general and an expert on Russia and the turmoil happening there. It was hoped that Masaryk could provide some insight and advice regarding that disorganized country. Unfortunately for Washington, Masaryk's comprehension of Russia's situation was far from encouraging. He believed that at least Germany would not intervene in Russia. He feared an early offensive move on the Italian front and Germany's propaganda to disconnect Italy from the rest of the Allies.¹⁰⁶ According to his note from that meeting, he also emphasized the necessity of dismembering Austria and bringing the monarchy down, and Wilson accepted this view. However, he never spoke publicly about it, nor came up with any anti-Austria verdict.¹⁰⁷

At that time, Wilson kept in mind only reforming the current empire, not ultimately liberating the Slavic nations. The person who helped change this course was his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Lansing, who also worked with the young Richard Crane, his secretary. Lansing was already preparing a suggestion to Wilson about turning around the conviction. Wilson got the document on June 26th, and based on Lansing's meetings with American immigrants, the situation on the fronts, poor internal management of Austria, and Masaryk's opinions, Wilson finally agreed not to maintain the monarchy.¹⁰⁸

Unlike other Western European allies, France recognized the Czechoslovak National Council as the future state's government quite soon. It declared its recognition first on June 29th, thanks to Masaryk's representatives in these states, Edvard Beneš and M. R. Štefánik, and the legions' efforts to fight on the French front. This recognition felt more substantial because those first recognitions showed that fighting for an independent state was worth it.¹⁰⁹

On July 26th, Washington received a message from its Paris ambassador, William Sharp, reporting on his conversations with Beneš. Beneš impressed Sharp with his knowledge of Austrian-Hungarian political history and highlighted Wilson's principles regarding the war. He argued to Sharp that complete autonomy for Czechs and Slovaks is impossible without Austria's break-up. They also talked about the Czechoslovakian troops in Russia, roughly estimated at 80 or 90 thousand soldiers, who were expected to get to France and join their countrymen on the Western Front. According to Kovtun (1991), Sharp was writing about

¹⁰⁶ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 32-33.

¹⁰⁷ Kovtun, George J. *The Czechoslovak declaration of independence: a history of the document*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1985, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 204-212.

¹⁰⁹ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 271.

Beneš with tremendous respect, which confirmed how effective and great Beneš was in his role in Paris as Masaryk's delegate. All this indirectly helped Masaryk in Washington.¹¹⁰

During July, Masaryk read some of the *New York Times*' posts and wrote about action back home in Bohemia. In one of the posts, he was pleased to read about Czech politicians calling for the American political ideal, just like he did in America. Newspaper articles like these were essential to Masaryk. The print and American journalists were once again helping the Czechs and their cause by convincing the American public that Masaryk's efforts were truly justified, that his political agenda and the Bohemian agenda in Europe were the same; two halves of one revolutionary national movement.¹¹¹

Another article issued in July was about the Czechoslovak legions by a New York journal, *The Sun*. This extensive article was introduced with photography of the legion in Vladivostok and Masaryk's portrait, headlined "New Lords of Siberia." The article wrote about the legion defeating the Bolsheviks in Vladivostok and central Siberia, which granted them control of the railway from the East to the West. The article introduced Masaryk as a scientist, politician, and the leader of the Czechoslovakian liberation movement.¹¹²

The process of recognition was far from straightforward, as it shared the attention of the American government with the situation in Russia, but receiving the news of the legion's victory in Siberia helped Masaryk on his diplomatic journey toward success.¹¹³

After the English recognition on August 9th¹¹⁴, the American press again wrote in favor of the Czechoslovaks and suggested the USA follow the British example. The *New York Times* explained the historical rights of Czechs and Slovaks in one of its extensive articles from August 18th, which included a detailed map of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. According to that article, based on British recognition, a fighting state was formed in the heart of Europe; its three legions in Siberia, France, and Italy were formalized, and it may be the end of the Austrian monarchy.¹¹⁵

As the journalists were helping Masaryk gain the favor of the American public, both Charles and Richard Crane supported him in the political circles. His old friend Charles

¹¹⁰ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 228-229.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 234-235.

¹¹² Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 263-264.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 274.

¹¹⁴ Wikisource contributors, "Great Britain's New Allies -The Czecho-Slovaks," *Wikisource*, https://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Britain%27s_New_Allies-The_Czecho-Slovaks&oldid=11969404

¹¹⁵ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 277.

continuously tried to talk to Wilson in Masaryk's favor, propagating not only Masaryk's ideals but also Masaryk himself. Crane's interceding was one of the key factors that gave Masaryk more and more importance in Wilson's eyes. Despite their intellectual and formal sympathies, Wilson began to increasingly recognize Masaryk as the leader of a significant movement that captured international attention.¹¹⁶

American recognition of the Czechoslovakian National Council was to be decided in the second half of August. Lansing thought that one of the results of the war would be the founding of the independent Czechoslovakian state. He contemplated the Czechoslovak question repeatedly and requested some additional information from Charles Crane, as well as Masaryk's previous non-official request for recognition, the message of Ambassador Sharp, and two of Beneš's memoranda. Between the 18th and 19th of August, Lansing prepared two detailed documents for Wilson. Regarding the Czechoslovakian question, Lansing was convinced the USA had to recognize Masaryk's movement in the exact nature as other Western Allies did. After reading these suggestions, Wilson decided on two things: to set the legions in Russia for a retreat and to move Masaryk's movement to clear diplomatic recognition.¹¹⁷

Wilson understood that America could no longer delay recognizing the Czechoslovakian movement and the Czechoslovakian National Council as the new government and asked Lansing to prepare a fitting public statement. In the meantime, Lansing decided to schedule a meeting with Masaryk on the 23rd of August to discuss the tricky situation in Russia and the legions, how to help them get out of there, and the terms of recognition.¹¹⁸ Lansing finished a draft of the government statement recognizing the National Council two days later. The recognition was primarily based on the fact that the Czechoslovakian National Council was a significant partner of the Allies in the war. It also included mentions of the future state's borders and the current situation of Austria. The statement claimed that the revolutionary actions of the Czechs and Slovaks set a "war status," which was a reason to grant them independence from the emperor's government.¹¹⁹

Masaryk's formal request for recognition was submitted to the State Department in a detailed memorandum in late August. A whole section was devoted to how much the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 266-267.

¹¹⁷ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 273-279.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

¹¹⁹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 283-284.

recognition meant to Masaryk, regarded as more significant than the earlier recognitions of France, England, and Italy. The memorandum was called "The Recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council and the Czechoslovak Army," and started with this paragraph:

"We desire the recognition by the United States for reasons of principle: we consider the great American republic to be the mother of modern democracy, and therefore her recognition is of special value to us." (...) ¹²⁰

In the remainder of his address, Masaryk emphasized the importance of the church as a strong spiritual force for both Americans and Czechs, highlighting it as a shared foundation that connected the two peoples. He praised America as the ideal of freedom and pointed out that more than a million of his countrymen had made new lives there. Masaryk spoke about drawing on the principles of the American Declaration of Independence to guide their own revolution. He referenced parts of Wilson's speech, particularly those that called for the liberation of humanity, the equality of nations, and the belief that no people should be forced to live under a sovereignty they do not willingly accept. ¹²¹

According to Kovtun (1988), this memorandum was one of the most important ones Masaryk wrote in 1918. It offered a great list of arguments lobbying for the independent state. It had 10 sections, with the tone of a political essay, boiling down to the need and justifications for an independent state. ¹²² Masaryk wrote that the new state must be a republic, clearly refusing any Habsburg monarch.

Austria-Hungary sent a note to the Allied Powers early in September, proposing a peace conference in neutral territory. This marked the long-awaited end of the war. ¹²³

On Monday, September 2nd, Wilson sent Lansing an approved concept of the government statement, in which he only made some stylistic changes. ¹²⁴ The following day marked Masaryk's most significant achievement. Robert Lansing invited him for a meeting and gave him a copy of the US government statement of the Czechoslovakian National Council

¹²⁰ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 48-49.

¹²¹ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 48-49.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Showalter, D.E., Royde-Smith, J.G. "World War I." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 21, 2025.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>.

¹²⁴ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, p. 287-289.

recognition, admitting there was an existing war status between the Czechs + Slovaks against the Germans and Austria-Hungarians.¹²⁵

With his statement, the United States officially recognized the Czechoslovakian National Council in Paris as the governing body on September 3rd, 1918.¹²⁶ In this form, American recognition came out stronger than the previous ones from the European Western countries, despite Lansing's or Wilson's efforts to do so.¹²⁷ However, it was just what Masaryk needed.

*"American recognition, although coming last, was more than a formal seal at the end of an inevitable process. From Masaryk's statements in 1918 in America, it can be clearly understood that he accorded American recognition a special importance in view of the moral prestige of American ideals, represented by Wilson."*¹²⁸

A week later, on September 11th, Masaryk had a second personal meeting with Wilson. He came to thank him for the recognition of the National Council. The rest of the discussion was about the Czechoslovak army in Russia, and no word about proceedings with the Empire.¹²⁹ Another week after that, on September 20th, Masaryk, as the leader of a Mid-European Democratic Union, an organization representing the peoples of East Central Europe in America, presented a resolution to Wilson in which the delegation demanded the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy. Wilson accepted this resolution by comparing Austria to an old building that must be torn down.¹³⁰

Masaryk saw Wilson as one of the fighters for modern democracy, as Wilson, in his first political campaign, claimed that faith and confidence in a nation are the key factors for democracy against monarchy and aristocracy. This was something Masaryk related to.¹³¹ After that, Masaryk started working on the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence at the beginning of October, which was inspired by the American Declaration of Independence from 1776. Masaryk wanted it to resemble the similarity between the Czech and American revolutions. The parallel that fit the most was a rebellion against a despotic regime.¹³²

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 290-291.

¹²⁶ Kozák, Jan Blahoslav. *T. G. Masaryk A Vznik Washingtonské Deklarace V Říjnu 1918*, p. 35.

¹²⁷ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, . 291.

¹²⁸ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. XI.

¹²⁹ Kovtun, George J. The Czechoslovak declaration of independence: a history of the document, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Pynsent, Robert B. *T.G. Masaryk (1850-1937): Thinker And Critic*, p. 194.

¹³¹ Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue. *Světová Revoluce: Za Války A Ve Válce 1914-1918*. 22nd ed. Spisy T.G. Masaryka, Prague: Čin, 1938, p. 369-371.

¹³² Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 363-364.

The first draft was given to Lansing on October 16th ¹³³, but it was then edited by several of Masaryk's American friends overnight and revised by Masaryk again; the final version of the Czechoslovak Declaration (also called the Washington Declaration) was released on October 18th, 1918, as the final act of Masaryk's revolutionary movement. With a paragraph from the second half, it refers to the links with America: ¹³⁴

"We accept and shall adhere to the ideals of modern democracy, as they have been the ideals of our nation for centuries. We accept the American principles as laid down by President Wilson: the principles of liberated mankind, of the actual equality of nations, and of governments deriving all their just powers from the consent of the governed. We, the nation of Comenius (referring to Jan Amos Komensky), cannot but accept these principles expressed in the American Declaration of Independence, the principles of Lincoln, and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. For these principles our nation shed its blood in the memorable Hussite Wars five hundred years ago, for these same principles, beside her Allies in Russia, Italy, and France, our nation is shedding its blood today." ¹³⁵

It is a remarkable fact that the text of the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence is not in Czech or Slovak but in English, and the native version had to be translated. ¹³⁶

Masaryk wanted to make it crystal clear that the Czechs and Slovaks rightfully earned their freedom. They have fought for it, all the people at home, in the emigrant colonies, and of course, how Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefánik did everything in their power to get the French, English, and American governments on their side. They did not get independence as a gift in a conference room behind closed doors. ¹³⁷

In the Declaration, he proclaimed the new state as a republic with freedom of religion, science, press, and assembly, but wanted it to be secular. ¹³⁸ Although he never presented a specific program on how the relationships between the Czechs and Slovaks should be arranged, Masaryk always used the term 'Czechoslovak/ian', stating that the equality of both nations was joined into one. The process of dissociating from Austria began in Prague on

¹³³ Ibid., p. 384.

¹³⁴ Kozák, Jan Blahoslav. T. G. Masaryk a vznik Washingtonské deklarace v říjnu 1918, p. 69.

¹³⁵ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 50-51.

¹³⁶ Kovtun, George J. The Czechoslovak declaration of independence: a history of the document, p. VII.

¹³⁷ Pekař, Josef. *Na Cestě K Samostatnosti: Výběr Z Článků A Přednášek 1916-1935*, Praha: Panorama, 1993, p. 135.

¹³⁸ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, p. 375.

October 26th.¹³⁹ The Slovakian National Council declared separation from Hungary and officially joined the Czechs in a united state on October 30th, 1918.¹⁴⁰

A few days earlier, on October 27th, the newspaper *Národní listy a Venkov* in Prague informed about the Czechoslovakian news. It was the final moment for all the prominent Czech politicians who had to work from Geneva, and the time of hanging on was over; they finally decided on the takeover. These great men, who held Bohemia as the Provisional Government together for the whole time, were ready to declare an independent state the minute they accepted Austria's capitulation. The day after, Prague received a message that Austria had accepted all peace conditions. It was followed by enormous excitement, people cheering for Wilson and Masaryk, seeing them both as their liberators.¹⁴¹ The armistice between the Allied Powers and Austria-Hungary was signed on November 3rd, to come into practice a day later, on November 4th. However, some of the terms had to be altered, and the final armistice document was signed at 5:00 AM on November 11th, 1918, and a few hours later, World War I came to an end.¹⁴²

Before returning to Bohemia, Masaryk gave his last speech at the Lawyers Club in New York. He spoke about his overall feelings, the reconstruction of Europe, and the American assistance to the European nations. According to Kovtun (1988), this considerably long speech showed Masaryk as the champion of cooperation between democracies.¹⁴³ However, the most important thing about this New York stop was that Masaryk received shocking news. On November 14th, the National Assembly in Prague unanimously elected Masaryk as the first Czechoslovakian President.¹⁴⁴ Beneš messaged him from Paris as fast as he could, announcing that he agreed with the Provisional Government on the state being a republic and Masaryk's election. The rest of the government should have been formed after returning to Prague. Beneš suggested that Masaryk, as the President now, should get on his way as soon as possible, saying his presence in Prague had become essential.

¹³⁹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 410, 427.

¹⁴⁰ Galandauer, Jan. *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918*, Praha: Nakladatelství Svoboda, 1988, p.237.

¹⁴¹ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*. p. 428-429.

¹⁴² Showalter, D.E., Royde-Smith, J.G. "World War I."

¹⁴³ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 41-44.

¹⁴⁴ "Masaryk Se Dozvěděl O Zvolení Prezidentem V New Yorku Na Obědě. Poslanci Ani Nepočítali Hlasy." Online, 14. 11. 2018. <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/masaryk-se-dozvedel-o-zvoleni-prezidentem-v-new-yorku-na-obede-poslanci-ani-nepocitali-hlasy-76730>.

The future may have been unstable and uncertain, but there was one thing sure enough – after winning a fight for the independent state, the first man standing in the front must have been Masaryk. ¹⁴⁵

After one last talk with President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, five days before, ¹⁴⁶ Masaryk left New York on November 20th and never came back. Journalists were given the opportunity to write a final article about this remarkable Slavic figure, capturing his departure and the farewell message he left behind. Masaryk expressed his deep gratitude to the American press for helping bring the political struggles of the small Slavic nations to the American public's attention. Through the press, he also thanked the people of the United States for their thoughtful sympathy and support. He concluded that America would always be regarded as the "older sister" of the newly born Czechoslovakia.

"May the friendship and the community of interest of the two democracies, in co-operation with the other democracies of the world, furnishes a firm basis for the establishment of a new order in a transformed world." ¹⁴⁷

Masaryk's journey back home from the US lasted for over a month. He reached Paris on December 7th in the morning, and from there, he went straight to Prague. He arrived in the Czech (and newly also Czechoslovakian) capital shortly before Christmas, on December 21st, at one in the afternoon. ¹⁴⁸

To some, it might have seemed that the presidential chair was perfectly made for Masaryk. He appeared born for the role in many ways—meeting with diplomats, delivering carefully crafted speeches, and acting in full accordance with the Constitution. Yet, this role also felt strangely unfitting and unfamiliar for someone who, until then, had been fighting tirelessly from the outside. ¹⁴⁹ When he stepped into the presidential role, he knew he had to get to work on many things. Boosting the economy, industry, and trade needed full attention, as he wanted to bring the country to the international level, both politically and economically. He contacted economic and financial leaders among his old friends in America, England, and France to ensure this. Wilson even promised the support of supplies until Czechoslovakia could steadily stand on its own. ¹⁵⁰ The last fraction of correspondence

¹⁴⁵ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, p. 435-436.

¹⁴⁶ Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue. *Světová Revoluce: Za Války A Ve Válce 1914-1918*, p. 369.

¹⁴⁷ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 44-45.

¹⁴⁸ Kovtun, Jiří. *Masarykův Triumf: Příběh Z Konce Velké Války*, p. 465-466.

¹⁴⁹ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 177.

¹⁵⁰ Machovec, Milan. *Tomáš G. Masaryk*, p. 278.

between Masaryk and Wilson regarding economic help consisted of letters and telegrams from 1918 – 1923, marking a finale to their relationship – a formal friendship with utmost respect for one another. Unfortunately, President Wilson died early in 1924.¹⁵¹

During wartime, Masaryk and his family had to face many complicated situations, such as Masaryk leaving his family without telling his wife, the involvement of his children in his political doings, with both positive and negative character - taking his daughter Olga alongside him on his way to Italy and England, his other daughter Alice being arrested in Prague, his son Herbert and wife Charlotte getting severely ill while Masaryk was away in the world. Herbert died in his father's absence, Alice was suffering in prison, Charlotte's health was getting weaker, and in the American press, there were even paragraphs saying his second son, Jan, who had to join the Austrian army, should be hanged. Masaryk had to sacrifice and suffer all of this, in exchange for the vision of an independent state of the Czechs and Slovaks.¹⁵² Charlotte's health was progressively getting weaker and weaker, which led to her death in 1923, almost a year before Wilson's.¹⁵³ Within two years, Masaryk lost his life partner and a great ally.

Masaryk had set out with the intention of making his journey a solemn revolutionary mission. Yet it evolved into a four-year, three-day odyssey worldwide, spanning three continents—Europe, America, and Asia. Ultimately, he became the first President of the state he had fought to create, risked his life for, and ultimately led to victory.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 63.

¹⁵² Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 143,150-151.

¹⁵³ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. 63.

¹⁵⁴ Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America: Testimony Of A Relationship*, p. X-XI.

4 THE LEGACY OF T.G.M. IN AMERICA

When Masaryk died on September 14th, 1937, the entire nation mourned as though it had lost its father—the man who had fought for it, built it, and led it with unwavering resolve. The nation's guiding hand was gone with his passing, yet there remained an unshakable sense that his legacy would endure for generations. As Karel Čapek noted, Masaryk was known worldwide as the "Great Old Man of Europe." This global reverence cast a golden light on the Czech nation itself. To his people, he was—and would always remain—the President Liberator.¹⁵⁵ His funeral was worthy of a great politician, yet far from pompous. He “marched” through Prague for one last time as a warrior, a hero who loved this country until the last breath, and a revolutionary leader, given a tribute from his people.¹⁵⁶

Even after Masaryk's death, his legacy remains alive in both America and today's Czech Republic. Multiple honorary objects or institutions were named after him to remind us of the importance of his actions, the sacrifices he had to make to secure an independent state, and his contribution to the intellectual world. For example, the University of Chicago was as significant to Masaryk as he was to the University. Their cooperation and relationship laid the foundation for the following events. In 1947, this University formed ‘The Masaryk Club’ as a forum for dialogue and collaboration. Its original purpose was to promote better understanding between the two countries and to bring more aspects of Czechoslovak life and culture to the University environment. However, this was not the only connection between Masaryk, Czechoslovakia, and the University of Chicago. Czechoslovakia was lucky enough to continue this partnership even in the tough times of another war.¹⁵⁷

During the Second World War, the University of Chicago played a key role in the club's endeavors and brought much help to those who left Europe. The aim was to unite the incoming Czechoslovaks in exile, help incoming Czechoslovak students to be let into the country, and organize lectures, including parts from those previously led by Masaryk. Even President Beneš, Masaryk's successor, ultimately resigned after the Munich Agreement in 1939, which signaled the end of Czechoslovakia's liberty. Seeking refuge, he turned to America—specifically to a familiar ground in Chicago, where he was offered a position at the university. In this way, Beneš followed closely in Masaryk's academic and political footsteps as he established a Czechoslovak movement in the city. Before the outbreak of the

¹⁵⁵ Čapek, Karel. *Čtení O T. G. Masarykovi*, p. 139-143.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155-156.

¹⁵⁷ “Czechs & Chicago.”

Second World War, he was invited to Washington to meet President Franklin D. Roosevelt. As Roosevelt saw it, America had once stood by Czechoslovakia—and now, it was ready to do so again.¹⁵⁸

Later on, when Czechoslovakia fell under Soviet power in 1948, the principles of democracy and the traditions of the first democratic republic were preserved through the Masaryk Club, as it served as a “*forum for values of humanism, freedom, democracy, and international cooperation*” represented by Tomáš G. Masaryk.¹⁵⁹ Especially throughout the 20th century, Masaryk’s legacy remained deeply present, not only within the state he had built but also far beyond its borders. As Čapek (1969) observed, if you met a foreigner during that time and mentioned you were from Czechoslovakia, they would almost certainly know of Masaryk. They wouldn’t refer to him as “your President,” but rather as “your Masaryk,” a phrase that reflected not only familiarity but also deep respect. It was a subtle, yet powerful acknowledgment of the unique honor Czechoslovakia held in having him as its founding leader. Masaryk’s world popularity may not be current, but Čapek perceived it as eternal; that the names of other politicians would fall into history books, forgotten in time, whereas Masaryk would still stand above all of them.¹⁶⁰ It is no secret that Čapek had a very amiable relationship with Masaryk despite their age gap. Thus, one may take these statements with a grain of salt but cannot doubt their complete inauthenticity.

Besides the “Masaryk Club” in Chicago, Washington erected a statue on Embassy Road at Massachusetts Avenue in his honor. The “American Friends of the Czech Republic” association funded the fabrication. Masaryk standing on a pedestal, holding his iconic hat and a Czechoslovakian Declaration of Independence scroll. It was revealed on September 19th, 2002, as a part of the official visit of Václav Havel, the last Czechoslovakian president and the very first president of the newly formed Czech Republic. “*On the walls of the stone pedestal below the statue are carved quotes from the Washington Declaration (the Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak nation by its provisional government) and from George H. W. Bush's speech on Wenceslas Square in Prague in November 1990.*”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ “Czechs & Chicago.”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Čapek, Karel. *Čtení O T. G. Masarykovi*, p. 176-177.

¹⁶¹ Štofáník, Jakub, and Alice Velková. “Washington Pomník T. G. Masaryka.” Online. <http://tg-masaryk.cz/mapa/index.jsp?id=421&misto=Pomnik-T.-G.-Masaryka>.

Another statue is in Chicago - an equestrian statue of Masaryk with a written plaque below, made by Albin Polasek, presenting him as a warrior rider connected to a Czech myth of Blaník riders – *“In the center of the province of Bohemia is the Blaník Mountain, under which sleeps a heroic company of medieval knights. It is said that when their countrymen on earth are oppressed, the mountain will open and these ancient warriors will ride to the rescue. Legend has it that during World War I, the knights appeared in the persons of Masaryk and his legionnaires, founding a new, free country after 300 years of oppression.”*¹⁶²

Through these statues, Masaryk was honored in both American cities, where he had done remarkable work and spent most of his American journey.

¹⁶² van Tilburg, Kees. “Masaryk Memorial.” Online. <https://equestrianstatue.org/masaryk-thomas-2/>.

CONCLUSION

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's engagement with the United States was a defining element of his political journey and a vital component in successfully recognizing Czechoslovak independence. His visits to America, beginning with a personal union and culminating in international diplomacy, reflected his adaptability to turn philosophical ideals into political realities. Masaryk's tactical use of American democratic rhetoric, intellectual standing, and relationships with key figures such as the Cranes and President Wilson allowed him to position the Czechoslovak cause within a global discourse of liberty and self-determination.

At the beginning of all this is the University of Chicago and its program, asking for Masaryk to be a lecturer. These events laid the foundation for everything else. Through these lectures, he introduced not only himself as a charismatic teacher and politician, but also introduced the two Slavic nations, whom America knew nothing about. Thanks to the press and his academic position, Masaryk gained support from the Czech and Slovak diaspora and gathered sympathy from the broader American public. His success in achieving formal recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council by the United States was not merely a diplomatic victory but a testament to the power of ideas rooted in democracy, national identity, and international cooperation.

Masaryk never saw himself as heroic; he merely fought for what he believed in, which had brought him such a glorious reputation. One could argue that even Masaryk's esteemed reputation had flaws and that he was not always right. That may well be true. But in his own eyes, he was always striving to do his best—to act with integrity and to pursue the greater goal he believed in. He never really fought only for himself; he fought for his people, as he was both a Czech and a Slovak, becoming the leader of both. Once uncertain of his own Czech heritage, Masaryk ultimately became its most powerful symbol. He risked everything in pursuing an independent state—even his own family. Some might call that choice selfish, exposing his loved ones to danger for the sake of a political cause. But Masaryk understood the risks. He knew his actions might make his family a target. And yet, it was precisely that knowledge—the weight of what was at stake—that propelled him forward with even greater resolve. As a firstborn son to his parents, Masaryk became the very first democratic President of the newborn Czechoslovakian state.

In tracing Masaryk's path from a philosopher and professor to a revolutionary leader and statesman, this thesis has sought to highlight America's unique role in his life and the

shaping of a new Central European republic. Masaryk's journey reminds us that nation-building is not only a matter of domestic will but also of international advocacy—and that true leadership lies in the ability to unite ideas with action across borders. His intellectual and political impact transcended the historical moment, establishing a lasting foundation for Czech-American relations and offering a model of leadership grounded in ethical responsibility, cultural understanding, and global dialogue.

The credit for state-making and every effort behind it is given to Masaryk. He got the presidential seat, all the glory, and the love of his nation, but he alone could not have done all of it. Masaryk was the right hand of the whole operation, but Beneš and Štefánik were the other. Their merit on this was just as grand as Masaryk's. However, one must admit that America had the final word at the war's end, and Masaryk was there. Not to mention how his previous visits in 1902 and 1907 established his connections with the political circles and served as a starting point for everything in 1918. Edvard Beneš and Milan Štefánik had a significant share in the victory of the Czechoslovakian cause because, without their work in France, the recognition of the Czechoslovakian National Council may have never happened. Moreover, Masaryk was very aware of this and specifically credited these two, especially Beneš, saying there would be no Czechoslovakia without him.¹⁶³

Ultimately, Masaryk shared similarities with more than one American president. He could be compared not only to Wilson, as a determined man of principles and facts, but also to Abraham Lincoln—both entering politics early, possessing a deep moral sense, rising from humble beginnings, and ultimately leading their nations. America served as a role model to Masaryk in many socioeconomic and political spheres. He admired its ideals and sought to reflect those values in his leadership, aspiring to the same sense of justice and fairness he saw in the United States.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Čapek, Karel. *Hovory S T. G. Masarykem*, p. 150.

¹⁶⁴ Ludwig, Emil. *Defender of democracy: Masaryk of Czechoslovakia*. New York: Robert M. McBride, 1936, p. 60.

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