

The Allied Influence on the Formation of Czechoslovakia, 1915 to 1919

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá proces formování nezávislého československého státu, který začal v roce 1915. Popisuje domácí a zahraniční odboj a zabývá se postojem Spojenců k českým a slovenským požadavkům. Cílem práce je vysvětlit, proč se Spojenci rozhodli podpořit české a slovenské představitele stejně jako jejich požadavky a uznat Československo za nový stát Střední Evropy.

Klíčová slova: Československo, Rakousko-Uhersko, Spojenci, první světová válka, uznání, domácí a zahraniční odboj

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the process of the formation of an independent Czechoslovak state which began in 1915. It describes the home and foreign resistance and deals with the attitude of the Allies towards the Czech and Slovak demands. The aim of the thesis is to explain why the Allies decided to support Czech and Slovak representatives as well as their demands and to recognize Czechoslovakia as a new state of Central Europe.

Keywords: Czechoslovakia, Austria-Hungary, Allies, World War I, recognition, home and foreign resistance

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the formation of an independent Czechoslovak Republic during World War I. It argues that if Tomáš Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Milan Štefánik had not been so determined to achieve their goal, Czechoslovakia would not have been formed. As representatives of the Czechs and Slovaks, they had to persuade Allied leaders that one of their war objectives should be the liberation of nations oppressed by the empire of Austria-Hungary. They also tried to convince them that it was not possible for the Allies to win the war and to retain Austria-Hungary in the same form. Initially, the Allies were not convinced that Austria-Hungary had to be transformed and they did not want to interfere in Austro-Hungarian matters. As the war continued, however, they found out that they were not able to persuade the empire to make a separate peace with them and betray Germany. Therefore, they began to consider Czech and Slovak demands. In addition, Masaryk and Beneš tried to conciliate the Allies by the formation of an army which began to fight on the side of Allies in France and Italy. Moreover, the part of the Czechoslovak army that was united in Russia got the attention of the whole world when it unintentionally entangled with Bolsheviks and was successful in struggling against them.

It is obvious that the Czech and Slovak representatives, no matter if they worked abroad or in Bohemia, along with legionaries did a very good job but without the Allied support and recognition, the Czechoslovak Republic could not have been created and incorporated among the states of Central Europe. The Allies had a great influence on the formation of Czechoslovakia.

1 HISTORY OF THE CZECH LANDS

The Czech lands consisting of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were independent until 1526 when the Czech king Ludwig Jagiellonian died at the battle of Mohacs. He did not have the successor so the Assembly of the Czech lands elected Ferdinand I, a Habsburg, their king and optionally created a union with Austria and Hungary to protect themselves against the Turks. However, after the Turkish danger disappeared, Czech people were not able to emancipate themselves from the Habsburgs' rule.¹ They tried, it for example, at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 but they were defeated and Ferdinand II executed twenty-seven Czech lords who participated in the uprising as a warning against another rebellion.²

When the Czech Deputies were not successful on the battlefield they decided to try to achieve it by fair means. In 1848, they asked the Austrian Emperor to abolish serfdom and give national equality, freedom of press and language equality to the Czech lands. They were not heard. The Emperor saw no reason to emancipate the Czech lands. The next opportunity to become independent did not come for another seven decades.³

¹ David Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia," *East European Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1992): 185-207, <http://pao.chadwyck.co.uk/PDF/1319724364970.pdf> (accessed October 22, 2011).

² František Čapka, *Dějiny země Koruny české v datech* (Praha: Libri, 1998), 278-282.

³ Jiří Kocian, *České průšvihy: aneb Prohry, krize, skandály a aféry českých dějin let 1848-1989* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2004), 9-15.

2 THE MOST IMPORTANT MEN

There were three Czech and Slovak men who were involved in the struggle for independence of the Czech and Slovak lands in the biggest possible extent from the very beginning. Besides these men, the leaders of France, Great Britain and the United States of America were very important because without their agreement and support, the Czecho-Slovak state could not be formed at all.

2.1 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

Tomáš Masaryk was born in 1850. He studied at two grammar schools in Brno and Vienna. Then he began to study philology at the philosophical faculty of the University of Vienna. By 1878 he was working there as a docent of philosophy. But formerly he travelled across Europe and in June 1877 in Leipzig he met Charlotte Garrigue, a daughter of an American entrepreneur. They got married less than a year later in America. The young married couple lived in Vienna but in 1882 Charles University in Prague was divided into Czech and German sections so the family moved to Prague and Masaryk began to teach philosophy at Charles University. Masaryk entered politics in 1889 as a member of the Young Czech Party and in 1900 he established a new political party called the Czech Realist Party. At the end of 1914 he went to Italy and began to lead the foreign resistance. He was a chairman of the Czecho-Slovak National Council and he tried to influence the Allies (primarily French and British Government, later on also the American one) to allow him to liberate the Czecho-Slovak nation. His effort was successful - in October 1918, the Czecho-Slovak Republic was formed and he became its first President. He was re-elected three times in 1920, 1927 and 1934 but in December 1935 Masaryk abdicated and died two years later. The Czechs know him as the President Liberator and consider Masaryk as one of the most important personalities of the Czech nation.⁴

⁴ Robert J. Kerner, "Two Architects of New Europe: Masaryk and Beneš," *The Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (1921): 27-43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29738449> (accessed September 13, 2011).

2.2 Eduard Beneš

Born in 1884, he was reportedly very clever and ambitious. He studied law, sociology and philosophy in several European cities: Prague, Dijon, London, Berlin and Paris. Due to these experiences, he was able to speak English, French and German fluently and he was acquainted with the international law. He met Masaryk in 1903 for the first time and he became one of his most loyal students and cooperators. Beneš participated in the Czecho-Slovak resistance against Austria-Hungary, at first in Prague and later as the General Secretary of the Czecho-Slovak National Council in Paris. As Masaryk's right hand, he helped greatly in the formation of an independent Czecho-Slovak state. They were unified and understood each other, despite the fact that they were almost never together: Beneš was usually in Paris or London while Masaryk spent much of his time in Russia and America. Their harmony in thinking and decision making was important because if some actions were not timed so perfectly, the Allies might not have been persuaded to establish Czechoslovakia. Beneš had a great influence in the formation of the new state and Masaryk said that the Republic would not have been created without him.⁵

2.3 Milan Rastislav Štefánik

The third most important man was Slovak Milan Rastislav Štefánik. He was born in 1880. When he was twenty-four year old, he left for France where he took French citizenship and became a general in the French Army. He supported the Czecho-Slovak resistance and he was a deputy chairman of the Czecho-Slovak National Council. Most of the time he spent with Czecho-Slovak legionaries who decided to fight against Austria-Hungary on the side of the Allies. On 14 October he was appointed the Minister of War in the provisional government in Paris and a month later he took the same office in the first Czecho-Slovak Government. He died in an aircraft accident in May 1919 while returning to the new Czechoslovak Republic.⁶

⁵ Kerner, "Two Architects of New Europe," 27-43.

⁶ J. J. Duffack, *Štefánik a Československo* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 2007), 65-76, 158-168.

2.4 Georges Clemenceau

Georges Clemenceau, born in 1871, was a French politician. He became Prime Minister for a second time in November 1917, having already held this office from 1906-1909. He was the oldest person from the most important men at the Peace Conference in 1919 and because he experienced the French defeat by Germany in 1871, he was determined to punish Germany as much as possible to help France in recovering from the war and to ensure that Germany would never be able to attack France again. He became even more popular after he was shot by a French anarchist in February 1919. He was well-disposed towards Czech ambitions, so France was the first state which recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council at first, then its Army and after that its provisional government.⁷

2.5 Woodrow Wilson

Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, was elected president of the United States first in 1912 and then again in 1916. When he became president, he did not know much about foreign policy and was not aware of the situation in Europe. However, he was knowledgeable about Austria-Hungary, having written about it in 1889. Wilson, an ideologue, wanted to bring democracy to the world. He came up with the idea of the League of Nations which would supervise on keeping of peace and adherence of international treaties. The League of Nations should also protect independence of its members against any aggressors, solve international disputes in a peaceful way and try to limit or control the armament of individual states. However, although Wilson was able to enforce this idea on the Versailles Conference, he did not gain the approval from the American Senate for the United States to join the League, because the opinion that the United States should not interfere into European matters began to prevail after the end of war.⁸

⁷ Antonín Klimek, *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919: Československo na konferenci ve Versailles* (Praha: Melantrich, 1989), 16-18, 29; Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 3-46.

⁸ Ibid.

2.6 David Lloyd George

David Lloyd George, born in 1863, was a British Liberal politician. From 1908 to 1915, he held an office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1915, he was appointed the Minister of Munitions. A year later, in July 1916, Lloyd George became the Minister of War and replaced Herbert Asquith in the position of the Prime Minister of Great Britain in December. Lloyd George was born for politics. Although he was the youngest leader among the Council of Three which was formed at the Peace Conference and consisted of him, Clemenceau and Wilson, Lloyd George was able to enforce his opinion. He was a great listener and speaker. Furthermore, he was very good at improvisation and liked finding solutions to all kinds of problems which he proved especially during the Versailles Conference.⁹

⁹ Ibid.

3 THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

World War I began on 28 July 1914, when the Austrian-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia. It did so because exactly one month prior Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austrian-Hungarian successor to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, during his official visit to Sarajevo. For Austria-Hungary and its Triple Alliance allies, Germany and Italy, this incident was a great opportunity to change the balance of powers in Europe and to gain new colonies. After issuing a 10-part ultimatum to Serbia, which Serbia could not meet without sacrificing its sovereignty, Austria-Hungary began mobilizing its army. It counted on help from both Germany and Italy, with which it had mutual assistance agreements, but Italy, which did not agree with the Austrian-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia, declared its neutrality and joined the Entente Alliance in 1915. On the contrary, Germany welcomed the opportunity to enter war because it wanted to prove the whole world that it was the strongest state on the European continent and it longed to win war and gain colonies from beaten states. In opposition to Austria-Hungary and Germany, which were also called Central Powers, Great Britain, France and Russia formed the Entente Alliance and prepared for war. These three Empires had reciprocal cooperation agreements in place in the case of a declaration of war by states from the Triple Alliance. Regardless of these agreements, each state had its own reasons for war. France could not forget about the loss in the Franco-Prussian war from 1870-1871 and wanted to get back territories Alsace-Lorraine and its lost pride, Great Britain did not want to allow Germany to become the world-power and to take its first position in world economy and Russia had disputes about the Balkan area with Austria-Hungary. These states of the Entente Alliance were joined by Japan, Serbia, Belgium and in 1917 by the United States of America, which helped a lot to win the war. But there were also some states who became allies of the Central Powers during the war. In 1914, it was Turkey, because Germany promised it the protection from Russia, and one year later Bulgaria. Step by step, states of the Entente Alliance declared war to the Central Powers and vice versa. Three war fronts were created. The Western front between Germany and France, the Eastern front between Germany and Russia and the South front between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. The war also started on

the sea. The First World War brought a lot of changes to Europe. One of them was the destruction of Austria-Hungary and formation of new, independent Czechoslovakia.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jan Beránek, *První světová válka* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1968), 7-98; Ian Westwell, *První světová válka den po dni* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 2004), 6-28.

4 1915

4.1 Not such a difficult decision

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was not satisfied with the national and social policy of the Austria-Hungary, but until 1914 he was thinking only about the reformation of the Austria-Hungary, not about its entire destruction. However, when the Austria-Hungary started to cooperate with Germany, Masaryk realized that he could not support the empire any longer, because if the Austria-Hungary won the war, it would not change its internal policy and the Czech lands would not gain autonomy. Masaryk's opinion was confirmed by Austrian former Prime Minister Ernst von Körber who told Masaryk that after the war, the Austria-Hungary would be neither able nor willing to implement necessary reforms. So, Masaryk did not have anything to lose, because in the case of the Austria-Hungary's defeat, it would be better for the Czech people to be on the side of the Allies. Further, Masaryk saw that others shared his opinion. Many Czech soldiers conscripted to the war did not want to go, because they felt that they were going to fight on the wrong side.¹¹

4.2 The beginning of foreign resistance

On 18 of December in 1914 Masaryk left his family, friends and colleagues and went to Italy and Switzerland. In the spring, he wanted to return, but his friends warned that Austrian authorities would arrest him, so he stayed in Switzerland and organized the resistance from there. In March 1915 he sent a circular note to other Czech representatives living abroad, in which he detailed how they would struggle for independence of the Czech nation. He also suggested the formation of a committee to lead and guide the resistance. Then, at the beginning of July, Masaryk made the first public speech against Austria-Hungary. Masaryk said that "every Czech has to decide for the reformation or for the counter-reformation, for the Czech idea or the Austrian idea". After this speech, Masaryk

¹¹ Jiří Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf: Příběh konce velké války* (Praha: Odeon, 1991), 47-49.

received a message from Czech politicians who stayed in Prague that he could act on behalf of the Czech nation and that native political parties approved of his activities.¹²

The second stage of the Czech resistance started when Beneš, who felt threatened in Prague, decided to work with Masaryk from abroad. He arrived in Switzerland on 2 September 1915. This date is considered to be the beginning of the organized foreign resistance. On 14 November Masaryk declared that they would fight for the full independence of the Czech nation. This declaration was made in the name of the Czech Foreign Committee, which was the first political authority of the foreign resistance. Its manifestation was signed by representatives of compatriotic associations from Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States that wanted to show solidarity with Czech people living in Austria-Hungary. (Compatriotic associations provided not only moral but also financial support for the foreign resistance.) By this manifestation, the fight against Austria-Hungary was openly proclaimed.¹³

4.3 The home resistance

The process of recognition would have been jeopardized had not the foreign resistance been supported and actively supplemented by Czech politicians. Cooperation between foreign and home resistance worked well, and native political parties agreed with almost everything Masaryk and Beneš were doing. Native politicians started to meet in secret in March 1915. In the beginning, only two political parties participated, but other parties soon joined. At first, Beneš directed this secret committee, but after his departure to Switzerland, Přemysl Šámal became "the chairman". From the second half of 1917, Czech politicians began to call this committee "Mafia".¹⁴

Not all political parties supported the resistance. Some were against the reformation and wanted to stay part of Austria-Hungary. In June and July 1915, representatives of Czech cities and regions met and sent telegrams to the Emperor of Austria-Hungary in which they declared their support for Austria-Hungary. The biggest illustration of Czech

¹² Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 69-70.

¹³ Ibid., 70-71; Jan Galandauer, *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918: Programy, projekty, perspektivy* (Praha: Nakl. Svoboda, 1988), 276-279.

¹⁴ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 69.

loyalty towards Austria-Hungary happened at the beginning of 1916. The presidium of the Czech Association, in which almost every Czech politician was associated, sent a letter to the Austrian-Hungarian Prime Minister stating that Czech politicians saw their future only under the control of Austria-Hungary. This letter was not very favourable for the foreign resistance, because it denied Masaryk's statement that the formation of an independent state is the wish of every Czech. But as time passed, the Czechs and also the Slovaks, at home and abroad, made clear their true desires.¹⁵

4.4 Cleveland agreement

Czech immigrants living in the United States created the Bohemian National Alliance, headquartered in Chicago, to support Masaryk's foreign resistance. They also wanted to familiarize the American public with the situation of the Czech lands in Austria-Hungary and to gain sympathy and understanding for their effort to create an independent state. The Slovaks formed a similar organization, the Slovak League of America, headquartered in Cleveland. In 1915 representatives of these alliances decided that it would be useful to cooperate and on 22 October, they agreed that they would fight for the formation of a federal Czecho-Slovak state which would consist of two independent nations - the Czechs and Slovaks which would have full autonomy.¹⁶

¹⁵ Antonín Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918: Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky* (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 1994), 14-16.

¹⁶ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 88.

5 1916

5.1 The formation of the Czecho-Slovak National Council

In February 1916, the Czecho-Slovak National Council was formed in Paris. It was developed from the Czech Foreign Committee which was only extemporary committee. The main aim of the Czecho-Slovak National Council was to create an independent Czecho-Slovak state. T. G. Masaryk was appointed the Chairman, M. R. Štefánik and J. Dürich became Vice-chairmen and E. Beneš held an office of General Secretary. M. R. Štefánik was also considered as an representative of the Slovaks. The formation of the Czecho-Slovak National Council should also suggested to representatives of the Allied states that the intention to form an independent Czecho-Slovak state is serious and to provide them an official authority to negotiate with.¹⁷

5.1.1 The first supposition of sympathy

On 3 February, Masaryk met the French Prime Minister Aristide Briand. During their meeting, Briand said that he sympathized with the Czecho-Slovak endeavour and supported Masaryk to continue in his activities. Briand was the first statesman who expressed his sympathy publicly, but it did not influence the French policy in any way. No Allied Government was prepared to support the Czecho-Slovak full independence in that time.¹⁸

5.2 The United States begins to interfere to the war

President Wilson firstly mentioned the idea of universal association of nations on 27 May 1916 when he had a speech for members of the League to enforce peace. The aim of this association should have been the provision of collective world security. Wilson offered them that the United States would mediate between antagonized states to achieve peace

¹⁷ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

and they would become a guarantee of it. He determined three principles. The first principle determined that every nation could choose a sovereignty under which it would want to live. The second one was about reciprocal respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity between nations. The last principle stated that everybody from the whole world had a right to peace. Wilson tried to end up the war again by his note issued on 18 December 1916 in which he asked all states engaged in war to formulate their war objectives as well as conditions under which they would be willing to make peace. Central Powers did not want to announce them, they preferred round dealing with the Entente Allies. However, France and Great Britain refused the direct negotiation.¹⁹

¹⁹ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 81-82.

6 1917

6.1 First mention about the liberation of oppressed nations

On 10 January, Great Britain and France defined their war objectives as a response to Wilson's challenge from 18 December 1916. One of them was the liberation from foreign domination and it was determined for nations living under the supremacy of the Austria-Hungary: Italians, Slavs, Rumanians and Czecho-Slovaks. It was the first time, when the future of oppressed nations from the Austria-Hungary was mentioned as the Allied war objective. But there was not written that the result of the liberation has to be the full state independence. This proclamation did not indicate anything about the destruction of Austria-Hungary. It is presumable that Great Britain and France mentioned the liberation of these nations due to obtaining the sympathy of the American public. Because after this proclamation they were still trying to negotiate with the Austria-Hungary and to make a separate peace. In March, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George said that Great Britain did not want to separate Austria-Hungary and the Czech lands. His words were confirmed at the end of April by British Minister of Foreign Affairs Arthur Balfour with saying that they agree with emancipation of Czech nation within Austria-Hungary not with its full independence.²⁰

6.2 Attempts to make peace with Austria-Hungary

Politicians of Entente Alliance were thinking about making a separate peace with Austria-Hungary to weaken Germany. There were many attempts during the war. One of the negotiators was Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, the brother-in-law of Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl I. In March 1917, he communicated with French representatives who offered the territory of Silesia and Bavaria in exchange for Alsace-Lorraine and Austro-Hungarian detachment from Germany. This discussion could be successful, but France and Austria-Hungary were not able to come to an agreement regarding war objectives of Italy. Another negotiator was Count Abel Armand, an officer of the French

²⁰ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 77-78.

General Staff, who began to discuss the possibility of separate peace with Austrian diplomat Nicholas Revertera in August 1917. Armand overstepped his powers when he promised to Revertera that Austria-Hungary could gain Bavaria, German part of Silesia and Poland if it abandoned Germany. Fortunately for the Czech nation, Austria-Hungary refused to betray its cobelligerent. If it had done so, the Allies would not have requested the independence of the Czech lands and they would have allowed Austria-Hungary to consider and solve the question of emancipation of its nations itself.²¹

6.3 Recognition from Russia

Masaryk was travelling a lot across Europe and tried to find important people from newspapers and Governments who would support the Czecho-Slovak matter. When Russian Czar abdicated in March 1917, Masaryk decided to leave England and traveled to Russia. After his arrival in May 1917, Masaryk was negotiating the transport of thirty thousand Czecho-Slovak soldiers to France with French Minister of Munitions Albert Thomas, who was sent to Russia to encourage the Russian provisional government not to stop fighting against Germany and Austria-Hungary. They finally agreed in June. Furthermore, Masaryk had another intention in Russia. He tried to persuade the Russian provisional government to approve the formation of an independent army corps in Russia. The Government finally decided to accept his suggestion and on 9 October it officially recognized the Czecho-Slovak army corps as a part of the Czecho-Slovak Army.²²

6.4 First French recognition

Whereas Masaryk was negotiating in Russia, Beneš did the same in France. He was very successful in negotiations, because on 16 December, French president Poincaré issued

²¹ Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia" 185-207; Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 78-79.

²² Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 74; George F. Kennan, "The Czechoslovak Legion," *Russian Review* 16, no. 4 (1957): 3-16, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/125745> (accessed September 13, 2011).

a decree in which he permitted the formation of the Czecho-Slovak Army in France. This Army was considered as the first independent Czecho-Slovak Army ever.²³

After two months, on 7 February 1918, the status of autonomy was given to the Czecho-Slovak Army by Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, and he stated that this Army would be politically directed by the Czecho-Slovak National Council. The military command stayed at the hands of France.²⁴

Comparing these two recognitions, the French recognition was more important, because the Russian provisional government did not constitute the role of the Czecho-Slovak National Council in control of the Army. Nevertheless, Masaryk and Beneš appreciated every recognition, because it helped them to believe in their mission and continue in effort to achieve their goal.²⁵

6.5 In Bohemia

Fortunately, Masaryk and Beneš were not alone in their struggle. Czech people did not want to assure Austria-Hungary about their loyalty towards it so they began to exert pressure on Czech politicians to express their demands on session of Viennese Parliament. Czech writers became the main organizers of the pressure and on 19 May 1917 made a speech in which they encouraged and urged Czech politicians to action. As the result, Czech Association prepared a declaration in which Czech politicians criticized the governance system of Austria-Hungary and demanded transformation of Austria-Hungary into the federal state that would consist of independent states with equal rights. This declaration was made on 30 May and is known as the May declaration.²⁶

²³ W.R. Calcott, "The Last War Aim: British Opinion and the Decision for Czechoslovak Independence, 1914-1919," *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984): 979-989, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2639038> (accessed September 13, 2011).

²⁴ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 54.

²⁵ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 74-75.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-122; Galandauer, *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918*, 283-287.

6.6 Entry of the United States into the war

In the first stage of war, the United States of America stayed neutral, they did not want to interfere into war. Wilson proclaimed neutrality of the United States on 4 August 1914. Nevertheless, neutrality did not mean aloofness. The United States wanted to negotiate the peace between the Central Powers and the Entente Alliance and made several attempts but with no results. On 22 January 1917 Wilson made a speech in Senate and he was speaking about democratic states and conclusion of peace without any winner. He said that governments should deduce their power from the agreement of people they are governing and nobody has the right to change the sovereignty of nations and transfer them according to his pleasure as they were goods.²⁷

The United States of America finally decided to enter the war in April 1917 because Germany and Austria-Hungary renewed the unlimited submarine warfare and also because they wanted to help states of the Entente Alliance which were jaded from the war. But they declared war only on Germany. Wilson hoped that Austria-Hungary would recover itself, acquit of Germany and make a separate peace with states of the Entente Alliance and America. Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary stayed the fellow of Germany and the United States were forced to declare war on Austria-Hungary in December 1917 too.²⁸

Wilson proclaimed on 4 December that the United States did not want to damage or transform the Austrian Empire. "We owe it, however, to ourselves, to say that we do not wish in any way to impair or to rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is no affair of ours what they do with their own life either industrially or politically."²⁹

²⁷ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 82.

²⁸ Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia" 185-207.

²⁹ Guido Kisch, "Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 19, no. 3 (1947): 235-238, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1876400> (accessed September 13, 2011), 236.

7 1918

In January 1918 Lloyd George in the official statement of war purposes said: "We agree with President Wilson that the break-up of Austria-Hungary is no part of our war aims."³⁰ The situation at the beginning of 1918 was not still very favourable for the Czecho-Slovak full independence. However, progress was seen. Great Britain and the United States demanded autonomy for oppressed nations living in Austria-Hungary and France with Russia recognized the Czecho-Slovak Army. The process of recognition was slowly getting started.

7.1 Wilson's Fourteen Points

On 8 January Wilson decided to introduce his suggestion about how the world should be organized after war finished. Wilson wrote his ideas in fourteen points. He mentioned that secret treaties should not be concluded between nations, seas should be free and every nation should have the same equal opportunities to trade. For Czech politicians, tenth point was the most important one: "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development."³¹

This quotation confirms that at the beginning of 1918, the United States were not prepared yet for approving the effort of Czech politicians to gain independence and supporting it. Wilson did not want to destroy Austria-Hungary, but he asked the reformation of it. During the year, his approach began to change as other Allies gradually recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council and its Army.

³⁰ Kisch, "Woodrow Wilson and the Independence of Small Nations in Central Europe," 236.

³¹ Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia," 194.

7.2 Czecho-Slovak legions in Russia

On 7 February Masaryk declared on the same day that Czechoslovak troops, which operated in Russia, belonged to the autonomous Czechoslovak Army and they would not interfere in Russian matters. He demanded the redeployment of these troops to France, because after the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917 the Eastern front ceased and there was no reason for Czech legions to stay in Russia. The Bolshevik Government allowed it. Unfortunately, the situation in Russia was changing very quickly and Bolsheviks realized that they should not allow Czecho-Slovak legionaries to travel with arms because they could become very dangerous. However, legionaries rejected to give their arms to Bolsheviks by reason that they had to fight with Hungarian and German soldiers who were captured before Russia stopped fighting. Therefore, Czecho-Slovak legions become very important for Masaryk. The whole world was interested in Russia and behaviour of Czecho-Slovak legionaries in Siberia was really appreciated by the Allies. Czecho-Slovak legions brought attention to the position of Czech and Slovak lands in Austria-Hungary and Masaryk with Beneš were able to take advantage of this. Czecho-Slovak soldiers helped a lot in the process of recognizing the Czecho-Slovak nation and state.³²

7.3 Situation in Bohemia

7.3.1 Epiphany declaration

After the May declaration from 1917, the first request of the full independence was publicly declared on 6 January by the General Assembly consisting of Czech politicians from the Imperial Council of Austria and from Assemblies of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia and Duchy of Silesia. They said that "they could not accept the peace which would not bring the justice and freedom to the Czech nation and that they would fight for the independence of the Czechs and also the Slovaks until the happy end".

³² Kennan, "The Czechoslovak Legion," 3-16; Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 74-75.

They noticed that their right to independence comes from the historical and natural rights. They also mentioned that according to the right to national self-determination they demanded the participation at the Peace Conference where they could vindicate their rights. This was the first declaration of full independence which was proclaimed in the Czech lands and at the same time the first strong statement of support for Masaryk foreign resistance. Because of the date when it was announced it was called the Epiphany declaration.³³

7.3.2 Meeting in Prague

On 17 May, the meeting of representatives of non-sovereign Austro-Hungarian nations took place in Prague on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the National Theatre. Participants declared their right to live in their own independent states. They agreed that only the democracy which will be acknowledged all over the world can ensure the better future of all nations and they refused all treaties which the volition of the nation would not ratify.³⁴

7.3.3 Meeting with the Emperor

Emperor Karl I. was anxious when he was examining the situation in the Czech lands. He decided to convene with two Czech politicians and try to solve disagreements between Czech representatives and Austrian politicians. During the meeting which was held on 26 June he began to realize how much Czech politicians are dissatisfied with the Austro-Hungarian policy whereas Czech politicians found out that the Emperor did not know what to do to terminate disputes among Austrian politicians and representatives from other nations and what changes should be done to prevent Austria-Hungary from destruction. Therefore, on 13 July 1918 the Czech National Committee was reorganized. Some

³³ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 122; Galandauer, *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918*, 294-296.

³⁴ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 108.

members of Mafia were appointed to it, so the public and secret parts of Czech politics began to cooperate and prepare to assume power when the right occasion appeared. From this day, Czech politicians who participated in sessions of Imperial Council of Austria began to speak about full independence of the Czechs and Slovaks and the Austrian Government was not able to prohibit them in it. In August, Austro-Hungary tried to persuade the Czechs to be loyal to it and to refuse the British recognition, but they rejected. Austria-Hungary got near to cessation of its existence.³⁵

7.4 Situation abroad

7.4.1 Congress in Rome

From 9 to 11 April a Congress of Oppressed nations took place in Rome. The Czecho-Slovak delegation was led by Beneš and Štefánik. Representatives of Italians, Romanians, Poles and Yugoslavs participated in the Congress and also representatives of France and Great Britain were there as unofficial observers. These politicians declared their rights to become politically independent and to achieve national unity. They marked Austria-Hungary as the instrument of German supremacy and major obstacle to fulfillment of their desires. Through this Congress, they also requested Allied Governments to confirm that the Entente Alliance began the war to liberate nations living under the German and Austro-Hungarian dominancy and they agreed that Allied states should support movements which could lead to full emancipation of their nations. After this Congress, the representative of the Czecho-Slovak National Council Štefánik and Italian Prime Minister Orlando signed an agreement on 21 April that the Italian Government considered the Czecho-Slovak Army as the allied autonomy army, which is under the political and legal direction of the Czecho-Slovak National Council.³⁶

³⁵ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 229-233.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 129-131.

7.4.2 American policy changed

At the beginning of May, American Secretary of State Robert Lansing recommended Wilson to clarify the American policy towards Austria-Hungary and its nations. Wilson thought about it and then said Lansing that he agreed with the Slavic movement in Austria-Hungary. Consequently, on 29 May, the United States of America officially commenced the policy against Austria-Hungary. On this day, Lansing declared that American Government felt sympathy with Czecho-Slovak freedom movement.³⁷

7.4.3 Pittsburgh agreement

In April 1918, Masaryk left Russia and traveled to America over Japan and Canada. He arrived in Chicago on 5 May and was welcomed by thousands of people. On 30 May 1918, the representatives of Czech and Slovak compatriotic organizations Bohemian National Alliance, Slovak League of America and National Alliance of Bohemian Catholics met in Pittsburgh with Masaryk and discussed conditions under which the united Czecho-Slovak state could come to existence. They made terms that Czecho-Slovak state would be a democratic republic, but they agreed that details of the state system would be think over and established after the formation of the independent state by its legal representatives. This so called Pittsburgh agreement also contained a guarantee that the Slovaks would have their own assembly, legislation and courts and Slovak language would be an official language in the Slovak part of the new state.³⁸

³⁷ Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia," 185-207; Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 131.

³⁸ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 145-147; Jan Blahoslav Kozák, *T. G. Masaryk a vznik Washingtonské Deklarace v říjnu 1918* (Praha: Melantrich, 1968), 104.

7.5 The process of recognition began

Because of negotiations which Masaryk and Beneš led with representatives of the most powerful states, due to Czecho-Slovak Army who helped armies of the Entente Alliance in France, Italy and Russia and also due to Austro-Hungarian refusal to betray Germany, Allied states began to recognize the Czecho-Slovak movement.

7.5.1 First British recognition

Great Britain was observing the situation about the Czecho-Slovak affair and then on 3 June it finally decided to express its opinion. British Minister of Foreign affairs Balfour wrote to the General Secretary of Czecho-Slovak National Council Beneš that the British Government had a great sympathy with the Czecho-Slovak movement and that it is prepared to acknowledge this movement in the same way as France and Italy had done. "His Majesty's Government will thus be prepared to recognise the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the supreme organ of the Czecho-Slovak movement in Allied countries, and they will also be prepared to recognise the Czecho-Slovak Army as an organised unit operating in the Allied cause and to attach thereto a British liaison officer so soon as the need for this may arise. His Majesty's Government will at the same time be prepared to accord to the National Council political rights concerning the civil affairs of Czecho-Slovaks similar to those already accorded to the Polish National Committee." ³⁹

The British Government recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as a political authority, not only from the military point of view as French and Italian Governments did. However, in the British recognition was not written anything about the separation or destruction of the Austria-Hungary, so the British Government did not commit itself to any specific action, it just showed its sympathy towards the Czech nation. ⁴⁰

³⁹ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 126.

⁴⁰ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 197-198.

7.5.2 French recognition

Nevertheless, there was another state which really supported the Czechs and Slovaks and it was willing to signify it substantially. On 29 June, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon announced that the Czecho-Slovak nation had the right to become independent. The French Government recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the supreme organ, which was able to manage all issues of its nation and began to consider the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the basis for the future Czechoslovak Government.⁴¹

7.5.3 British recognition

On 9 August, the British Government declared that it considered the Czecho-Slovak nation and its Army as allies and confessed the Czecho-Slovak National Council its competences. This declaration is also known as the Balfour's declaration: "Since the beginning of the war the Czecho-Slovak nation has resisted the common enemy by every means in its power. The Czecho-Slovaks have constituted a considerable Army, fighting on three different battlefields and attempting, in Russia and Siberia, to arrest the Germanic invasion. In consideration of its efforts to achieve independence, Great Britain regards the Czecho-Slovaks as an Allied Nation, and recognises the unity of the three Czecho-Slovak Armies as an Allied and belligerent Army waging regular warfare against Austria-Hungary and Germany. Great Britain also recognises the right of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, as the supreme organ of the Czecho-Slovak national interests, and as the present trustee of the future Czecho-Slovak Government, to exercise supreme authority over this Allied and belligerent Army."⁴²

⁴¹ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 219-220; Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 142.

⁴² Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 201.

7.5.4 American recognition

The United States were aware of what was happening in Europe, but they were still hesitating. Wilson expressed his sympathy with the Czecho-Slovak movement in May, but it took other three months to declare the recognition. On the other hand, the United States were the first state which recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the de facto Government. On 2 September the Government of the United States proclaimed that the Czecho-Slovak nation is waging the warfare against Germany and Austria-Hungary and it gave it this recognition: "The Czecho-Slovak peoples having taken up arms against the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, and having placed in the field organized armies, which are waging war against those Empires under officers of their own nationality and in accordance with the rules and practices of civilised nations, and Czecho-Slovaks having in the prosecution of their independence in the present war confided the supreme political authority to the Czecho-Slovak National Council, the Government of the United States recognizes that a state of belligerency exists between the Czecho-Slovaks thus organized and the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires. It also recognizes the Czecho-Slovak National Council as a de facto belligerent Government, clothed with proper authority to direct the military and political affairs of the Czecho-Slovaks. The Government of the United States further declares that it is prepared to enter formally into relations with the de facto Government thus recognized for the purpose of prosecuting the war against the common enemy, the Empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary."⁴³

7.5.5 British recognition

Straightaway, the latest and the highest level of British recognition followed. On 3 September Great Britain recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the peer-to-peer partner with whom they could deal on political, military and economical questions. Robert Cecil and Eduard Beneš signed an agreement consisting of ten points. The most important was the sixth point in which the British Government recognized the right of the

⁴³ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 246.

Czecho-Slovak National Council to be represented at any Allied Conference when questions affecting the interests of the Czecho-Slovaks are under discussion.⁴⁴

7.5.6 Japanese recognition

Regarding the distance between Europe and Japan, Japanese were not so acquainted with European problems. Therefore, when they did not know which stand they should take, they often imitated the policy of Great Britain. Accordingly it is not surprising that on 9 September, the Japanese Ambassador in London wrote to Beneš that "the Japanese Government considered the Czecho-Slovak army as an allied and belligerent army and recognized the rights of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to exercise the supreme control over that army."⁴⁵

7.5.7 The most important French recognition

On 10 September France recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council to the biggest possible extent. The French Government said that the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the Government de facto was a symbol of Czecho-Slovak sovereignty and promised to support Czecho-Slovaks in formation of their independent state. Similarly as Great Britain, France also permitted representatives of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to participate in international conferences, where Czecho-Slovak affairs would be discussed. This was the biggest diplomatic success of Beneš.⁴⁶

7.5.8 Italian recognition

On 3 October Italian Prime Minister Orlando made a speech in the Italian parliament in which he recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the Government de facto.

⁴⁴ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 247-248.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 251.

⁴⁶ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 309-310.

At the end of his speech Orlando added that Italians really appreciated Czech soldiers who were defending Italy as it was their native country.⁴⁷

7.6 Big changes began

7.6.1 Situation in Bohemia

On 29 September 1918 representatives of Czech National Committee and Czech Association met in Council House in Prague and wrote a resolution for the Austrian Government in which they proclaimed that the process of disengagement has started and the Czechs believed in their full liberation.⁴⁸

On 1 October during the session of Imperial Council of Austria, Austrian Prime Minister Hussarek was speaking about a new plan according to which Austria-Hungary would transform itself. However he was not able to think up anything new, he was only rewriting the idea of his predecessor to establish regional Governments. This was totally unacceptable for the Czechs because it would lead to fragmentation of the Czech lands and after this reformation Czech autonomy would be rather restricted than strengthened. Fortunately, the movement for full independence got to the point from which no road led back. Nobody was willing to listen to Austrian's suggestions about transformation any longer. The Czechs would not believe that Austria-Hungary thought it seriously this time and moreover they were aware of recognitions which were provided to Czecho-Slovak National Council as well as to the future Czecho-Slovak state by France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States of America. In addition, the Allies have already found out that destruction of Austria-Hungary could have very negative influence on Germany and its ability to continue in the war. Therefore, the next day - on 2 October, Czech politicians declared that no Czech politician would negotiate with the Austrian Government anymore and they said a compliment to Czecho-Slovak legions which were fighting on the side of the Entente Alliance. They ended up their speech by saying that they could not advise Austria-Hungary nothing more than to stop fighting and give up.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 328-329.

⁴⁸ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 290-291.

⁴⁹ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 370-372.

On 14 October Czech politicians called a strike against the exportation of food from the Czech lands, because the food-supply got worse. Demonstrations took place throughout the country and the strike changed into the manifestation against Austria-Hungary. After five days - on 19 October, members of Czech National Committee met and prepared a resolution in which they refused any attempt to reorganize Austria-Hungary and they denounced the new Austrian idea as an effort to destroy the unity of Czecho-Slovak nation. They wrote that the destiny of their nation stopped to be the internal affair of Austria-Hungary and became the international question. Czech politicians were aware of the transformation of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to the provisional government because Beneš informed them about important events from Paris. Czech National Committee also proclaimed that it was in cooperation with the foreign resistance and that nothing could be changed without the agreement received from Masaryk and Beneš. On 22 October Czech politicians participated in the session of Austrian Imperial Council for the last time. The final speech was made by František Udržal who spoke on behalf of every Czech politician. Udržal said that Austria-Hungary did not have any chance to be rescued. He anticipated the formation of an independent Czecho-Slovak state and he stated that it would be formed without violence and troubles.⁵⁰

7.6.2 Situation in America and France

On 12 October Masaryk decided that it was right time to transform the Czecho-Slovak National Council into the provisional government. Beneš in Paris came to the same conclusion and began to work on it. Masaryk started to write the Czecho-Slovak declaration of independence in the meantime. He wanted to issue the declaration and to proclaim the formation of the provisional government at once. He had to work quickly because messages about Austro-Hungarian attempts to form a federation appeared in America and Masaryk was afraid that president Wilson could change his mind and began to support Austria-Hungary when it was willing to form a federation. Fortunately, these Masaryk's worries were unsubstantial. On 7 October Wilson said to the British first lord of Admiralty that dismemberment of Austria-Hungary is necessary because the United States

⁵⁰ Ibid., 398-402.

of America promised independence to oppressed nations. Nevertheless, Masaryk did not know about this conversation so he tried to prepare the declaration as soon as possible. Because of the slow connection - in those days they were dependent on telegrams - was difficult to coordinate actions which Masaryk did in America and Beneš in Paris. Masaryk wrote to Beneš to wait with the proclamation until he issued the Declaration of independence, but because the situation was favourable, Beneš decided to act.⁵¹

7.6.2.1 Formation of the provisional government

He wrote a letter to Pichon, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, in which he declared the transformation of the Czecho-Slovak National Council into the Czecho-Slovak provisional government. He stated 26 September as the date when the government was established. In the letter to Pichon, Beneš determined three members of the Czecho-Slovak provisional government - T. G. Masaryk became the president of the government and Minister of Finance, M. R. Štefánik was appointed Minister of War and Beneš held an office as Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Interior. Beneš delivered this letter on 14 October and Masaryk was probably informed on 17 October.⁵²

7.6.2.2 Declaration of independence

Masaryk finished his draft of Declaration on 14 October and his secretary Císař translated it in English. Then the draft was passed to six Americans who were Masaryk's friends and they were asked to write their remarks. After many hours of re-writing, the Declaration was done on 17 October, sent to Beneš and published on 18 October.⁵³

Main points which were emphasized by Masaryk in the declaration were that "no people should be forced to live under a sovereignty they do not recognize", "we make this declaration on the basis of our historic and natural right", "we accept and shall adhere to the ideals of modern democracy" and "the Czechoslovak State shall be a republic".⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 368-369, 396-398.

⁵² Ibid., 380-382.

⁵³ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 388-394.

⁵⁴ Klimek, *Vznik Československa 1918*, 318, 319.

7.6.3 Meeting in Geneva

On 28 October the meeting in Geneva was held by Eduard Beneš and delegation representing the home resistance. This session meant the integration between home and foreign resistance. They informed each other about successes they achieved during the war and what situation was in the Czech lands. The meeting lasted until the end of October and politicians agreed that Masaryk would be elected the first president of a new state and Kramář would be the Prime Minister. Beneš and Štefánik would stay in their offices. On the last day of conference - on 31 October, they signed a declaration that they agreed with everything what the Czecho-Slovak provisional government and before it the Czecho-Slovak National Council made and achieved. They also expressed their recognition for Czech soldiers fighting against Austria-Hungary and Germany in Italy and France and also in Russia. In addition, they agreed that the future state would be a republic.⁵⁵

7.7 The Czechs and Slovaks declared their independence

The process of gaining independence began on 26 October in Prague. Czech politicians who did not leave to Geneva agreed that they took control over buildings where the cereal was stored. The Austrian commander who was responsible for Prague thought that the Czech National Committee wanted to assume the important office according to the Emperor manifest and he allowed it to them under the condition that they would continue in supplying the Austrian army. On 27 October, information about the formation of the Czecho-Slovak provisional Government appeared in Czech newspapers and Czech politicians decided that the opportunity for declaration of an independent state came. Czech politicians negotiated with the Austrian commanders and persuaded them that everything had to proceed peacefully and without violence. On 28 October in the afternoon, the latest connection with Vienna was interrupted. The Czech National Committee met and approved the very first law of independent Czecho-Slovakia. On 29 October first authorities of a new state began to function. The Czecho-Slovak revolution was finished by the Martin declaration on 30 October. Slovak politicians spontaneously

⁵⁵ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 422-425; Galandauer, *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918*, 319-320.

declared their annexation to the Czecho-Slovak state without knowing about events happening in Prague and the Conference in Geneva. They marked the Slovak nation as a part of the united Czecho-Slovak nation according to their speech, culture and history.⁵⁶

7.8 The end of war

Austria-Hungary was destroyed at the end of October and new states were formed. Except for Czechoslovakia it was Austria and Hungary and some territories of former Austria-Hungary were appropriated by Poland, the new Yugoslavia, Italy and Romania. Armistice with Germany was concluded on 11 November. Before the signing of armistice, the Supreme War Council met in Versailles and negotiated conditions for making peace with Germany. On 4 November, Beneš was invited to participate at the meeting of the Council. Beneš had an opportunity to defend the new Czecho-Slovak state and its interests. The invitation was a proof that the Allies really recognized the Czecho-Slovak Republic and were prepared to consider it as an equal state. By the way, Poles nor Yugoslavs were not invited because they were not able to be unified and there were several groups in their states which wanted to attain power.⁵⁷

7.9 Formation of authorities

The new Czecho-Slovak state formed the most considerable authorities during several days. On 13 November, Czech National Committee changed into the Czecho-Slovak National Assembly, voted the most important regulations and created the Provisional Constitution. One day later, they appointed members of the Government and elected Masaryk as the first Czecho-Slovak president. Beneš became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Štefánik the Minister of War. Karel Kramář, who was elected the Prime Minister of the new Government, let approve by members of the Assembly that Habsburgs

⁵⁶ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 427-430; Galandauer, *Vznik Československé Republiky 1918*, 315-318.

⁵⁷ Beránek, *První světová válka*, 241-252; Klimek, *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919*, 9.

were deprived of the Czech throne and that the new Czecho-Slovak state would be a republic.⁵⁸

7.10 Masaryk's return to Europe

Masaryk was informed about his election on 16 November when he was in New York. After four days, he left America. On 29 November, Masaryk arrived in London. He met with a few friends and British representatives Balfour, Miller and Churchill. Then he continued to Paris. Beneš waited for him in French port and together they traveled to the French capital city. There Masaryk met French president Poincaré, Clemenceau, Pichon and Berthelot, the boss of the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who supported the Czecho-Slovak struggle for independence almost from the beginning. He also visited Czecho-Slovak soldiers and expressed his thanks for what they did. On 16 December he arrived in Italy where he also met with Czecho-Slovak legionaries, thanked them and said that their work did not finished yet, that their place is in their new state where they were supposed to protect it. Finally, after four years of travelling all around the world, Masaryk arrived in Prague on 21 December 1918 where he was keenly welcomed.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 438-439.

⁵⁹ Kovtun, *Masarykův triumf*, 438-439, 461-466.

8 1919

8.1 Paris Peace Conference

The most important event of 1919 was definitely the Peace Conference. The aim of this Conference was to negotiate peace conditions for defeated states, to resolve questions concerning the formation of new states and to demarcate new borders. The Conference took place nearby the French capital city Paris, in the Versailles Castle. This place was chosen because of French insistency. The conference was officially initiated by the speech of French president Poincaré on 18 January. Nevertheless, informal meetings were already realized from 12 January. Twenty-seven states and also five British dominions participated at the Conference. Russia was not invited and representatives of other states dealt with the Russian issue during the whole conference. They wanted to decide what attitude they should choose towards Russia and how to behave to the new Russian Government. Two languages were selected as the official languages but Lloyd George and Wilson cannot speak French, so only English was used. Clemenceau did not mind, because his wife was American, so he was able to speak and understand English. The most powerful states divided the most important offices among themselves. Georges Clemenceau became the chairman of the Conference and David Lloyd George, Robert Lansing, Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando and Japanese Marquis Saionzi were chosen as vice-chairmen. Woodrow Wilson also participated on negotiations. Plenary sessions in which representatives of all states were presented happened only seven times because it was impossible to discuss everything with so many people. As a result, the most powerful states: France, Great Britain, The United States of America, Italy and Japan marked themselves as states with general interests which have the right to decide about everything. Other winning states including Czechoslovakia belonged to the group with special interests. It meant that these states could join the discussion only when questions concerning them were disputed. Subsequently, the Council of Ten was formed. It consisted of Heads of Delegations and their Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The United States of America was represented by its president Wilson and the Secretary of State Lansing, Lloyd George and Balfour acted on behalf of Great Britain, there were Clemenceau and Pichon for France, representatives of Italy were Orlando and Sonino and Japan sent its Prime Minister Makino and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Chinda. This council was narrowed because the Heads of Delegations began to talk about the most difficult issues among

themselves so the council was renamed as the Council of Five. However, Japanese were interested only in German colonies in Asia and did not want to tackle of the situation in Europe and Italian delegates were recalled from the conference for a short time, because its territorial claims were not fulfilled. Finally, the Council of Three remained. Its members were Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson.⁶⁰

8.2 Czechoslovak delegation in Paris

The delegation from Czechoslovakia was led by Karel Kramář. This Czech politician was well-known in Czechoslovakia as well as abroad. In 1916, he was sentenced to death by Austro-Hungarian court, but Emperor Karl I. gave him an amnesty. Kramář was Conservationist and before the First World War he supported an idea of Slavonic Empire which would consist of Czechoslovakia, Russia and other Slavonic nations. Kramář thought that Russia could protect these smaller states. Unfortunately, this idea could not be realized, because Russia was sovietized. Kramář was self-confident and he supposed that he would negotiate directly with the Council of Three. Fortunately, Eduard Beneš was a member of the delegation too and because of his experience he knew that it is important to keep in touch with the members of committee because these specialists submitted their suggestions to the Council of Three and not occasionally the Council accepted their proposals, because Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George did not have and also could not have sufficient knowledge about every state and every nation. When Beneš began to prepare for the conference, he was thinking about Czecho-Slovak objectives which should be discussed at the conference - the most important topic to discuss was definition of Czecho-Slovak borders, mainly the area around Teschen and possibility to add the Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Ruthenians wanted to form an independent state at first, but they decided to join Czechoslovakia when they learnt that states of the Entente Alliance would not agree.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Klimek, *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919*, 7, 12-20; Geo A. Finch, "The Peace Conference of Paris, 1919," *The American Journal of International Law* 13, no. 2 (1919): 159-186, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2188076> (accessed September 13, 2011).

⁶¹ Klimek, *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919*, 20-26; Paul R. Magocsi, "The Ruthenian Decision to Unite with Czechoslovakia," *Slavic Review* 34, no. 2 (1975): 360-381, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2495193> (accessed September 13, 2011).

Beneš also thought about supporters of Czecho-Slovak aims. He was sure that France would have big influence at the Conference so he was glad that he could rely on its help because France was a big supporter of Czecho-Slovakia during the war already. In addition to this, France was afraid of Germany as well as Czechoslovakia so it was in the interest of both of them to weaken Germany as much as possible. Beneš was much worried about the United States, because he knew that the most important matter for Wilson was to form the League of Nations and he did not care about territorial demands so much. Wilson preferred to divide states according to the national principle, but it would mean that Czechoslovakia would lose third of its inhabitants because they were 3 million of Germans, 770 thousand of Hungarians, 550 thousands of Ruthenians and also unknown number of Poles and Gypsies out of 14 million Czechoslovakia's population.⁶²

8.2.1 Beneš and Kramář on the meeting with the Council of Three

On 5 February Beneš and Kramář got the opportunity to vindicate their claims in front of the Council of Five on 5 February. Beneš demanded the historical borders of the Czech lands and affirmed that Czechoslovakia needed the old frontiers, because the range of mountains provided natural protection for it. He also asked for the joining of Subcarpathian Ruthenia to Czechoslovakia and suggested the formation of corridor which would connect Czechoslovakia with Yugoslavia.⁶³

8.2.2 Decision of the Council of Three concerning Czechoslovakia

On 4 April the Council of Three agreed with keeping to the old frontiers of the Czech lands and joining of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The idea of the corridor was refused and concerning Teschen, the Council decided to mark a provisional line between Czecho-Slovakia and Poland.⁶⁴

⁶² MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 229-242; Klimek, *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919*, 24-26, 34.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

8.3 Czechoslovakia in 1919

The year 1919 was very difficult year for the new state. There were a lot of institutions which had to be formed, new rules and regulations had to be confirmed, the new state had to get rid of Austro-Hungarian habits and society had to recover from war. The Czechoslovak Republic had to become independent in economy and became self-sufficient. Monetary reform was implemented in this year because Czechoslovakia needed its own currency. Furthermore, one war conflict had to be solved. As early as at the end of 1918 Hungary attacked Slovak lands and Subcarpathian Ruthenia because it did not reconcile to the fact that Slovakia as well as Ruthenia became a part of Czechoslovakia. Fighting lasted until August 1919 when Czechoslovakia finally beaten Hungary. Czechoslovakia was supported by Romania which provided its army to help Czechoslovak soldiers. As is known from history, Czechoslovakia was able to get over all difficulties and also was able to retain its position among other Central European nations.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 257-270.

CONCLUSION

The Czechoslovak Republic was formed on 28 October 1918. Not many people are familiar with how difficult the struggle for independence was. It began in autumn 1915 when Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš declared their demands regarding the liberation of the Czech and Slovak nations from Austro-Hungarian supremacy and began to negotiate with politicians from Great Britain, France and later with the United States, too. Masaryk and Beneš realized that speaking about their claims was not enough. They decided to participate in the war actively and help the Allies to win the war. Therefore, they united Czech and Slovak soldiers who did not want to fight on the side of Austria-Hungary and were captive by the Allies along with volunteers and formed an army which joined the Allied armies. This improved their negotiating position. Nevertheless, the chance to succeed in their demands was still small, because the Allies tried to make a separate peace with Austria-Hungary to weaken Germany. Finally, the Allies understood that Austria-Hungary would not leave Germany under any circumstances and its destruction was necessary. The recognition process began, the Allies gradually recognized the Czechoslovak National Council, the provisional government and lastly, they recognized the new independent Czechoslovak state. The influence of Allies on the formation of Czechoslovakia was really great, without their support and recognition, the effort of Masaryk and Beneš would be needless.

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