

ing intolerance toward modernist art and were a sign of the imminent end of artistic freedom.

Between 1945 and 1948, modernist art developed dynamically as a result of liberal cultural politics. The art of groups such as Grupa 42 in Czechoslovakia—centered around Galerie Gerd Rosen in Berlin—contained plenty of references to Picasso's art. In the art of František and František Gross from Grupa 42, the inspiration of the actual paintings of Picasso, especially the women's heads shown at the exhibition “The Art of Republican Spain” interfered with cubism in Czech modernism. The most important source of inspiration for Czech artists was the collection of Vincenc Kramař. In Kramař's collection, besides the works by Picasso and Braque in their analytic cubism period, there was also the notorious 1907 self-portrait by Picasso (now in the National Gallery in Prague). Kramař also possessed works by Emil Filla, the Czech cubist. After his return to Prague from the concentration camp in Buchenwald in 1945, he began to work on a series of pictures that were presented at a show in 1947. Some of his works are dialogues with Picasso's works, exhibited in Prague in 1946. Picasso's inactive women sitting in a closed space are contradicted by Filla's women in action: a sculptor at work and a woman releasing a lark from its cage. The tension between the painters is so clear due to the proximity of Filla's characters to Picasso's style—a proximity that is close to pastiche.

Tadeusz Kantor, the leader of the Young Painters Group, also referred to Picasso in his work. His pictures presenting women, which were created in 1945–47, may be the best example. The synthetic form, rigid contour of color planes, expressive clashes of diversified points of view—all these are connections between Kantor's canvases and the war pictures of women by Picasso. Kantor was not able to see Picasso's works. The intermediary role was played by young French artists following Picasso—André Fougeron, Edouard Pignon presented in Cracow in 1947. Tadeusz Kantor saw the exhibition of French painters as a presentation of the most up-to-date trends in painting of Paris. In his pictures presenting people at work, such as *The Laundress*, Kantor uses the postcubist form to present the theme of the efforts of ordinary people. The artist's social engagement is the clue to these works (Plate 12.1). In 1947, Kantor left Cracow for Paris. After his six-month stay there, his painting changed. Objects and characters disappeared from his canvases and the inspiration from abstract surrealism became clear.

The works of one of the leaders of the Hungarian European School, Dezső Korniss, present an interesting synthesis of inspiration from Picasso with geometric discipline. Korniss became familiar with Picasso's work in the 1930s. Two interesting pictures—which may be perceived as dialogues with Picasso—emerged after the war. One is *The Singers* (1946), where Korniss transposed the famous figures of *The Three Musicians* (1921) into geometrical and abstract forms. The other composition that sums up Korniss's work is the surrealistic *Grasshopper's Wedding*, which emerged in 1948. The canvas is a dialogue with Picasso's *La Joie de Vivre* (1946), the picture referring to Mediterranean culture.

The artists from the circle of the Gerd Rosen Gallery in Berlin, who established the Zone 5 group in 1948, were also strongly influenced by Picasso. In the pictures by Trökes, the leader of the group, one finds echoes of war still lifes with a skull by Picasso. The works by Marc Zimmermann refer to Picasso's surrealistic period. Both artists were employed by the State School of Architecture and Art in Weimar in the Soviet occupation zone. They were dismissed shortly afterward, as soon as the first semester was over. The surrealist influences in their paintings were the reason for their dismissal.<sup>18</sup> Inspiration from Picasso can also be found in the work by artists of the older generation who stayed in the Soviet occupation zone, such as Karl Hofer and Horst Strempel. In a well-known triptych by Strempel, *Night over Germany*, Angela Schneider found the influence of *Guernica*.<sup>19</sup>

The inspiration from Picasso's art presented above should be seen in an ideological context. For many artists and critics, Picasso became the example of political engagement and modernist painting. The artists' references to Picasso were a sign that they were joining the trend of social changes, but also a sign that they were stressing the value of art's autonomy and the freedom of the artist. Soon it became clear that it was not Picasso's painting that was to become the new model of official visual language of the socialist state. By the end of 1948, the communists consolidated their position in the region and a campaign against "formalism" in art began. The campaign did not omit Pablo Picasso himself. In the part of Germany occupied by the Soviets, which

<sup>18</sup> K. M. Kober, *Die Kunst der früher Jahre 1945–1949* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1989), 341.

<sup>19</sup> A. Schneider, "Picasso in uns selbst," in *Deutschlandbilder. Kunst aus einem geteilten Land*, ed. E. Gillen (Berlin: Dumont, 1997), 359.

was about to become the GDR, the campaign took place in *Tägliche Rundschau*—the newspaper of the communist party SED. Adolf Dymshitz, who initiated the debate, did not hesitate to point to the deep contradiction between Picasso the fighter and Picasso the artist.<sup>20</sup> This discord, as the author puts it, should be a warning for his followers, an instruction to modernist artists, which clearly meant: following the formal path would not be tolerated. Explicitly formulated warnings had been issued by an author with the nickname N. Orlow in the text closing the “formalist debate”:

Some representatives of this absurd trend in GDR painting try to hide behind the name Picasso. Picasso painted a number of paintings in a realist style. One example of his realist work is his famous representation of the dove as a symbol of peace. The formalist ‘dislocation’ of Picasso means nothing more than the obvious waste of his talent.<sup>21</sup>

Picasso, the popularizer of the image of a dove and olive branch as a secular peace symbol and participant in numerous peace congresses, was perceived as a warrior for peace. Nonetheless, his art—regarded as formalism—was condemned and forbidden behind the Iron Curtain. The absence of his art was nevertheless balanced by the dove’s omnipresence. The peace dove, which provided a “trademark” for the peace movement organized by the communists, had influenced almost every area of social life. One might find it in paintings, as well as on posters and in the applied arts.

The new “engaged” Picasso masterpieces emerged in the first half of the 1950s. *Massacre in Korea*, which was Picasso’s reaction to the Korean War and the risk of a new global conflict, was painted in January 1951. Even though the communists disliked the painting due to its modernist deformations of women’s bodies and its weak emphasis of the invaders’ identity as the “American imperialists,” it was used in communist propaganda. One example of this may have been the presentation of the picture at the French Painting Exhibition in Warsaw in 1952. The exhibition showed key works by French modernists: Picasso and Léger as artists working with political-

<sup>20</sup> A. Dymshitz, “Über die formalistische Richtung in der deutschen Malerei,” *Tägliche Rundschau*, 19 November 1948.

<sup>21</sup> N. Orlow, “Wege und Irrwege der modernen Kunst,” *Tägliche Rundschau*, 20 January 1951.

ly engaged subjects. Matisse's fabric works were also shown, highlighting his involvement in the applied arts. Works by young, politically active painters, such as Fougeron and Pignon, were also shown.<sup>22</sup> Ryszard Stanisławski used the following words to interpret *Massacre in Korea* in an official art periodical: "Even though in comparison with *Guernica*, Picasso used much more understandable and clear symbols, *Massacre in Korea* may distract the spectator, whose desire is to see more explicit and less symbolical accusations against the American soldiers, less than a nameless torturer hidden in armor."<sup>23</sup> *Massacre in Korea* had reappeared in Warsaw four years later. A large-scale reproduction had been placed in November 1956 on Krakowskie Przedmieście, the main promenade of the capital of Poland, as a sign of solidarity with the Hungarians struggling on the streets of Budapest. The context of the Thaw had changed the meaning of the painting. The characters in armor were identified with Soviet tanks.

A small private gallery run by Eduard Henning in Halle in East Germany was an interesting example of how Picasso was perceived by the communists at the time. Personal relationships between Henning and artists such as Braque and Picasso enabled them to organize small shows of their works in Halle. Most of the exhibitions took place in the second half of the 1950s during the Thaw, but the first one, the graphic work exhibition, took place in 1950. Henning also issued a brochure devoted to the artist. The correspondence between central and regional-level party officers focusing on the brochure offers valuable information about the attitude of the East German authorities toward the art of Picasso and the artist himself. "About the content of the book, one may say that it is an attack on our struggle over realism.... It is a sophisticated selection of the most formalist works by this revolutionary artist"—these were the words of the chief of the culture department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>24</sup> He also added: "Picasso must not be banned, but the brochure of course will not be launched."

The above view should be perceived as an official example of the authorities' approach to Picasso in the Stalinist years, not only in the GDR. As a no-

<sup>22</sup> "Sztuka francuska walczy o pokój," *Przegląd Artystyczny* 2 (1955): 55.

<sup>23</sup> R. Stanisławski, "Nowe drogi malarstwa francuskiego," *Przegląd Artystyczny* 3 (1952).

<sup>24</sup> H. G. Sehrt, "Die Galerie Henning in Halle 1947–1962," *Kunstdokumentation SBZ-DDR*, ed. G. Feist, E. Gillen, and B. Vierneisel (Cologne: Dumont, 1996), 241.

torious authority and an icon of the communist peace movement, the artist could not be banned, but his works as the contradiction to socialist realism were not to be popularized or even shown at all. This kind of schizophrenic attitude was present until the second half of the 1950s, when the Thaw overwhelmed the countries that we are focusing on. The Thaw began as the effect of the famous Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party and Khrushchev's letter condemning the crimes of Stalin's regime.

At the time of the Thaw—which took a different path in each country of the region—Pablo Picasso became an important reference for the artists on their way from socialist realism to modernism. The exit, as well as the entrance into socialist realism, took place in the light of discussions held in art newspapers, where the question of realism had remarkably reappeared. When analyzing the discussions, one might have the impression of the “thawing” of the problems that had been “frozen” almost six years earlier. The problem of Picasso reappeared as well. A cold and tense “Picasso discussion” took place in *Bildende Kunst* in 1955. In the discussion, initiated with a text by Heinz Lüdecke, “The Phenomenon and the Problem of Picasso,” published in 1955 and involving several German and foreign artists and critics, the following question was raised: Is it possible to reconcile social engagement with modernist form? As Martin Damus puts it: “some proved that there must be a contradiction between the progressive engagement of Picasso and his formalist art, while others underlined that progressive engagement is also connected with his artistic modernity.”<sup>25</sup> The discussion also touched on a wider problem, which was the embracing of modernity in a socialist country and also an attempt to fill the crack that had appeared five years earlier. A similar discussion held in Poland in the large-format weekly magazine *Przegląd Kulturalny* (The cultural review) seemed much more liberal. It began with an article by Juliusz Starzyński, a prominent art historian linked to the communist regime, who on the pages of the official art historical bulletin highlighted the importance of Picasso's art.<sup>26</sup> It was a definite change in the tone of writing about Picasso and at the same time a revitalization of modernist art. Not

<sup>25</sup> M. Damus, *Malerei der DDR, Funktionen der bildenden Kunst im Realen Sozialismus* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> J. Starzyński, “Sztuka wieczyście młoda—kilka uwag o malarstwie Picassa w związku z ostatnimi wystawami,” *Materiały do Studiów i Dyskusji z Zakresu Teorii i Historii Sztuki, Krytyki Artystycznej i Badań nad Sztuką* 1–2 (1955).

long after, in *Przegląd Kulturalny*, the young artist Jerzy Ćwiertnia published a text in which Picasso was the main hero. Referring to the Warsaw presentation of *Massacre in Korea*, he put forward the notion of abolishing the opposition to “realism-distortion,” on which the current criticisms were based.<sup>27</sup> “There is no art without distortion” ends the article—a brave slogan supported by the authority of the creator of *Guernica*. This text led to the discussion illustrated in many of Picasso’s paintings. Its theme was the level of distortion in art, which at the same time did not altogether do away with thematic aspects.

In Czechoslovakia—despite all the voices breaking the silence about Picasso—the discussion was not taken up.<sup>28</sup> Controversy arose due to abstract art, not the modernism of Picasso. After the Thaw, however, Picasso’s work inevitably became a less lively reference and more like a museum object, especially when abstract art turned into the most influential trend. Such a phenomenon had clearly been visible in Poland as early as 1956–57; the same process occurred in Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the 1960s. In the GDR, on the other hand, the process of liberalization had slowed down in 1959 after the congress in Bitterfeld. Since then socialist realism, even if slightly modified, became a compulsory mainstream trend there. In Hungary, where after the bloody suppression of the Budapest revolution there was not even a trace of the cultural Thaw, the embracing of new trends occurred so late that Picasso’s art could cause no lively interest.<sup>29</sup>

Let us ask how the Thaw concerning Picasso’s work and the elimination of the discrepancy between Picasso the modernist and Picasso the activist were reflected in the art of that time. One might say that there is a clear generation gap in the artistic reception of Picasso. The artists of the older generation, who were connected with modernism and whose reaction to his art was very lively in the second half of the 1950s, preferred to turn to informal and abstract painting. The work of an East German artist, Willi Sitte, seems to be an exception as he joined the trend of socialist realism. After 1954, Sitte took up

<sup>27</sup> J. Ćwiertnia, “O smaku destylowanej wody, o metodzie uchylania drzwi i jeszcze o kilku sprawach natury artystycznej,” *Przegląd Kulturalny* 11 (1955).

<sup>28</sup> In 1956 in Czechoslovakia several texts revaluated Picasso’s art after years of social realism. See J. Padrtá, “75 let Pabla Picassa,” *Výtvarna Práce* 15–16 (1956).

<sup>29</sup> Similar as in the DDR, Poland and Hungary before the Budapest Uprising, some texts which reevaluate Picasso’s art were published. See E. Korner, “Picasso,” *Szabad Művészet* 1–2 (1956).

the themes from the field of communist propaganda, but he used a costume derived from Picasso's pictures. In the picture *Mörder von Koye*, Sitte took up the theme of the American massacre of North Korean prisoners of war. The theme was broadcast by the communist propaganda. The model for Sitte in terms of style was *Massacre in Korea* by Picasso. After 1956 Sitte began the series of sketches for *Lidice*, a painting depicting a Nazi massacre in a Czech village in 1942. Sitte's aim was to create *Lidice* as an Eastern European *Guernica* and embody anti-Nazi communist propaganda. In order to achieve such an effect, Sitte used not only the famous *Guernica*, but also other works such as *The Morgue* (1944–45) and *Massacre in Korea*. The sketches for this picture represent the attempt of the synthesis of the most engaged works of Picasso.

Paradoxically, the older part of Picasso's œuvre was the focus of younger artists whose debut took place in the 1950s. Young German artists such as Manfred Bötcher and Harald Metzkes looked to the precubist works of Picasso, which meant the possibility of avoiding the principles of socialist realism imported from the USSR and dealing with realist form at the same time. Ralf Winkler (later known as A. R. Penck) was an exceptional painter who used Picasso as his reference. Winkler is the author of plenty of sketches, beginning in 1956 when he analyzed the early and cubist style of Picasso. Also, in his most renowned pictures that emerged in the 1960s, such as *Weltbild Nr 1* (1963), one finds echoes of the diptych *War and Peace*, which emerged in 1952.

Picasso's art was a kind of ideological rejection of socialist realism, but also a search for its alternative version, the abandoning of academic fossilization and the preservation of representation with a distance to abstract art.

In Czechoslovakia, the followers of Emil Filla gathered in the Group Traša referred to the tradition of Picasso's art and cubism (V. Hermanska, C. Kafka, D. Matouš, etc.). These artists attempted to resuscitate the tradition of modernism and connect it with the observation of everyday reality. In their work, apart from the inspiration from Picasso's war still lifes, one notices the lively influence of Bernard Buffet, whose painting was extremely popular at the time in Paris. The popularity of Buffet confirmed their choice. The beginning of the Prague Thaw in the 1960s brought about the abandonment of re-animated modernism by the young artists who chose the path of abstract art. Dalibor Matouš, one of Filla's followers, complained about it and criticized

the abstract choice of his colleagues. He asked rhetorical questions about whether the “future development would follow Picasso.”<sup>30</sup>

Polish artists of the younger generation, such as Tadeusz Dominik and Stefan Gierowski, underwent a similar evolution. After a short period of being influenced by Picasso, they abandoned figurative art to devote their work to abstraction. The reference to Picasso was in this case a short Thaw episode, a step on the way out of socialist realism, which was always perceived as repulsive, and toward abstract art, which was then so desirable as a synonym of freedom and the renewal of the broken contact with the art of the West.

In Hungary, after the suppression of the Budapest Revolution, the artistic Thaw that would resemble the process in Poland and Czechoslovakia did not take place. The embracing of Western trends came in the 1960s. Picasso was not an up-to-date reference for Hungarian artists. Nevertheless, one finds echoes of his art in the works of some artists, such as the painter Sándor Bortnyik, an active member of the 1920s avant-garde. In the 1960s, he began a series of pictures entitled *Modernization of the Classic*, which took the form of a pastiche, where the masterpieces of old painters were presented in new, modern versions. Picasso’s style was represented by the reference to the famous painting by Tizian, *The Girl with the Fruits on a Tray (Lavinia)*. Bortnyik refers to the series by Picasso, who worked on masterpieces, such as Delacroix’s *The Algerian Women* or *Las Meninas* by Velasquez.

Discussions at the time of the Thaw were the last occasion when Picasso’s work was a vivid political and artistic phenomenon. In the 1960s, the modernism of Picasso seemed to lose its significance as a reference for contemporary artists. Picasso’s art became a part of mass culture. The term *pikas* is a symbol of the process. It was commonly used in Poland to identify any abstract form.<sup>31</sup> The generality of the term echoes the intense reception of Picasso in the first postwar decades when his popularity as the fighter for freedom was far ahead of the familiarity with his art.

<sup>30</sup> P. Štepan, “Ozvěny kubismu. Navraty a inspirace kubismu v českém umění 1920–2000,” *Dum u Černé Matky Boží* (2000): 38–39.

<sup>31</sup> A. Osęka, “Stereotypy a plastyka użytkowa,” *Kultura i społeczeństwo* 2 (1963).

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The Czechoslovak Colony in France — Stakeholder in the Relationship between France and Czechoslovakia in 1914–1940

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JEAN-PHILIPPE NAMONT

## The Czechoslovak Colony in France – Stakeholder in the Relationship between France and Czechoslovakia in 1914 - 1940

**O**n September 24, 1938, the president of the Czechoslovak Colony in France, Dr Flanderka, writes a letter to the French Premier Daladier, which is published with its reply in the Colony's newspaper, *Náš vystěhovalec* [Our émigré], on December 1st.<sup>1</sup> The Colony, "which unites former volunteers of the Great War 1914-18 and all associations organized in France," declares that Czechs and Slovaks living in France "are ready to put themselves at the disposal of the French government" and to serve in the army. On December 26, the Premier's Office informs the Colony that Daladier, "very touched by this gesture [the Colony] has expressed towards France, (...) took notice this offer (...) which will be taken into serious consideration," if necessary. But a few days later, the danger of war is removed, temporarily, by the Munich Agreement. By their gesture, the Czechs and Slovaks residing in France have shown a great attachment to France as well as to Czechoslovakia. Recalling the engagement of Czech and Slovak volunteers serving in the French Army in 1914-18, the Colony seems to have no doubt about the will of France to come to Czechoslovakia's defense against Germany once again, in a new war, and shows aspirations to be once again an actor in the French-Czechoslovak relationship.

The role of the political exile is well-known, including its contribution in the fight against some regimes, especially when the struggle was difficult or impossible because of the repression. The powers to whom the political exile stood up against often clamped down on the relations between the countries they formerly resided and their new-found home. The diaspora groups have set up a lobby or an information center in their country of residence, because they maintained contacts and an influence in the country they left behind. Something like that happened towards the end of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, when Masaryk, Štefánik and Beneš were making plans in Paris for the establishment of a Czechoslovak State after the end of World War I. Similarly, a lot of studies were written on the role of political exiles in their struggle against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

But citizens of a country, even a democratic one, even at the time of peace, can also play a role from abroad by supporting political entities, disseminating their views. If their experience, their life conditions, and their views concerning their country differ from those who live in it, they can sometimes be to the use of the state, at other times, the state may try to control them to an

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<sup>1</sup> "A document. A letter from the Czechoslovak Colony in France to Mr. Daladier", *Náš vystěhovalec*, No. 1-2, Paris (December 1, 1938).

extent. Indeed, foreign policy issues require the interaction of different states and their official representatives such as presidents, ambassadors, but immigrants sometimes also play an important role in this interaction. Thus, Czechoslovak émigrés living in France in the inter-war period, when their numbers have reached 50 000 people, and when relationships between Czechoslovakia and France were considered as good, constitute an interesting example, because through their activities within the Colony's associations, they constituted an important influence on the relationship between the two states. Moreover, they also unofficially represented their nation and influenced the construction of a national stereotype; in France, they were a reflection of their nation.

*Czechoslovak émigrés living in France in the inter-war period, constituted an important influence on the relationship between the two states.*

the role of Czechoslovak émigrés in France as stakeholders in the developments of 1938. It must be said that its activities were consistent even before this watershed year. Since its establishment in summer 1914, it acted like a lobby group, which will be shown in this contribution. Its members wanted to protect the Czechoslovak State through their actions in France, which they saw as an ally and a guarantee for the security of all Central Europe. If the Colony couldn't influence the French position in Munich and avoid the loss of sovereignty (but how could it possibly do so?), we shouldn't automatically underestimate its role. So, the question remains, what was the contribution of the Colony in French-Czechoslovak relationships over the period 1914-1940?

Its activities can be divided into two different periods. Over the course of 1914-18, the new Czechoslovak Colony wants to be a Czech and Slovak representative for the French and Allied authorities, before the creation of Czechoslovakia, and to act in a role of a consulate. In 1918-40, the Colony becomes a relay in France for the new Czechoslovak State, engaging in numerous activities, especially political ones over the period 1938-40.

### **I. The World War I Colony: a Czechoslovak Consulate in France (1914-1918)**

During World War I, associations belonging to the Colony intend to take political action along with allies, preparing the establishment of the Czechoslovak State and promoting the view that common interests do exist between allies, Czechs and Slovaks.

#### **1. The World War I as an impetus for the creation of the Czech Colony**

##### *The creation of the Czech Colony*

In the Parisian "Palais Royal", a tablet on one of the arcades of the Valois stands that "from this place, on August 22, 1914, Czechoslovak volunteers went away to defend, with France, freedom of nations and to recover national independence."<sup>2</sup> On that day, the members of Sokol and socialist association Rovnost [Equality], two Czech Paris-based associations, meet to help the French cause

<sup>2</sup> The same text in Czech ("Odtud vyšli dne 22. srpna 1914 českoslovenští dobrovolníci aby bojovali ve francouzské armádě za svobodu národů a za vlastní samostatnost") is written with this commentary in French: "this tablet was put by the Czechoslovak Colony of France", (December 15, 1934).

by entering the Foreign Legion, for the duration of the war, and by founding a Czech Colony. I must be said that its creation is also the consequence of the beginning of the First World War.

In 1914, the presence of Czechs and Slovaks in France is limited. Since 1850 however, some Czech artisans can be found in Paris, most of them tailors, furriers, restaurant managers, and after 1880 some factory workers and artists, such as Alfons Mucha, František Kupka, Otto Gutfreund, Emil Filla or Otakar Kubín (Coubine). The flow of Czechs and Slovaks toward France, and especially Paris, is constant, but Paris is the only destination, and so most of the volunteers of 1914 remain in France for only a few years. In the beginning of 1914, among the Austrian-Hungarian citizens living in France there were only 3000 Czechs and Slovaks, perhaps 5000, at best most of them Czechs, and among them 2000 have resided in Paris and its suburbs.

The expatriates have established various Associations. The oldest is the česko-moravská Beseda, the Fric's Czech-Moravian Society, founded in 1862, which was in 1892 transformed to the Parisian Sokol, a gymnastic association, close to French nationalists. The aims of the Sokol Association was to consolidate its members' national feeling in an emigration context.<sup>3</sup> Its first office was opened in the Palais Royal. Rovnost, founded in 1907, is at first anarchist organization, which soon after its establishment becomes dominated by socialists, like its president Josef Šibal. A third group, was founded by gardeners.<sup>4</sup> In 1912, during the first Balkan war, Czechs societies in France established a central Committee, bracing for the case of a possible attack by Austria against Serbia: this is an outline of the 1914 Colony.<sup>5</sup> For those who enter into these associations, however different their political views, the national feeling is a very strong uniting factor.

Since the start of the First World War, these associations have supported France. On June 28, in a gymnastic celebration in Bonneval (Eure-et-Loir), the Sokol President, Smutný makes assurances that his fellow Czechs will side with France in case of war. On July 25, the Sokol and Rovnost decide to act jointly and the day after, they all "join together in one of the Palais Royal's rooms to demonstrate against the ultimatum to Serbia."<sup>6</sup> Then, right in the center of Paris, "they proceed to the statue of Strasbourg, in the Place de la Concorde, and finally to the Austrian Embassy, where they all shout, triumphantly: *Down with Austria!*"<sup>7</sup> The president of Rovnost takes the Austrian flag and burns it before the police can intervene and break up the demonstration. Next, a Provisional Committee is formed, electing Hoffman-Krátý the president. On August 29t, the day of the general mobilization, the Committee sends to the Ministry of War a letter which says that "the members of the Czech Parisian Colony" will abide by the decree on foreigners, but also will issue to the police prefecture a "special declaration" stating taht they're ready to enter into the army, because if they're undoubtedly Czech, their heart is French.<sup>8</sup>

On August 9, the Colony's Assembly convenes, with the participation of several Frenchmen such as Ernest Denis, a Slavist at the Sorbonne University, or Henry Garat, a deputy from Bayonne. More than 400 persons meet in a restaurant at 9, Valois Street, in the Palais Royal where the Colony has its office.<sup>9</sup> A delegation of three of its members is then sent to the Ministry of Interior,

<sup>3</sup> J.-P. Namont, "Le Sokol de Paris, lieu de sociabilité des Tchècoslovaques en France entre 1892 et 1948", *Bulletin de l'Institut Renouvin*, Université Paris-1 Panthéon Sorbonne (Autumn 2003).

<sup>4</sup> A. Marès, "Tchèques et Slovaques à Paris : d'une résistance à l'autre", A. Marès, A. Kaspi (éd.) *Le Paris des étrangers depuis un siècle*. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1989), p.76.

<sup>5</sup> M. Levée *Les précurseurs de l'indépendance tchèque et slovaque à Paris*. (Paris : Payot, 1936), p.42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Archives of the Parisian police prefecture [APP], Carton "Czechoslovakia". Letter from the Committee of Volunteers to the Parisian prefect of police, August 2, 1914.

and on the same day obtains for the Czechs the same statute as Poles and Alsacians, which exempts, even to those who cannot fight, from the internment in civil prisoners' camps and the impoundment of their properties. Furthermore, Denis "encourages the revolt against Austria and escalates the enthusiasm of the Assembly," proposing to the Czechs an engagement in the Foreign Legion.<sup>10</sup> Up until August 21, they organize their own mobilization, and on August 22, the Committee of Volunteers can write a letter to the French President Poincaré informing him that 500 Czechs have enlisted in the army. "The volunteers meet again at eight o'clock in the morning in the garden of Palais Royal, (...) gather around the Sokol's flag, (...) cross the Place de la Concorde, and walk along the Quai d'Orsay (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), towards the Hôtel des Invalides. M. Delcassé, minister of Foreign Affairs, waves to these future heroes."<sup>11</sup> Led by the Sokol's instructor Josef Pultr, 343 volunteers undergo their basic training in Bayonne, and form the Nazdar Company, under the command of French officers but made up entirely of Czech soldiers. Those who are not going to Bayonne because their age does not allow them to do so or are exempt from service for medical reasons, become the organizers of the Colony, working to keep a good contacts with French authorities.

The rapid mobilization of the provisional Committee's members was a necessity because of two priorities: to form the Nazdar Company and to obtain an official recognition from French authorities. After that first step, the Colony chooses as its president Josef Apek, a tailor, who is the former president of the Parisian Sokol and has lived in Paris since 1879 and is "accredited by the Office of the police prefect, confirming the status of those who want to be recognized as Czechs."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Colony also obtains the authorization to deliver Czech nationality cards to make a distinction between them and the other citizens of Austria-Hungary, allowed under the statute originally intended for Alsacians and Poles. A definitive Committee is finally elected, and it takes the official name of *Comité de la Colonies et des Volontaires tchèques* [*Committee of the Colony and the Czech volunteers*]. Among its members, the choice of a former Czech soldier in the French army during the war 1870-1871, Václav Mila, for the post of its chairman illustrates the depth of devotion to France. On October 16th, the Committee votes on the complete statutes, in which it specifies that it is "the only authorized representative of the Czech nation in France." Every Czech living in France who wishes to enter in the Colony can do so without any obligation to pay a fee.

In the summer of August 1914, the Colony, officially recognized by France, begins to become engaged on the political scene as an actor in French-Czechoslovak relationship.

#### *The beginning of the Colony's action (1914- first half of 1915)*

After its creation, the Colony defines two priorities: to protect Czechs and Slovaks living in France, and to lead political action.

With its first mission, the Colony is really acting as a consulate, in spite of the lack of a Czechoslovak State which would have sent its officials. Nevertheless, nobody contests its legitimacy: the Colony, whose officials are chosen by a vote, and recognized by French authorities (who give it the right to deliver nationality cards), is also accepted by national leaders such as Masaryk,

<sup>9</sup> Alléon, "Počátky světové války a Čechoslováci v Paříži", *Národní osvobození* (February 10, 1935), p. 3 of the supplement.

<sup>10</sup> M. Levée *Les précurseurs de l'indépendance tchèque et slovaque à Paris*. (Paris : Payot, 1936), p.43.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.43-44.

<sup>12</sup> APP, Czechoslovakia, report of the police Commissaire, chief of the inquiry Office, to the prefect of police de Paris, March 17, 1915.

Beneš and Štefánik. The Colony deals with Czechs and Slovaks affairs in France, especially social and military issues, as specified in the 9 articles of its statutes. For men who are fit for service, "one or several volunteer groups" must be "organized to fight along side with Frenchmen in the war, against mutual enemies, German and Austro-Hungarians" and "help Czechs who suffered injury on the battlefield, and their parents, wives and children;" it seems obvious that war will make widows and orphans without material resources. The provisions will be made based on the financial possibilities of the Colony, thanks to contributions and gifts.<sup>13</sup> This first experience of solidarity is a lesson that the Colony will not forget after the war, and will continue to build upon.

Even though the Colony aspires to be a "friendly" society, it also has a political vocation, to "centralize the action of all Czechs living in France in order to defend all economical and political interests in accordance with French ones; to build and to develop friendship between French people and Czechs so as to be deserving of the name *friendly nations*; to prepare in every possible way the best conditions for a diplomatic solution for the Czech question; to provide information to France, verbally and in written form, about the requests and rights of the Czech-Slavonic nation (Czechs and Slovaks); to enter into and maintain mutual relationships with other Slavonic nations, friends of France."<sup>14</sup> In order to fulfill these aims, it organizes propaganda in France and starts publishing in October the newspaper *Nazdar*, founded by Hoffmann-Krátý, but also insists on its role as a legitimate representative of the nation, waiting for the formation of a government, and acting even on the diplomatic ground. We can notice that the Colony already wants a union with Slovaks, mentioned in spite of their weak representation in it.

## **2. The Czechoslovak Colony chisels out its purpose and becomes a platform for support of political emigration in France**

*The Colony, between internal rivalries and first military successes*

In 1915, the Colony, weakened by internal divisions, has to give up some of its goals.

While the Committee examines the nationality cards delivered in August under the control of its first Czech delegates, the newspapers *Paris-Midi* and *La Libre Parole* accuse it of serving as a "naturalization agency for Germans and Austrians" after a Czech certificate was given to Goldscheider, a Austrian born in Bohemia, whose wife is German, and whose brothers are fighting in Franz Josef's army, thanks to his former employee Antonín Veselý, the president of Rovnost and the Colony's treasurer. According to the leaders of the Colony, the bad press was to be attributed to Hoffmann-Krátý.<sup>15</sup> After a similar affair with another Austrian, the Committee revokes Goldscheider's Czech nationality, but it is already too late to prevent the loss of its credibility. In January 1915, former president of The Colony Hoffmann-Krátý establishes the so-called *French-Czech League*, attracting some important French men close to the Czech cause. This League has difficulty convincing the French authorities to endow it with the right to issue Czech certificates, and thus it only engages in political propaganda. The League wants to "develop the current relationships between France and Czech nation," but also with others Slavonic nations, and "act, by all possible means, to rebuild the ancient kingdom of Bohemia, in order to form a Czech independent State, with Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia (Austrian and German portion), but also Slovakia

<sup>13</sup> Vojenský historický archiv (VHA), carton 56. Statutes of the "Comité de la Colonie et des Volontaires tchèques".

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> APP, Czechoslovakia, April 8, 1915. Report of the inquiry office about the Czech Colony of Paris.

and the northern part of Lower-Austria, bordering the lands inhabited by Czechs." Thus, The League is using the notion of a historical right and national principle.<sup>16</sup> Hoffmann-Krátký, who becomes one of the vice-presidents of the League convinces some Frenchmen to join his cause (Sansboeuf, ardent supporter of the Czech nation since the 1880s, is chosen as president, and members of the Municipality of Paris or artists like Auguste Rodin enter the Honorary Committee), along with Czech intellectuals and artists (painters Strimpl, Bilek, Eberl, Purghart and Kubin). František Kupka, is also consulted, and remains close to the League but doesn't become a member.

Even after the League and the Committee accuse yet another individual of working for Austria, the French personalities don't notice these internal dissensions, and don't choose between these two organizations.<sup>17</sup> However Sansboeuf, the honorary president of the Colony and president of the French-Czech League, understands the seriousness of the conflict, and attempts to bring the two sides together. A compromise is finally found at the Colony's general assembly, on February 21, 1915. The Colony's Committee is modified to reinstate some leaders of the League. In July, the League is definitively accepted by the Colony when it fires some founders, including Hoffmann-Krátký himself. From this moment on, the League tries only to keep good relations with French personalities.

But a third organization is created in Paris on January 28, 1915, on initiative of Czech nationals from Russia. It is called the *Conseil des Colonies tchèco-slaves* [Czech-Slavonic Colonies Council] with the aim of fighting for "independence of the Czech and Slovak nation"<sup>18</sup> through propaganda efforts in France. From September 1915, a newspaper, *L'indépendance tchèque* [*The Czech independence*], develops this program. It is not a new competitor within the Czech community in France because the first leaders of this council are also members of the Colony. The aim of the Council is to build official ties between all Czech Colonies abroad. As early as 1914, the Colony in France had contacts with those in Switzerland and England. But now Horský, a Czech delegate from Russia, supported by Nicolas 2<sup>nd</sup>, is sent to Western Europe to unite Czech colonies with the Council in Paris. He asks the Colony for support in forming "a National Council."<sup>19</sup> Javůrek, a member of the Colony's Committee, becomes its first president. If the Parisian Colony is in the center of this project, the Council's role is to centralize the efforts of resistance groups abroad. Its offices are located near the Palais Royal, 16, Richelieu Street, where the Colony already has its own office, but the Council's statutes allow for changing the focus loci for another European or American town. In any case, the establishment of the Council foreshadows the Colony's future loss of influence.

At this time, the volunteers of the Nazdar Company become famous. In October 1914, they are sent to the Champagne front, arriving at the front line in the spring of 1915. On May 9, in La Targette, near Arras, the Company penetrates the German lines by several kilometers, suffering 80% that day.<sup>20</sup> Among them, were the Sokol's monitor Josef Pultr, the president of Rovnost, Sibal, and the Nazdar's flag-carrier Karel Bezdiček, who falls covered by the Bohemian flag. In Paris, the Colony mourns the loss of these soldiers and organizes a memorial service for them. Most of the families of the Colony as well as the associations have lost someone; for example, the Sokol loses 70 members during the war. This battle of La Targette becomes a symbol of the volunteers' sacrifice, and after the war the Colony will constantly recall it.

<sup>16</sup> VHA, French-Czechoslovakian League to Kupka, April 28, 1915.

<sup>17</sup> APP, Czechoslovakia, inquiry office, April 8, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> Article 1. Statutes.

<sup>19</sup> M. Levée *Les précurseurs de l'indépendance tchèque et slovaque à Paris*. (Paris : Payot, 1936), p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-87, S. Ioffé *La phalange tchèque, Comment se sacrifièrent les premiers volontaires tchèques*. (Paris, 1918), pp.96-108.

*The Colony appears like a support-platform for the Czechoslovak political emigration*

However, the Czech political emigration withdraws some of the Colony's powers, amending, for example, the political program for establishing Czechoslovakia.

On July 20, 1915, Kopecký, an official delegate of the Czech National Alliance in United States, who is also secretary of the Czech Committee of London, decides to convene a general assembly in the Palais Royal, to which some members of the Colony's Committee are invited. The purpose is to unite all Czech colonies, giving a leading role to the American one and to Czech politicians who are at the time in Switzerland, including Masaryk. Kopecký reassures those who don't want to see the Parisian Colony (which was not invited to attend) to lose its influence. Finally, a *Czech National Alliance of France* is established made up of members of the Parisian Colony, among them Kupka, who sustained war injuries. The Colony, regarding itself as the only authorized representative of the Czechs in France, excludes members who attended the assembly, and reminds the prefect of police that no one else, but it, has the right to deliver nationality certificates. Nevertheless, the Colony accepts that the power should be left to politicians.

On October 10, during its general assembly, the Colony chooses the name of *Colonie tchèque de France – Volontaires tchèques* [*Czech Colony of France – Czech Volunteers*]. Its statutes, more detailed than in 1914, are the result of a compromise. Its key aims remain the same and include ones such as "protecting all political and economical interests of Czechs and Slovaks in France, building and to developing friendship between French and Czech nations, introducing the Czech nation and acting by all means to win back the independence of the Czech Lands."<sup>21</sup> But its action officially concern Slovaks, as well. Above all, the Colony is divided into two Committees, a "Consular Committee, the *Comité de la Colonie des Volontaires Tchèques*" and a "Political Committee, the *Alliance nationale tchèque de France*." In others words, a single structure is made from the former Colony and the new Alliance.

The Consular Committee is named so, because it retains the right to deliver Czech nationality cards. But it is above all a society with a primary focus of "caring for members of the Colony, providing them with useful advice, protecting their economical interests their properties, helping the poor and providing jobs to the unemployed; (...) caring for the Czech volunteers who are fighting (...), keeping them free of moral pain and bodily needs; (...) keeping a cash-box for assistance and carrying out duties for the benefit of injured and poor volunteers, their families, their widows and orphans." Moreover, the Consulate Committee is charged with "preparing (...), negotiating and (...) facilitating the economic relationship between Czech Lands and France," a difficult task during the time of war, and a rather surprising role, given the fact that after the war the newly-created independent state would assume these duties.

The Political Committee, one of the Czech National Alliances abroad was established with one purpose in mind: "to achieve by all possible means the Czech political program, including the independence of Czech Lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia), united in a Czech State." Thus, this Committee represented the Colony abroad and organized the propaganda, including conferences where personalities such as Masaryk, Beneš or Denis, founder of the newspaper *La Nation tchèque* [*The Czech Nation*] in 1915, would speak.

This recasting, desired by politicians and accepted by some of the Colony's members, holds consequences for the Colony's leaders. Kupka becomes the Colony's president, and the former high-ranking officials join the Consulate Committee, but especially the Political one. Some members

<sup>21</sup> APP, Czechoslovakia, report of inquiry office, October 26, 1915, about statutes.

of the French-Czech League are invited as well. Čapek, the former president, now serves as the chief of the Consular Committee. The politicians have the Colony under control from this moment on and its members are only "Czechs living in the territories of the French Republic, including colonies, with their names entered in the Consular Committee's register." They have to pay a national tax. All Czech associations in France can join the Colony, and if they chose to do so, they have to work in harmony with its aims. Now, the Colony, "with the mediation of its Political Committee, (...) is a part of an immense organization for all Czechs abroad."

With this new phase, the Parisian Colony is converted into a pillar of Masaryk's and Beneš's action abroad, after their departure from Bohemia in 1915. Masaryk, with Beneš and Štefánik, who was already in Paris, establish here in June 1916 the National Council for Czech Lands, which in July 1917 becomes "Czecho-Slovak," and directs all political action led by the resistance abroad. The Colony also adopts the name "Czecho-Slovak," and finally gives up its double structure, keeping only four basic aims: assistance, consular action, propaganda and education. The largest portion of its profits goes to helping volunteers and their families. This helps includes accommodating soldiers on leave who stay in Paris for a few days, or sending packets to soldiers, at the front or those being treated in a hospital. The Colony exchanges letters with French authorities on volunteers or questions of nationality; it organizes a census of Czechs in France. In 1917, when the French government decides to change the rules regarding issuance of nationality cards, the Colony draws up a list of 781 names in the jurisdiction of the Paris police prefecture. In February 1919, the Strasbourg Central Census Bureau turns to the Colony for assistance in distinguishing between Austrians and Czechs living in the Alsatian town, which have been returned to France after the war.<sup>22</sup>

At last, the propaganda and educational activities are becoming more pronounced. The Colony goes on to "spread in France the knowledge of the Czechoslovak nation" and "to increase the national consciousness and level of education of Czechs and Slovaks living in France." (...) "members of the Colony mustn't denationalize, and above, all their children have to receive a Czech education."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the *Bulletin mensuel de la Colonie tchèque de France* [Monthly Bulletin of the Czech Colony in France] in the period between 1916 and 1918 publishes articles on Czech

lessons in the Oriental Languages School, with topics ranging from the great figures of Czech history, like Palacký, provides information about conferences in Paris, and dispenses recommendations to read Czech newspapers, like *La Nation tchèque*, published in French, or *Československá Samostatnost* [The Czechoslovakian independence], also published in Czech. The Colony and its associations are also active in organizing conferences and charity concerts for the benefit of volunteers, as well as other events. On May 14, 1916, Rovnost and the French Human Rights League put on an afternoon performance

*The Czech, and later Czecho-Slovak Colony, uses its presence in Paris, one of the most important allied capitals, to defend the cause of independence.*

in Paris, with 1200 people attend a concert playing Czech, French and Russian songs, and listen to poems recited by comedians of the *Comédie Française*, and listen to intervention titled "the wishes of the Czech nation," by Georges Bienaimé, a journalist writing for the newspaper *La Victoire* [The Victory]. To complete the mosaic, military celebrations are often organized. Since 1916, the anniversary of the Targette Battle is celebrated, and after each important fight of the Czech

<sup>22</sup> VHA, carton 1. Census central Bureau to the Czechoslovak Colony, February 22 – 26, 1919.

volunteers, and later of the Czechoslovakian army, the Czech press publishes articles about their acts of bravery.

The Czech, and later Czech-Slovak Colony, uses its presence in Paris, one of the most important allied capitals, to defend the cause of independence. In spite of the loss of its influence, surviving members take part in victory celebrations in November 1918, firmly convinced that they contributed to allied success and the birth of Czechoslovakia.

## **II. Between 1918 and 1940, the Colony, transformed by the establishment of Czechoslovakia, intervenes in French-Czechoslovak relationship and becomes a stakeholder**

### **1. The establishment of Czechoslovakia transforms the Colony, changing its composition**

*The associations incorporate the Czechoslovak identity*

After the allied victory in 1918, the creation of a Czechoslovak State represents the greatest event for the Czechoslovak Colony in France.

On the one hand, the Colony can no longer act as representative body for Czechs and Slovaks in France, and must abandon its consular function. Every official business hence forward is handled by the embassy and the consulates, which are the only interlocutors for French authorities. Czechoslovakia deploys a chargé d'affaires to France as early as 1918, and later the ambassador Osuský from 1921 onward. Moreover, several consulates are set up between 1922 and 1926 in Lyon, Marseille, Strasbourg and Lille.

On the other hand, Czechoslovakia supports Czechoslovak associations and the Colony itself, providing it with material assistance, either in monetary or in-kind form. Money, dispensed by the consulates, can also be used to build schools - in such cases, the Ministry of Education itself is charged with allocating the money.<sup>24</sup> The associations also have a role as libraries for their members offering books and newspapers sent by the Czechoslovak government.

At last, the Czechoslovak nationals living in France have their own country – a common State for Czechs and Slovaks and are learning, even in the situation of emigration, to be Czechoslovaks. Indeed, what does it mean to be Czechoslovak in France between the two world wars, especially for those who never lived in "Czechoslovakia"? How does one become Czechoslovak? Many of the immigrants have left Austria-Hungary to come to France only knowing their native region, for example Bohemia or Upper Hungary, or Vienna. The outlines of this new European country are something alien to them. With their passport, which certifies their new citizenship and guarantees that they're not Austrians or Hungarians, they are gradually getting used to developing contacts with the embassy or the consulates. The associations created after 1918, like the Colony itself, never use the words Czech or Slovak, but always Czechoslovakian, and used to blur the lines between the different nationalities. Moreover, they keep contact with Czechoslovakian institutions, like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Československý Ústav Zahraniční [Office for Czechoslovaks

<sup>23</sup> VHA, carton 56, Statutes of the Czechoslovak Colony of France, 1917.

<sup>24</sup> The ministry of Education writes to the consul of Marseille, June 25, 1937 (No. 85308/37-II/C-3), that after the demand from association Kraján, Vianne (near Bordeaux), for a help for the creation of a school, it participates with 4000 Kč. Czech national Archives CUZ 52.

*abroad]. They attend social events, where they are learning the ins and outs of Czechoslovakian citizenship. For example, in the mining town of La Grand' Combe (Gard), where the association Československý Vystěhovalec [the Czechoslovakian émigré] already exists, some émigrés from Ruthenia intend to create in 1936 a second association, the Jednota československých a podkarpatských robotníků [The Czechoslovak and Subcarpathian workers Union], insisting on the national aspect more than on the citizenship, and distinguishing Ruthenians from the others. The consul of Marseille advises to this new group to join the first association; the State, thinking that his position affords him the right to intervene in association's life.<sup>25</sup> Most of the associations confirm their loyalty by annually participating in the celebrations of the Republic's founding and the president's (Masaryk and then Beneš) birthday, in a ceremony often attended by the consul.*

#### *The French-Czechoslovak Immigration Convention and the Colony*

After 1918, France becomes one of the main countries which receive Czechoslovak immigrants. Liberal immigration policy is a necessity due to negative demographic trends caused by massive loss of lives during the war and the need for reconstruction. The French State chooses Poland, Italy and Czechoslovakia as priority countries from which to draw workers. In March 1920, Czechoslovakia and France sign a Convention, which specifies the legal conditions guiding the recruitment of workers. As a result, the number of Czechoslovaks in France rises to 40 000, perhaps 50 000 by 1930. This new situation has a distinct effect on the Colony.

The Czechoslovakian population in France becomes more composite. Its potential members include students, artists, but we also find those who came before 1914. Among them are artisans, merchants and factory workers, above all Czechs, living in and around Paris, a good number of whom can pride themselves on their deeds during the struggle for Czechoslovakia's independence and contribution to building the Parisian Colony. The second category of individuals includes those who lived in Alsace and Lorraine before 1918, when it was a part of Germany. With the exception of Strasbourg, they are Czech workers and miners who came to work in Germany (Ruhr, Westphalia), where they often gained rich experience in forming associations. After 1918, without having moved, they find themselves living in France. Approximately 7000 other individuals – almost all of them Czechs – come from Germany after 1918. A fourth category – a more numerous one, is composed of immigrants who chose to leave for France after the signature of the Convention. They arrive in convoys with work contract in hand and start working in factories, miners or in agriculture. Most of them are Slovaks. Thus, Slovaks, in minority before 1914, are now the majority in France after 1920, and represent 60% of the Czechoslovaks in France (Czechs make up about 30%, followed by Hungarians and Ruthenians). The unbalance which existed between Czechs and Slovaks before 1914 is now reversed. Consequently, the Czechoslovak community in France doesn't mirror the make up of the Czechoslovak society. Therefore, being Czechoslovak in France is not the same as being Czechoslovak in Czechoslovakia.

The dispersion of all these immigrants all over France leads to the multiplication of associations, which by the 1930s number about forty. All foreign nationals are obliged to obtain a license from the police department's prefecture, and are being monitored by the French police.

The distribution of the associations in France depends on the concentration of Czechoslovak immigrants, with the exception of the countryside. The industrial Parisian suburb is an important

<sup>25</sup> Consul of Marseille to the Jednota československých a podkarpatských robotníků, 8504/1936, December 19, 1936. Czech national Archives, CUZ 52.

center with a high share of immigrants, and associations – particularly in the north and west of town – Suresnes, Gennevilliers or Argenteuil. By 1930, there are five associations by 1930. In Paris, where the central Colony, the Parisian Sokol and Rovnost existed before the war, more associations spring up: the *Association des Anciens Volontaires tchècoslovaques dans l'Armée française* [Former Czechoslovak Volunteers in French Army Association], the students association, and various professional associations (cooks, waiters, hotel-waiters). On the whole, 15 associations are based in Paris. In the Northern sections of Nord and Pas-de-Calais, there are ten associations around the mining and factory town of Lens, with their members keeping busy contacts. Associations in the region of Alsace and Lorraine (Merlebach, Strasbourg, Colmar) form the third center. Elsewhere in France, we find only isolated associations in industrial towns (Vianne, Montbéliard, la Grand' Combe, etc.). Some other ones are established in French overseas colonies, like in Algeria and Tahiti.

#### *The Colony's weaknesses*

Some associations are ephemeral, not well organized, or have only a few members. On the other hand, some play an important role in the life of the Czechoslovak community. Their efficiency depends on the members' stability. For example, in Merlebach in the Moselle district, the community's make up stays constant, due to the fact that some families arrived as early as 1900, didn't move since then, and continued to be active in the association.<sup>26</sup> The composition of the association's committee shows great continuity, with the same members holding the posts of secretary, treasurer, president (between 1914 and 1939, there were only five presidents, each elected for a five year term). On the contrary, where the population is more mobile and where the community ties are weaker, an association can't really work properly. For example, the association Československý Vystěhovalec [Czechoslovak émigré], in Terre Noire (Loire), is founded in 1920 but ceases to exist in 1921 because the greater part of its members leave for work in Guesnain, in the north of France. In this case however, the group of members is numerous enough to recreate the association in their new town of residence. In the same way, a lot of Czechoslovaks working at farms are not able to join an association, because of their isolation in the countryside. This applies especially to many Slovaks. From this point of view, the two greatest weaknesses of the Colony, whose aim it is to amalgamate all Czechoslovak associations into a union, are its instability and dispersion of its potential members all over the French territory.

*The two greatest weaknesses of the Colony are its instability and dispersion of its potential members all over the French territory.*

The Colony's other weaknesses are the political choices it makes. Social disparities of its members run deep, and except for their Czechoslovak citizenship, there is a lot that divides for example a miner living in Nord-Pas-de-Calais region from a Parisian artist or lawyer (the job held by Colony's president Flanderka). These disparities are reflected in the political preferences, which are expressed by some associations. This is by no means a new phenomenon: Rovnost, in Paris, was socialist in its leanings, as well as Komenský in Merlebach (Moselle). But there were some other associations that became communist, especially in Pas-de-Calais and the Parisian suburbs. In Gennevilliers, a Czechoslovakian group of the communist trade union CGTU is established. In

<sup>26</sup> In 2004, it is possible to notice that a lot of families are still living in this town.

Argenteuil, the Czechoslovak Catholic association's newspaper, has to defend rumors that it is on the capitalists' side, and not the side of workers.<sup>27</sup> These political divisions represent a serious problem for the Colony, threatening its cohesion, which they confirm in the newspaper *Emigrant*, published in Prague. Despite this situation, contacts among the associations are maintained on occasions, such as the celebration of the war sacrifice held in La Targette. Annually, the delegates converge to this symbolic place and pay tribute the fallen heroes, side by side with the Colony's leaders. Moreover, the Colony's legitimacy is confirmed by the good relations between the Czechoslovak State and France. Its prestige, thanks to the activities in 1914-18 does not suffer and is brought to life at commemorations, such as the one at Targette cemetery and other ceremonies, such as the affixing of the tablet in the Palais Royal in 1934.

## **2. The Colony intervenes in French-Czechoslovak relationships**

*The Colony, a Czechoslovak State's relay in France for cultural and social purposes*

The Colony still remains an important actor in the French-Czechoslovak relations. The newly established state uses the Colony as a relay for the immigrant population living in France.

With the increase of their numbers in France, the Colony is useful for Prague in addressing the question of how to consolidate the loyalty to Czechoslovakia and the national feeling, Czech or Slovak, to avoid de-nationalization, and to create a network capable of acting as a lobby to influence French authorities. Moreover, it is also important in its role as a support for an efficient action for the benefit of immigrants. This action is not only a result of the Czechoslovak State's will, but also of the Colony's initiative.

If the Colony disseminates the Czechoslovak idea among citizens living in France by unifying them in a single organization, in local associations as well in the central Colony, and fortifies in them loyalty towards Czechoslovakia, it keeps alive the flame of national identity. Thus, the individuals may consider returning home after few years spent in France. It is important especially for children, as they need to be able to live in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, most emigrants come to France to work for one or two years, and plan to return home with savings; they don't know yet that a good number of them will remain there their entire lives.

The purpose of many of the association's existence is to introduce Czechoslovakia, its history, culture, and to teach Czech and Slovak languages. Consuls often pay a visit to local associations, giving talks about Czechoslovakia in general, or about President Masaryk. Sometimes, lecturers come from Czechoslovakia, on invitation from the Colony and local associations. Moreover, institutions, such as the Československý Ústav Zahraniční or the Ministry of Education send books and newspapers to community libraries, which proves to be a real necessity, since immigrants generally came without any book, and have a desire to read in their mother tongue. Among the books on Czechoslovakia, we can also find ones about Czech or Slovak grammar, and history books about great men like Hus or Štefánik, Božena Němcová or Alexandre Dumas's novels. An effort is made to balance Czech and Slovak books, in order to adjust the library to the community's composition. However, the collections aren't very large, containing on average only 100 to 200 titles. Other means to support the cultural awareness are also used and include children's New Year's present (children do a little show, in which they sing Czech or Slovak songs, recite poems and dance dressed in a national costume), theatrical shows (some association have their own theater company), etc.

<sup>27</sup> *Náš Kraj*. Mesačník spolku sv. Cyrila a Metoda, No. 2 (May 1938), pp.5-7.

The other way to support national awareness is through the creation of complementary schools. Wherever the population's concentration is large enough, with enough children, a teacher is sent from Czechoslovakia to teach a few lessons each week, usually on Thursday or/and on Sunday, in the public school or in the mining company school. Sometimes, the company even provides a house from the teacher. Complementary schools are the result of the will of the State, but an association is needed to make it a reality. In the beginning, it is often the case that one of its members takes the job of a teacher, on his/her spare time. After this initial period a Czechoslovak teacher is sent by the Ministry of Education. He often joins the local association and becomes one of its influential members. Moreover, the consul who has to make the decision on the viability of a school usually asks a local association for a report on the Czechoslovak community in the area. For this reason, in December 1928, Merlebach's association Komenský sends to the consul of Strasbourg a list of 147 Czechoslovak citizens residing in the town and its surroundings, with details such as the name, the year of arrival going back to 1902, the number of persons in the family, the number of children, the profession of he husband.<sup>28</sup> Thanks to this roll, lessons are organized from 1930 on.

Even though classes for minorities have existed in Paris since the war, most of the schools are established after 1930, when it is already clear that the children, who attend French school every day, master French as well as their parents' mother tongue. The associations are often taking the initiative, sending letters to the consul or to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, lobbying for the establishment of these schools. But the parents' wish can amplified by an association, as was the case in the little mining town of Harnes, in the Pas-de-Calais, where a school Committee formed by parents in 1938 a puts together a list of 44 pupils, and the association Komenský of the town of Méricourt-sous-Lens, not far from Harnes, helps it in obtaining a teacher. Such grass-roots organizing sometimes precedes the State activities.

Social assistance is the other priority for the Czechoslovak State. This activity gains in importance after 1920. In 1929, the Colony changes its statutes becoming a "friendly society," and taking on a more social issues. The Convention signed in 1920 determines a legal framework for flows of migrants between the two countries, in fact toward France, but doesn't serve to protect Czechoslovak workers very well. Moreover, they are always among the more unfortunate social groups. Czechoslovak authorities try to find solutions with the help of associations. Consulates inquire about local conditions by sending questionnaires to the associations, which are sometimes very detailed; the report sent by Merlebach's association Komenský to the Strasbourg consulate has a similar aim. Locally, associations devote a portion of the membership fee to help the unemployed, the sick, to pay for members' funerals attended by the members of the association, and even the consul and a representative of the Parisian Colony. In Paris, the Colony is able to finance a dispensary from February 1920 onwards thanks to the support of the Czechoslovak State. As early as 1920, a so-called "Czechoslovak House" is planned to be build in the French capital, which could also serve as a library, a museum, a conference room, a gymnastics room, a medical center and the seat of the Colony, according to the project elaborated in 1935.<sup>29</sup> In the end, this ambitious idea never materializes. When approximately 6000 Czechoslovak refugees arrive in France in 1938-39 after the end of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Colony is there to help them. It is also a sign of its political action.

<sup>28</sup> 8/12/28. Antonín Vostrý, president, and Řepa, secretary of the association Komenský, to the Consul, Merlebach, 11096. Ministry of Foreign affairs (MZV), Prague. Representative administrations (ZU) Paříž. 63. Školy.

<sup>29</sup> MZV, Prague. ZU Paříž, carton 117.

*The Colony, a political actor in French-Czechoslovak relationship*

Aside from the cultural and social fields, the Czechoslovak authorities want the Colony to play a more active political role, by using its influence over the members of the French society. The aim is to have at their disposal a Czechoslovak community, organized in a Colony. This aim gains in urgency as the Czechoslovak State is weak, especially in its first years and towards the end of the 1930s.

With its newspapers, the Colony is active in addressing propaganda to Czechoslovak citizens, as well as the French public. In the beginning of the 1920s, "political" pages of the Colony's newspapers are important. Thus, in 1920-21, the newspaper *Pařížský Čechoslovák*, published in Czech, reports on the political situation in Czechoslovakia, celebrates on page one the "Third anniversary of Czechoslovak independence," or presents to the new immigrants the Colony's activities in 1914-18. *Paris-Prague*, in 1923, written for the French public, insists on friendship between "France and Czechoslovakia,"<sup>30</sup> comments on French foreign policy and recommends a strict adherence to Versailles Treaty, because of the risk of a possible German or Hungarian revenge. The newspaper explains the dangers of the return of the Habsburgs in Austria or Hungary, or why the right is on Czechoslovakia's side *vis-à-vis* Polish territorial claims. In the 1930s, the press devotes a lot of attention to social issues, such as passports, employment regulations, the social insurance system, or administrative issues. Between 1938 and 1940, the Colony regains its political function when Czechoslovakia is under German threat and is finally abandoned by France and Great Britain. The letter to Daladier, mentioned in the introduction, in which the Colony extends the offer of a military assistance to France, was written under these circumstances. In 1937-39, approximately thirteen newspapers and bulletins are established in France by the Colony, in both Czech and French, making up one-third of all the newspapers published since 1914. In 1938, the Czechoslovak State stops financing the associations, but each association sends money to Prague, in order to help the government in this difficult time. It is often a small amount, but it proves the associations' loyalty toward Czechoslovakia. From March 1939 all the way up to the French defeat in May-June 1940, members of the Colony participate in the military action organized by ambassador Osuský who refused to give up the embassy to the Germans. They serve in the French army as early as Spring of 1939, and since November in the Czechoslovakian army in France.

Beyond the political implications, we can notice another original aspect of the existence: the establishment of "memorial places" in France, such as monuments, historical places, which all have a meaning for every Czechoslovak living in France. The *Palais Royal*, in Paris, is seen as the heart of the Czech life before 1914, and as the birthplace of the resistance against Austria. It is Beseda's seat as early as 1862, the seat of the Colony in 1914, surrounded by shops, cafés and restaurants owned by compatriots. In short, it is the center of a "Czechoslovakian district" in the French capital. In 1934, the Colony organizes a ceremony in the Valois Gallery, revealing the tablet honoring the volunteers of the Great War, tablet, which remains there to this day. The battlefield of La Targette where the volunteers proved their valor in 1915, and the cemetery of Père-Lachaise in Paris, become places of pilgrimage attended annually by the Colony's leaders, ambassador Osuský, and some French personalities. Yet another celebration takes place each year on October 28, near the Unknown Soldier's grave, under the Arc de Triomphe. These three commemorations are taking place to this day. Their aim is to inscribe the activities in the history of

<sup>30</sup> *Paris-Prague*, No. 1-3, (March 20, 1923), pp.3-5.

noticeable to the French. We can perceive it as an effort to help immigrants not to see France as a foreign country, but as a country where Czechoslovaks too have a history, visible and palpable, making the integration to French society easier. In a way the Colony achieved creating a double identity, "French-Czechoslovak," or paradoxically, even sped up the process of assimilation.

The Czechoslovak Colony in France was founded in 1914 to send volunteers in the French Foreign Legion and bring independence to the Czech Lands. Later, the aim was to create Czechoslovakia and acting as the only legitimate organization representing Czechoslovakia before French authorities, with consular powers. It continues to engage in propaganda activity after the First World War, explaining to immigrants, as well as to Frenchmen what Czechoslovakia is, and defends its political choices.

1918 constitutes the beginning of a new phase. The Colony, which is now a stakeholder in the relationships between the two States, becomes a relay for the Czechoslovak State in France; the task is indeed important because of the increasing immigration from Czechoslovakia to France. Its actions are influenced by those made by the two countries, but the Colony is also able to take its own initiatives. Cultural activities and social assistance become its primary focus, especially after 1929, when the statutes transform it into a "friendly society." Towards the end of the 1930s, when Czechoslovakia disappears off the map and the war comes, the Colony decides to resume its political activity, despite of the disappointment from France's position. Thus, as in 1914, the Colony passes itself off as a legitimate representative of Czechoslovaks in France and an actor in French-Czechoslovak relations.

After World War II, during the communist period, the Colony loses its role. Due to the financial help from the Czechoslovak State and its policy of dissemination in France of communist ideas, it becomes impossible for the Colony to retain its role as an interlocutor with the French state. Its influence is reduced to several communist towns around Paris. Others associations, like the Parisian Sokol, reject communism and break ties with Czechoslovakia. Citing their actions prior to 1940 and their legacy, their members take on a French identity, giving up any hope of living again in a free Czechoslovakia. Political opponents, fleeing to the west, and rarely choosing France (instead, choosing United States), don't use their structures. Instead, setting up new ones, like Pavel Tigrid's review *Svědectví*. Presently, no Colony exists in France, but nevertheless, there are some associations trying to unite Czechs and Slovaks living there. However, we must concede that most of their members don't see themselves as Czechs or Slovaks and don't even know their parent's language. Those coming from Czech and Slovak Republics (about 10 000 people to date) are not very interested in the activities of these associations. Thus, Slovak and Czech cultural centers in Paris are seen by the two states as the best way to promote national cultures in France. However, a memory of the actions taken by the associations between 1914 and 1940 is still alive in France; each year, on May 9, a ceremony is organized by associations under the Arc de Triomphe, near the Unknown Soldier's tomb, attended by the ambassadors, who also visit the Czechoslovakian Cemetery in La Targette. Even though the time of Czechoslovak emigration to France has been over for several decades, its legacy continues to influence the French-Czech-Slovak relations. ■

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*After World War II, the Colony loses its role. Its influence is reduced to several communist towns around Paris.*

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