

**Michael Cude**

(History Department, Fort Lewis College, USA)

## The Imagined Exiles: Slovak-Americans and the Slovak Question during the First Czechoslovak Republic

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, over a half million Slovaks migrated to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Although economics served as the primary motivation for the Slovaks moving to America, the politics of national identity also influenced this migration. Many Slovak-American leaders, such as Štefan Furdek and Peter Rovnianek, used the opportunity to develop Slovak national identity, culture, and politics free from the grip of Magyarization in pre-First World War Hungary. They organized from America a campaign to assert Slovak national rights within Hungary, hoping to pressure Hungary from the outside to open up to cultural and political autonomy for Slovakia. When the Czechoslovak revolutionary movement was organized after the outbreak of the First World War, its leaders, including Thomas Masaryk and Milan Štefánik, attempted to utilize these existing Slovak-American organizations for financial, military, and diplomatic support. While the Slovak-Americans served as a vital part of the Czechoslovak revolution, their political organizations demanded recognition of an independent Slovak identity and Slovak political autonomy in exchange for their support.

This campaign pushed many Slovak-Americans to absorb a sense of direct influence on the affairs of their homeland. The Slovak-American's ability to guide

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<sup>1</sup> Historians estimate the Slovak population in the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at around 650 thousand, between a quarter and a third of the population of Slovakia at the time, although their precise numbers are difficult to establish due to the United States government's method of categorizing immigrants. Joseph Stasko, *Slovaks in the United States of America: Brief Sketches of their History, National Heritage and Activities* (Cambridge, Ont, Canada: Good Books, 1974), 69. M. Mark Stolárik, "The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia, 1914–1918," *Slovak Studies*, Vol. 8, *Historica* 5 (1968), 7–82. 7–82. Gregory C. Ference, "Slovak Immigration to the United States in Light of American, Czech, and Slovak History," *Nebraska History*, 74 (Fall/Winter 1993), 130–135.

the direction of the Slovaks became more limited, however, as their efforts became subsumed by the larger Czech organizations, which attempted to keep Slovak ideals for independent identity and political autonomy at arm's length. Consequently, the Slovak-Americans experienced ample frustration when their influence dissipated shortly after the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic. In response to this frustration, the more ardent Slovak-American nationalists replanted their fight over the Slovak Question against the newly formed government in Prague. They attempted to mobilize their fellow Slovaks in America to the cause of Slovak autonomy, to build working relationships with Slovak nationalists in the homeland, and to place external pressure on Prague through propaganda and by petitioning for international support.

As an immigrant community, these Slovak national activists in America were not exiles in the true sense of the term. Unlike true political exiles, many of them had no designs to return to the homeland on a permanent basis, content with their lives in the United States. Under pressures of assimilation, Slovaks in America also increasingly identified as Americans, adopting, like many other immigrants, a 'hyphenate' identity as Slovak-Americans. This sentiment became even more prevalent as Slovaks born and raised in America took over their numbers.<sup>2</sup> Slovak-American national activists nonetheless still saw themselves as ethnically Slovak, which they felt granted them rights to an active voice in the direction of their ethnic homeland. When Budapest and then Prague shut them out from such involvement, Slovak-American nationalists embraced the mentality and approach of exiles from the national politics of Slovakia, fighting from abroad to advance Slovak aspirations for political and cultural autonomy. They likewise positioned themselves as surrogates for true political exiles, starting with the First World War. In this respect, the Slovak-Americans were 'imagined exiles,' playing the role of an exiled community, even as they had little inclination to return and live in the conditions they hoped to bring about in their ethnic homeland. Although Slovak-American national activists failed in their goal of Slovak political autonomy during the First Czechoslovak Republic, their efforts nonetheless facilitated the adoption of a transatlantic national activism and organization among the Slovaks and contributed to the embrace of democracy as a guiding feature of Slovak national identity.

Having left the confines of Hungary after moving to the United States, Slovak-American nationalists embraced their migratory experience as a form of national liberation, one that freed them from the shackles of Magyarization and allowed them to develop a Slovak national culture and politics without restraint. In turn, they embraced this experience as an opportunity to bring

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<sup>2</sup> For more on Slovak-American identity formation, see: June Granatir Alexander, *Ethnic Pride, American Patriotism: Slovaks and Other New Immigrants in the Interwar Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

national liberation back to the homeland through financial and moral support, but also by placing eternal pressure on the Hungarian government through the international exposure of the impact of Magyarization on Slovak national development. Because moving to America was central to their sense of liberation as a nation, these Slovak nationalists openly embraced it as a part of their national conception. They developed a hyphenate identity as Slovak-Americans, in which they conceptualized themselves as culturally and ethnically Slovak, but as civically American in their embrace of American styled democratic statehood and citizenry. This sense of dual identity became a defining point for what they saw as the liberation of the Slovak nation. Many Slovak-Americans believed that by transferring American civic values back to Slovakia, they could bring the same national liberation and flourishing of national culture that they themselves had experienced in the United States.

Slovak national activism in the United States included public protests against Magyar officials visiting America, diverse propaganda efforts, and the building of political connections with national leaders in the homeland. These activities were rooted locally in Slovak schools and churches, but became linked nationally through Slovak fraternal organizations and press outlets. The central organization for Slovak national activism became the Slovak League of America (SLA), founded in May 1907 by Slovak-American leaders to unify the disparate Slovak groups in the United States behind common political action. The SLA's main objectives were to develop the cultural and political life of the Slovaks in America as a means of supporting the cultural and political life of the Slovaks in the homeland and to fight for Slovak national self-determination.<sup>3</sup>

Before the outbreak of World War I, Slovak national organizations actively worked to inform about the Slovaks and to protest Magyarization. For example, in 1902 Slovak activists petitioned American government officials to prevent a tour of a memorial Hungarian flag and then later attempted to prevent the building of a monument to Louis Kossuth in Cleveland, Ohio. Whenever Hungarian officials visited the United States, such as Albert Apponyi in 1904 and 1911 and Mihaly

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<sup>3</sup> Konštantín Čulen, *History of Slovaks in America*, Daniel C. Nečas, trans. (St. Paul, MN: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society, 2007). Jan Pankuch, *History of the Slovaks of Cleveland and Lakewood*, Rasto Gallo, trans. (Cleveland: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society & Western Reserve Historical Society, 2001), 29–38. Stolárik, “Role,” 7–82. Francis Hrušovský, “American Democracy and Slovak Life,” in *Sixty Years of the Slovak League of America*, Joseph Paučo, ed. (Middletown, PA: Slovak League of America, 1967), 9–25. Stephanie O. Hušek, “Slovak American Fraternal, Cultural, and Civic Organizations to 1914,” in *Slovaks in America: A Bicentennial Study*, Joseph C. Krajsa, ed. (Middletown: Slovak League of America, 1978), 23–38. Joseph A. Mikuš “The Slovak League of America: A Historical Survey,” in *Slovaks*, Krajsa, ed., 39–56. R. Vladimír Baumgarten & Joseph Stefka, *The National Slovak Society: 100 Year History, 1890–1990* (Pittsburgh: National Slovak Society, 1990), 17–33. Constantine Čulen, “American Slovaks and Slovak Statehood,” *Slovakia*, 1, 1 (May 1951), 18–22. Konštantín Čulen, “Beginnings of the Slovak League in America” in *Sixty Years*, Paučo, ed., 26–36.

Karolyi twice in 1914, Slovak-Americans organized widespread protests in the press and publically. During Apponyi's first visit, the Slovak-Americans produced a "Memorial Pamphlet" to expose many negative examples of Magyarization, such as the suppressing of Slovak language education, a lack of press freedom, and a lack of appropriate Slovak representation in the Hungarian parliament. Later publications of a similar vein included transcripts of the trial proceedings of Slovak nationalists in Hungary, as well as the history of the Slovaks designed to expose Hungarian ill-treatment.<sup>4</sup>

Next to these efforts, Slovak-Americans also maintained ample connections with the homeland in support of Slovak national development. The Slovak-American press played a key role in bringing the ideas of Slovak self-assertion into Hungary. The Slovak-Americans also tried to build cultural proxies to banned organizations, such as an American branch of the Slovak Cultural Institute, the *Matica Slovenska*, and the Sokol gymnastic organizations. They also built relationships with Slovak nationalist leaders. Slovak-American money helped fund the political careers of Slovak politicians, such as Milan Hodža, Pavel Blaho, and Andrej Hlinka. Events, such as the arrest of Hlinka in 1906 and the Černova Killings in 1907 likewise spurred much Slovak-American action, including fundraising campaigns to aid the families of the victims in Černova, to support Slovaks facing political trials, and to assist Slovak nationalist politicians and press.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Sending of the Hungarian National Banner to the United States," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Theodore Roosevelt, 1902 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903), 45–48. American Slovak Association of Journalists, *A Political Criminal Trial in Hungary in the Year of Our Lord 1906: The Political Criminal Trial against the Rev. Father Andrew Hlinka; The Rev. Father Joseph Tomik; Dr. Šrobár, and Others in Ruzomberk, Liptov Comitát, Hungary* (New York: American Slovak Association of Journalists, 1906). Thomas Čapek, *The Slovaks of Hungary: Slavs and Pan Slavism* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1906). *The Osuský, Stefan Papers (ŠO Papers)*, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center (IHRC), University of Minnesota, B1, F8. Pankuch, *History*, 31–33, 42–57, 87–91, 96–101. Čulen, *History*, 237–258, 263–270, 334–366. Stolárik, "Role," 7–82. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 31, 39–46. Victor S. Mamatey, "The Slovaks and Carpatho-Ruthenians" in *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies*, Joseph P. O'Grady, ed. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 230–234.

<sup>5</sup> "Americkí Slováci a vyklad programu Slovenskej Národnej Strany," in *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti*, Vol 1, Ján Beňko, et al., eds (Národné literárne centrum: Dom slovenskej literatúry, 1998), 406–407. Čulen, *History*, 219–236, 272–300, 313–319. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National Slovak Society*, 35–65. Pankuch, *History*, 62–66, 86. Mikuš, "Slovak League," p 40. Hrušovský, "American," 9–25. Stolárik, "Role," 13–21. Joseph Paučo, "Slovaks Abroad and Their Relationship with Slovakia," *Slovakia in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, Joseph M. Kirschbaum, ed., (Toronto: Slovak World Congress, 1973), 333–342. Joseph Paučo, "Furdek and Hlinka," *Furdek*, 16 (1977), 31–35. "Stanislaus Morávek to Seton-Watson" (Doc 43), in *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks: Documents, 1906–1951*, vol. 1, Jan Rychlík, Thomas D. Marzik, & Miroslav Bielík, eds. (Prague: Ústav T. G. Masaryka; Martin, Slovakia: Matica Slovenská, 1995).

As a result, when World War I broke out on 28 July 1914, the Slovak-Americans already had well-established infrastructures organizing in favor of Slovak self-determination and autonomy in Hungary, and they reacted quickly to exploit the war to advance their goals. The Slovak League's immediate response was a memorandum, sent to the United States and the Entente governments, which declared the League's support for American activism abroad in the name of spreading American democracy to oppressed nations. It then asserted that the goal of the Slovaks was to reach their national potential, as a people that were "modest, good natured, peace-loving, also naturally talented and capable of culture and development". Condemning Magyarization, the document ultimately called for the world powers to grant the Slovaks self-determination and equal status as a world nation. The SLA also pursued a range of other actions. For example, it condemned the Slovak leader Matúš Dula for supporting the Hungarian dynasty and the war. It then called on Slovaks in the United States to ignore calls for reservists to return home to join the war. The League also established a fund for the families of the Slovak war dead and regularly wrote to the U.S. Departments of State and Justice complaining about Austro-Hungarian propaganda in the United States. In one such a letter, SLA President, Albert Mamatey, compared World War I to the American Revolution, calling for a world where "no race shall be allowed to tyrannize over another race, nor a privileged, aristocratic class to dominate and oppress the people" in the name of "liberty and government of the people, by the people, and for the people".<sup>6</sup>

With this activity ongoing, Thomas Masaryk reached out to these Slovak-American organizations to embrace his conception of a united Czechoslovak revolution. While Masaryk received support from some Slovak-Americans, such as the 'Czechophile' publisher Milan Getting, there remained strict divisions among the Slovak-Americans over the relationship of the Slovaks to the Czechs. Most Slovak-American leaders, having established their own movement and organizations, chose to maintain an independent course from the Czechs in the early stages of the war. Getting did convince SLA leaders to attend some Czech-American meetings as observers, but the League remained tentative in its response and at its eighth Congress in February 1915, it formally rejected unity with the Czechs. The primary reason for this approach was a broad desire for the Slovak-Americans to bide their time until more clarity arose concerning the

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<sup>6</sup> Slovak League of America, *Memorandum of the Slovak League of America: Issued in the Name of the American Slovaks, Citizens and Residents of the United States, on behalf of the Slovaks of Hungary* (Slovak League of America, 1914). Albert Mamatey, *The Situation in Austria-Hungary* (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1915). Pankuch, *History*, 113–114. Stolárik, "Role," 22–31. Karol Sidor, "The Slovak League of America and the Slovak Nation's Struggle for Autonomy" *Slovakia*, 17, 40 (1967), 29–62. Gregory Ference, *Sixteen Months of Indecision: Slovak American Viewpoints toward Compatriots and the Homeland from 1914 to 1915 as viewed by the Slovak Language Press in Pennsylvania* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), 119–121, 198–139.

outcome of the war, with the idea of embracing an approach that would assure the Slovaks the greatest degree of national freedom. SLA leaders remained concerned about other nationalities trying to claim ownership of the Slovaks, including the Czechs. Catholic nationalist, publisher Jozef Hušek firmly expressed this fear on one occasion, declaring, "The Magyars say we are Magyars, the Czechs that we are Czechs. But we are Slovaks!" The Slovak League therefore considered multiple options, including remaining with Hungary, joining the Czechs, complete independence, or even joining the Poles or Russians, based on which outcome would assure the greatest amount of Slovak freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Czech leaders recognized this independent action, and it caused Masaryk some concern. Masaryk lacked a mandate from the Czechs and Slovaks within Austria-Hungary, cut off from them due to the war. The success of his movement, therefore, depended on support from internationally based Slovaks and Czechs to serve as proxies to Czechs and Slovaks in the homeland. As the largest population of overseas Slovaks, Masaryk needed the Slovak-Americans as evidence of popular Slovak support for a common Czech and Slovak state. This task was not easy for Masaryk. Masaryk was largely unknown to the Slovak-Americans at the time and the desire of the Slovak-American leadership for independent action remained firm. Mamatey, for example, openly complained that the Czechs expected the Slovaks simply to fall in line behind Czech leadership. Mamatey felt the Slovaks were a unique nation, and he interpreted the idea that the Slovaks were a subset of the Czech nation as comparable to the ideas behind Magyarization. In a letter to Czech leaders in Paris, Mamatey thus expressed his willingness to take steps forward in common action, but he firmly demanded that the Czechs recognize the Slovaks as equals and copartners, and that they assure the Slovaks local autonomy in any future state.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this resistance, the efforts of certain Slovak-Americans, such as Matthew Jankola and Štefan Osuský, encouraged the SLA to change its position. The result was the Cleveland Agreement of 25 October 1915, which declared that the Slovak League and the Czech-American Bohemian National Alliance (BNA) would pursue joint action for Czech and Slovak independence. In order to reach this compromise, the Czechs had to appease Slovak fears and make clear that they based this cooperation on recognition of cultural independence of the two nations and on political autonomy for the Slovaks as well. The agreement

<sup>7</sup> "Osuský Memoirs," *Štefan Osuský Papers (ŠO Papers)*, B49, F10, Hoover Institution Archives (HIA). Stolárik, "Role," 22–31. Sidor, "Slovak League," 29–38. Ference, *Sixteen*, 140–177. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 74–75. Pankuch, *History*, 108–113, 131–136. Mikuš, "Slovak League," 40–42. Jozef Paučo, *Slovenskí Priekopníci v Amerike* (Cleveland: Prvá Katolícka Slovenská Jednota, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Karel Čapek, *President Masaryk Tells his Story* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 190–194. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 61. "Mamatey to Tehlár, 10 IV 1915," & "Mamatey to Osuský, 10 IV 1915," *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA. "Mamatey to Osuský, 18 XI 1915," *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA. Pankuch, *History*, 106–107. Stolárik, "Role," 22–31.

thus asserted that any future state would be a democratic confederation “with complete national autonomy for Slovakia,” including its own parliament, state government, finances, and public administration, as well as “full cultural freedom, particularly the right to use the Slovak language as the official language of the state”. The Cleveland Agreement served as the first formal declaration of common action between the Slovaks and Czechs during the war, one based on cooperation but also on decentralization. Masaryk approved of the completion of this document.<sup>9</sup>

Common organization between the two peoples in America was, nevertheless, slow to get moving, and in the early stages amounted predominantly to joint propaganda efforts. Conflicts also remained in the relationship between Masaryk’s organization and the Slovak-Americans. Masaryk saw the Slovak-Americans simply as a supportive group to himself and his inner circle. Under the terms of the Cleveland Agreement, however, the leaders of the Slovak League saw themselves as equal partners, who should have a primary say in the decision making regarding the Slovaks and the right to back out at any point if the organization did not recognize their interests. Mamatey regularly warned Masaryk about this mindset and advised the Czech leader to be careful about calling the Slovaks ‘Czechs’ or otherwise ignoring them. Masaryk did not very well heed this advice. For instance, when the SLA sent Osuský and Gustav Košík to Europe to push its objectives, Masaryk expressed his displeasure publicly, chastising that the Slovak League for working by its own designs. Mamatey and the other Slovak leaders became irate over this response and Mamatey made a public statement expressing his bafflement. Mamatey and Lutheran nationalist Jan Pankuch likewise both criticized Edward Beneš and the National Council in Paris for sowing bitter feelings with several articles in the Czech-American press that condescendingly declared that the Slovak language was simply a Czech dialect. When Masaryk released a statement in November 1915 that called for freedom of all nationalities in Austria-Hungary, and ignored the Slovaks in the document, it only exacerbated this annoyance. In June 1916, the SLA addressed the matter in a memorandum, approving of open and friendly relations with the Czechs, but reasserting its demand for a strict adherence of the terms of the Cleveland Agreement.

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<sup>9</sup> “Clevelandská Dohoda” in *Dokumenty*, 444–447. “Mamatey to Osuský, 18 XI 1915,” *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA. “Osuský Memoirs,” *ŠO Papers*, B 49, F:1, 2 & 10, HIA. Štefan Osuský, “How Czecho-Slovakia was Born,” *Slovakia*, Kirschbaum, ed., 81–93. Štefan Osuský, “Moje Poslanie,” in Slavomír Michálek, *Diplomat Štefan Osuský: 1889–1973* (Bratislava: Veda, 1999), Appendix, 219–226. “Interview with Dr. Štefan Osuský, 5 IV 1967,” Appendix III, in Stolárik, “Role,” 57–66. “Daxner & Mamatey to Osuský, 20 X 1915,” *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA. “Za českú a slovenskú samostatnosť,” *ŠO Papers*, B91, F17, HIA. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, “The Cleveland and Pittsburgh Documents,” *Slovakia*, 36, 66 & 67 (1998), 81–97. Stolárik, “Role,” 22–31. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 29–38. Pankuch, *History*, 108–113. Peter P. Hletko, “The Slovaks and the Pittsburgh Pact,” *Slovakia* 18, 41 (1968), 5–54. Ference, *Sixteen*, 178–187. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42.

The Slovak League's ability to assert a voice in the forming of the state was weakened, however, when its two representatives effectively detached themselves from the League upon arriving in Europe. This result limited the SLA to its activities and organizations in the United States and allowed Masaryk to consolidate the image in western capitals that he and his organization served as the primary representative of the Slovaks overseas. The Slovak-Americans were never able to overcome this image, which forced them to remain linked to the National Council in order to maintain some influence. Slovak-American coordination with the Czechs thus held together. According to Pankuch, "the Slovaks decided not to break the agreement and often closed their eyes to the insults, in order not to harm the main goal – the revolution". As the Czechoslovak National Council began to have more and more success, Slovak-American opinion became more favorable toward unity with the Czechs. The Allied letter to Woodrow Wilson in January 1917 that called for the liberation of Central European nationalities served as the watershed moment for consolidating Slovaks-American support for the Czechoslovak revolutionary organization, even though Slovak-American nationalists remained bothered by the use of the term 'Czechoslovakia' in the message. By early 1917, the SLA thus began openly supporting the Czechoslovak National Council.<sup>10</sup>

Masaryk likewise recognized that he needed the Slovak-Americans, for manpower and financial aid and to help gain the support of the United States government. The National Council thus attempted to appease the Slovaks in America with several articles praising the Slovaks. Their primary effort, however, was to send Milan Štefánik to the United States in June 1917 to rally the Czech- and Slovak-Americans, fundraise, and recruit volunteers for the Czechoslovak Legions. As a Slovak himself, Štefánik eased Slovak-Americans concerns of Czech domination. He also convinced Slovak Catholics that Czech leaders would respect religious freedom. The Slovak-Americans responded with a range of fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts.<sup>11</sup> The SLA and the BNA

<sup>10</sup> "Mamatey to Osuský, 12 I 1916," "Mamatey to Osuský, 4 II 1916," "Mamatey to Osuský, 1 IV 1916," "Mamatey to Osuský, Date Unkn," "SLA to Osuský, 5 IV 1916," "Mamatey to Osuský, 10 IV 1915," "Mamatey to Osuský, 12 V 1916," & "SLA Fundraising Letter, 1916," *ŠO Papers*, B28, F26, HIA. "Getting to Osuský, 27 III 1916," *ŠO Papers*, B28, F34, HIA. "Osuský responds to Vnuk," *ŠO Papers*, B49, F2, HIA. "Výročie tragickej smrti generála Štefánika," *ŠO Papers*, B49, F3, HIA. Osuský, "How Czecho-Slovakia was Born," 84. "Osuský Memoirs," *ŠO Papers*, B49, F1, 4, 10, HIA. "Osuský memoirs," *ŠO Papers*, IHRC, B1, F8. Osuský, "Moje Poslanie". Michálek, *Diplomat*, 30–34. Pankuch, *History*, 119–120, 131. Stolárik, "Role," 22–41. Sidor, "Slovak League," 29–38. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 76–77.

<sup>11</sup> "Mobilyačná vyhláška Milana Ratislava Štefánika v Spojených Štátoch Amerických" in *Dokumenty*, 487–461. "The Ambassador to Italy (Page) to SoS," in *FRUS, 1918, World War I Supplement 1, V1* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 800–801. Imrich Mažár, *A History of the Binghamton Slovaks: Over a period of Forty Years, 1879–1919*, Wilhelmina Mažár Satina, ed. Thomas Janacek, trans. (Phoenix: Via Press, 2003), 203–217, 298–299. Victor



also jointly founded the Slav Press Bureau to serve as a center for propaganda against Austria-Hungary. This organization played a key role in convincing the American press to support the breakup of Austria-Hungary and helped encourage dual resolutions in each house of Congress in May of 1917 that called for creation of an independent Czech-Slovak state. The SLA also wrote many letters to Wilson and other American officials to garner their support.<sup>12</sup>

In order to convince American officials, who continued to oppose the breakup of Austria-Hungary until late into the war, Masaryk realized he needed to visit the United States to make his case personally. Sensing that active participation of the Czech- and Slovak-American communities would help convince Wilson of the Czech and Slovak desire for independence and of their understanding of democratic statehood, Masaryk made the consolidation of Czech- and Slovak-American support his first priority when he arrived to America in April 1918. The Slovak Question lingered, however. When Masaryk gave a speech to Czechs and Slovaks in Chicago on 5 May 1918 and failed to mention the Slovaks, Hušek and other autonomists led a firestorm of complaint. Hušek called for a full revoking of support for Masaryk: "The Struggle for a greater Czechia is not worth one cent, nor one drop of Slovak blood...we want to know whether we are fighting for a Greater Czechia or for a free, self-governing Slovakia and for a free, self-governing Czechia". Hušek then met with Mamatey and threatened that either the Czechoslovak National Council agreed to accept Slovak autonomy, or he would lead a full-fledged campaign against the Czechoslovak movement. This harsh criticism, and the possible embarrassment and questioning from the Allied leaders that it might cause, ultimately forced Masaryk to face the Slovak Question head on.

Consequently, it led to the creation of the most important document relating to Slovak nationalism for the next 20 years: the Pittsburgh Agreement. When Masaryk arrived in Pittsburgh after leaving Chicago, he attempted to amend his mistake. He gave a speech that hailed his own Slovak heritage and he promised equal and separately recognized Slovak participation in the new state. This

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S. Mamatey, "The United States and Czechoslovak Independence," in *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918–1988* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 69–70. Pankuch, *History*, 121–134. Stolárik, "Role," 32–41. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 79–81. Sidor, "Slovak League," 39–46.

<sup>12</sup> "Unsigned Letter to Secretary of State (Lansing), 18 IX 1917," *SLA Cabinet, F:Minutes of the Meeting Formulating the Pittsburgh Pact*, Slovak Institute (SI), Cleveland, Oh. Paul Jamarik, *Hungary and the Future Peace Terms* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1917). "Mamatey to Barry D. Smith, 30 X 1919," *Person File: Albert Mamatey*, SI. Albert Mamatey, *The Czecho-Slovaks: Who are They?* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1919). "Bohemian (Czech) National Alliance in America," *SLA Cab, F:11th Congress of the Slovak League of America*, SI. 55 *Congressional Record* 2856 (1917), Friday, 25 V 1917. Pankuch, *History*, 121–141. Stolárik, "Role," 32–41. Victor S. Mamatey, *Building Czechoslovakia in America: 1914–1918* (Washington D.C.: SVU Publications, 1976). Mamatey, "Slovaks," 224–249. Otakar Odložilík, "The Czechs" in *Immigrants'*, O'Grady, Ed., 204–223.

speech convinced the American Slovaks in attendance. Nevertheless, looking for written insurance, SLA officials provided Masaryk a copy of the Cleveland Agreement and asked for formal recognition of the document by the National Council. Masaryk accepted the request, although he rewrote the text in a more concise and considerably vaguer form. This new Pittsburgh Agreement once again declared common action between the Czechs and Slovaks in the formation of a democratic republic. Forced by Slovak-American nationalists, the document again made a clear assertion for Slovak autonomy, under the terms that the Slovaks would have their “own administration, own parliament, and own courts,” albeit with a closing line that stated that the republic’s organization would “be left to the liberated Czechs and Slovaks and to their duly elected representatives”. Although there remained divisions over the document, Slovak- and Czech-American representatives signed it on 31 May 1918. When Masaryk formally became president on 14 November 1918, Hušek and a group of Slovak-American leaders met with him in Washington on that same day. There, Masaryk formally signed the agreement as the official head of the Czechoslovak state. In the short term, the agreement appeased the Slovak-Americans, who consolidated their support around the budding state. In their view, the agreement set in stone a common basis for cooperation predicated on equality and autonomy for the Slovaks. While Masaryk used the agreement as a legitimating device in his diplomatic efforts, it later came back to haunt Prague as a symbol of Slovak nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately, Washington recognized the Czechoslovak National Council as the legitimate ruling body of the Czechs and Slovaks on 13 September 1918 and the National Council released the formal Declaration of Independence for Czechoslovakia on 18 October 1918. The precise degree of influence the Czech- and Slovak-Americans had on Wilson’s sentiment toward Czechoslovakia is unknown. Nevertheless, Masaryk cited the support they gained in Congress and elsewhere as critical for his diplomatic efforts. Charles Pergler, the first Czechoslovak Minister to the United States, also highlighted how Czech- and Slovak-American supplied necessary funds and organization, while linking the movement to American values of democratic statehood. American journalist Elmer Davis, who followed immigrant activities during the war, believed likewise. Just about all scholars of Slovak- and Czech-Americans also uphold this view.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Pittsburgská Dohoda” in *Dokumenty*, 484–487. Pankuch, *History*, 145–150. “Masaryk to Marmatey, 22 IX 1918,” *SLA Cab, F:11th Congress*, SI. Stolárik, “Role,” 32–54. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 39–46. Hletko, “Slovaks,” 5–54. Kirschbaum, “Cleveland,” 81–97. Mažár, *History*, 203–217. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81–83.

<sup>14</sup> “United States Recognizes the Czechoslovak National Council,” & “Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation,” in *The Birth of Czechoslovakia*, Cestmir Jesina, ed. (Washington D.C.: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1968), 74, 100. Tamaš G. Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914–1918*, Henry Steed, Trans. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927), 211. Čapek, *President*, 281–282. Charles Pergler, *America in the Struggle for*

The formal organization of the state began with as much trust and optimism from a transatlantic perspective as the Czechoslovak state would ever see, although it proved a mix of success and regret for the Slovak-Americans. While the Slovaks ultimately achieved separation from Hungary, they became dependent on Masaryk and his organization in order to achieve even their minimum goals and rule over Slovakia became consolidated by the National Council. While the Slovak-Americans were able to pressure Masaryk into symbolically accepting their goals for Slovak autonomy, their influence only extended to the points where he needed their assistance. Masaryk likewise played them effectively, using the Pittsburgh Agreement to mollify the Slovak-American nationalists to assure that they did not hinder his plans. As a result, the Slovak-Americans found themselves on the margins during the building of the state.

The establishment of the Czechoslovak state following the war once again stirred up the Slovak Question. Slovak nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic had full expectations of a federal relationship that would recognize Slovak cultural uniqueness and grant the Slovaks civic equality with autonomy over domestic affairs under the terms of the Pittsburgh Agreement. Nevertheless, Czech nationalist leaders, supported by some Slovak 'centralists', wanted a strongly centralized state instead, justified by arguments of the commonality of the two peoples, the threat of Hungarian and German irredentism, and the believed necessity of centralized Czech oversight over Slovakia as means of bringing modernization to the Slovaks.

In this formulation, Czech centralists and their Slovak supporters tossed aside the Pittsburgh Agreement. Masaryk justified this decision by dismissing the Slovak-Americans who had pressured it upon him. He claimed that the agreement "was concluded in order to appease a small Slovak faction which was dreaming of God knows what sort of independence for Slovakia". He likewise denied the authority of the transatlantic component the revolution: "I signed the Convention unhesitatingly as a local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks upon the policy they were prepared to advocate. The signatories were mainly American citizens". Meanwhile, supporters of centralism defined all support for autonomy and the Pittsburgh Agreement as either ignorant or treasonous. Czech and Slovak centralists then repeated these arguments ad hominem to try to discredit supporters of Slovak autonomy in Slovakia and abroad. This mentality did not dissuade Slovak nationalists. They fully embraced the Slovak-Americans as legitimate representatives of the Slovak people. The fact that Masaryk had written and signed the Pittsburgh Agreement emphasized its

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*Czechoslovak Independence* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1926). Elmer Davis, "America's contribution to Central Europe," *The New Europe*, 9, 112, (Dec 1918), 177–180. Mamatey, "Slovaks," 224–249. Odlozilik, "Czechs," 204–223. Joseph Bouša, "Wilson and T.G. Masaryk," *Slovakia*, 10, 6 (March–April 1960), 29–36.

legitimacy in their view, and exacerbated a sense of Czech duplicity among them. With their ultimate goal of obtaining domestic autonomy within the state, the Pittsburgh Agreement, therefore, became the primary symbol of the continued Slovak fight for self-determination.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, the Slovak-American autonomists found themselves once again becoming outsiders challenging the state authority over Slovakia, and the Slovak Question became in part about the right of the Slovak-Americans to influence the homeland. For the Czechs and Slovak centralists, the Slovak-Americans were unquestionably *ethnic* Slovaks. In terms of *citizenship and residency*, however, they placed them as undoubtedly American, and thus categorized the Slovak-Americans as, first and foremost, United States citizens whose influence should not extend beyond United States borders. The Slovak-American nationalists, supported by their allies in Slovakia, alternatively perceived themselves as true Slovaks, who by fate had simply ended up as a colony in America. They believed that the nation as an ethnic and cultural foundation transcended the state, which, accordingly, allowed them equal right to speak about the fate of the Slovak homeland. Moreover, they saw their American identity as an asset that only enhanced this perceived right. It was through immigration to America that they had helped preserve Slovak national identity, helped found the Czechoslovak state, and their experience in American democracy provided them something they felt would prove beneficial for their brethren in the homeland. No less, their experience in America had proven, in their own view, that the Slovaks could very much develop independently and did not need the strict oversight of the Czechs. As such, the Slovak-American activists gradually adopted a role as an 'exiled' national voice against Prague centralism.

The exclusion of the Slovak-American voice was, however, not immediate. Slovak-American leaders maintained contact with political leaders in Czechoslovakia during the state's foundation, and the SLA sent a delegation to Czechoslovakia in March 1919, wanting a first-hand view of the building of the new republic. Most of the delegates were bothered to learn during their visit that few in Slovakia knew about the Pittsburgh Agreement. Hušek in turn criticized a perceived "arrogance and domineering attitude" among the Czech and Slovak centralists, whom he contrasted with Slovak Catholic nationalist leader Andrej Hlinka: "Hlinka alone gave me a clear-cut statement – he lived and dies for the American

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<sup>15</sup> Masaryk, *Making*, 21, 208–211, 338. Thomas G. Masaryk, *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint*, New Edition, W. Preston Warren & William B. Weist, eds (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), 127–139, 147–148. "Interview," in Stolárik, "Role," 57–66. "Šrobár to Mamatey, X 1919," in Vavro Šrobár, *Oslobodené Slovensko: Pamäti z Rokov 1918–1920*, 2 (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2004), 190–197. "A Communication to Senator Stone," in Pergler, *America*, 107–111. B.P. Matocha, "Work of the Czechoslovaks in America" *Current History*, 10, 1, 2 (May 1919), 309–312. Charles Pergler, "The Right of Czechoslovakia to Independence," *Current History*, 14, 6 (Sep 1921), 942–943. "Osuský Memoirs," *ŠO Papers*, B49, F1, H1A.

pact... He stands for autonomy because he sees in it the assurance of a better future for his nation, and a guarantee of the free growth of its national culture and economy, as well as a barrier to Czech materialism and atheism". Slovak-American nationalists saw in Hlinka a figure who represented their own desires – their sense of Slovak independent identity and their hope for Slovak autonomy. Although they remained open to Prague, they made clear this openness was dependent on at least a gradual application of Slovak self-rule.

Back in America, the SLA continued to push the Pittsburgh Agreement. The League affirmed in a memorandum to Prague how they had agreed to a common state based on equality and autonomy and remained prepared to stand up against anyone who opposed the principle. In Wilsonian fashion, the memo demanded that Prague assure autonomy in the laws of the state, "because the demand for free self-determination and autonomy rests on eternal, natural and unchangeable laws of humanity". The Slovak autonomists also convinced Czech-American leaders to sign a memorandum that declared support for the full application of the Pittsburgh Agreement. In response, Slovak centralists, notably Minister for Slovakia Vavro Šrobár, attempted to persuade Slovak-American leaders otherwise. Šrobár tried to convince the Slovak League that the new government had applied the terms of the Pittsburgh Agreement in full and that support for autonomy aided efforts by the Czech and Slovak's enemies will ruin the state.<sup>16</sup>

Continuing to hear conflicting reports, Mamatey himself went to Slovakia in the winter of 1919–1920. Upon arrival, he presented the original draft of the Pittsburgh Agreement to Slovak leaders, including Hlinka, Šrobár, and Agrarian leader Milan Hodža. Hlinka praised the experience for allowing him to confirm the document's validity and the document served as a galvanizing symbol for Slovak nationalists. Hlinka in turn sent two of his compatriots, Jozef Rudinský and Jozef Kubala, to the United States in October 1919 to collaborate with Slovak-American autonomists. The Slovak League also maintained regular contact with Lutheran nationalists in Slovakia. Šrobár and Hodža, however, both rejected the agreement. The Slovak centralists then produced a letter that thanked the Slovak-Americans for their efforts, but argued that Slovakia remained under constant threat from

<sup>16</sup> The delegation to Slovakia included: J. Hušek, M. Francisci, Edo Kovach, M. Getting, J. Matloch, Pavol Šiška & Ignac Gessay. "Mamatey to Michael Bosak, 3 IX 1919," *PF: Mamatey*, SI. "Memorandum from SLA Central Committee, 24 X 1919" & "Memorandum from the Czecho-Slovak National Council of America, 7 XI 1919," in *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburgskej Dohody do ústavy Č.-S. Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922), 3–4. "Šiška and Getting to Mamatey, 13 III 1919," *SLA Cab, F: Minutes of the Meeting Formulating the Pittsburgh Pact*, SI. "Šrobár to Mamatey," & "Šrobár to Slovak-Americans, 15 IV 1919," in Šrobár, *Oslobodené*, V2, 190–198. Šrobár, *Oslobodené*, 172–189. Vavro Šrobár, *Z Môjho Života* (Prague: Fr. Borový, 1946), 322–323. Joseph Paučo, "American Slovaks and the Beginnings of Czecho-Slovakia," *Slovakia*, 16, 39 (1966), 63–75.

Hungary and “could neither build up nor maintain its autonomy without Czech help,” due to a lack of competent administrators. It then claimed that the new constitution would make good on the Pittsburgh Agreement and that it would protect the Slovaks, supported by “the brotherly feeling of the Czech Nation”. In response, the League refused to renounce the Pittsburgh Agreement, although it again expressed willingness to accept its gradual implementation.<sup>17</sup>

When this implementation did not occur, the Slovak League’s sentiment became more strident. Prague’s agents in America received much consternation from Slovak-Americans about the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution when it did not directly address the Pittsburgh Agreement. In response, Prague then sent Šrobár, its most powerful supporter, to America in 1923. While Šrobár attempted to unify the Slovak-Americans behind centralism, his visit had the opposite effect of galvanizing the Slovak-American autonomists. The Slovak League and other autonomist organizations boycotted Šrobár’s speeches. They criticized that Šrobár had, “under the false pretense of referring on the progress in Slovakia since the revolution, quite openly, as the confidant of the C.S. Government, turned political somersaults; stigmatized, without reasons whatever, the Slovak League of America with the stamp of ‘treason’ towards, and enmity to the C.S. Republic”. Unable to convert the Slovak-American autonomists, the Czech and Slovak centralists responded by trying to discredit them as a parochial, fringe minority ignorant of Czechoslovak affairs, when not also accusing them of working directly with Czechoslovakia’s adversaries in Vienna, Budapest, and Warsaw.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Club of Slovak Deputies to the SLA, 6 II 1920,” & “SLA Response to the Slovak Club, V 1920,” in *Memorandum*, 4–5. “Narodná Strana Na Slovensku Obživená na Základe Pittsburghskej Dohody,” & *Velactenej Slov. Líge v Amerike*, 9 VIII 1921,” *PF:Ivan Bielek*, SI. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 46–57. M. Mark Stolárik, “The Slovak League of America and the Canadian League in the Struggle for the Self-determination of the Nation, 1907–1992,” *Slovakia*, 39, 72 & 73 (2007), 7–35. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81–83. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42–46. Paučo, “American,” 63–75.

<sup>18</sup> Pankuch likewise claimed that due to his criticisms of Prague, his publications were banned in Czechoslovakia, and that the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington collaborated with Milan Getting to try and have the paper shut down by undermining its funding. Pankuch, *History*, 151–173, 177–186. “An Appeal of the Slovak League of America to All Political Factors of the Czecho-Slovak Republic,” *PF: Bielek*, SI. “A. S. Ambrose to Seton-Watson” (Doc 126) in *Seton-Watson*, 381–382. Masaryk, *Making*, 21, 41, 208–211, 338, 361. “White House to Frank B. Kellog, 3 II 1928,” *Coolidge Papers*, Series 1, 742. Thomas G. Masaryk, *Masaryk on Thought and Life: Conversations with Karel Čapek*, Reprint edition, M. & R. Weatherall, trans. (New York: Arno Press, 1971). “T.G. Masaryk on the Pittsburgh Agreement” (Doc 30) in *Slovakia: A Political and Constitution History (with Documents)*, Joseph A. Mikuš, ed. (Bratislava: Slovak Academic Press, 1995), 209–210. Edvard Beneš, “Of Czechoslovak Unity” in *We Were and We Shall Be: The Czechoslovak Spirit through the Centuries*, Zdenka and Jan Munzer, eds. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1941), 164–166. Sidor, “Slovak League,” 46–57. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 81–83. Mikuš, “Slovak League,” 42–47. Paučo, “American,” 63–75. Karol Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka, 1864–1926* (Bratislava: Knihotlačiarne Sv. Andreja, 1934), 410–413. Joseph V. Adamec, “The Slovak Catholic Federation: A 65 Year Perspective” in *Slovaks*, Krajsa, ed., 223–232.

This process proved extremely frustrating to Slovak-American autonomists, given their role in the revolution, and a sense of outrage and betrayal took over among them. Fed up with Prague's obfuscation on the Slovak Question, the SLA leaders began protesting openly against Prague centralism and for the immediate implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement, particularly after Ivan Bielek took over as SLA president in 1920. Hušek and Pankuch likewise formed an adjacent organization called the Friends of Slovak Freedom (FSF), designed to unite Slovak Catholic and Lutheran nationalists with a singular goal of addressing the Slovak Question. Slovak-American autonomists remained idealistic in their goal and faithful that American democratic ideals would eventually lead to the full application of Slovak self-determination. Their organizations attempted to unify the Slovaks in America and worked to keep them linked to their Slovak cultural identity. They also raised money to help Slovak social advancement and aid in the fight for autonomy and once again adopted the task of the international exposure and protest of the Slovak-Question.<sup>19</sup>

In doing so, Slovak-American activists pursued political action against the Czechs as they had previously against Hungary. Slovak nationalist organizations in America produced a flurry of pamphlets and informative documents as a means of exposing the Slovak Question and making the case for Slovak autonomy. These publications attempted to distinguish the Slovaks from the Czechs, to expose Prague's failed promises for Slovak autonomy, and to defend against centralist accusations against the Slovak-Americans. The Slovak-American autonomists also attempted to influence various governments to support their cause, most notably their own government in the United States. They wrote numerous letters to American officials, begging them to assure that the values of national self-determination and American democracy were applied in Slovakia. These petitions came in conjunction with similar appeals from the Slovak autonomists in the homeland, such as the Catholic nationalist *Slovenská Ludová Strana's* 1922 Žilina Memorandum.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Pán Mamatey sa vzdáva predsedníctva Slov. Ligy," *PF:Bielek*, SI. "Ot. Švec to Podkriavcy, 3 X 1938," *PF:Adam Podkriavcy*, SI. "SLA to Jakub Vitostak, 30 XI 1923," *The First Catholic Slovak Union of America (FCSU) Records*, F: 1303, IHRC. "Jan Kocur to Michael Senko, 30 XI 1926," *FCSU*, F: 1304, IHRC. "SLA to Arthur Colegrove," *The National Slovak Society (NSS) of the U.S.A Records*, B: 168, F: Slovak League of America (SLA), IHRC. Paučo, "Slovaks Abroad," 333-342. Adamec, "Slovak Catholic," 223-232. Baumgarten & Stefka, *National*, 85-87. Pankuch, *History*, 177-186. Stolárik, "Slovak League," 7-35. Sidor, "Slovak League," 59-62.

<sup>20</sup> These efforts to convince the outside world were, however, unsuccessful. Prague held firm control over the international image of Slovakia and kept most American officials convinced of the necessity of Prague centralism. "Telegram to Ivan Bielek, 29 XI 1934," *NSS*, B:168, F:SLA, IHRC. "Peter Hletko to John Willo, 2 IX 1936," *NSS*, B:168, F:SLA, IHRC. "SLA to Wilson, 18 IX 1920," *PF:Bielek*, SI. "Andrew Sitcher to Harding," 9 III 1921, F#: 860F.01/112, "John Porubsky to Charles Evans Hughes," 31 X 1923, F#: 860F.01/149, "Einstein to SoS, no. 611," 20 II 1924, F#: 860F.01/162, & "Adam Podkriavcy to John Hickerson," 29 III 1937, F#: 860F.01/181, *Records*

The Slovak-Americans also directed many publications toward Prague, hoping to motivate a change in centralist policy. After sending a letter of complaint in 1921, the SLA followed up with a more detailed memorandum in November 1922, which called on Prague to make good on the Pittsburgh Agreement in the name of natural rights and to reward the sacrifices made by Slovak-Americans during the revolution. It emphasized how Masaryk had given the American Slovaks a full understanding that the agreement was binding when he produced and signed it, and they provided a series of letters between the League and various Czechoslovak officials to expose how the former never lived up to their promises made to the Slovak-Americans. The memorandum promised to maintain friendly relations with Prague, should it respect Slovak domestic autonomy. If not, it warned that the Slovak-Americans would take the issue to the “court of public opinion of the civilized world”. The SLA then passed a follow up resolution chastising Prague for manipulating the world into perceiving the Slovaks as weak and dependent on the Czechs. It then provided a list of examples of Czech hostility against the League, including efforts to undermine its finances and attempts to bully and blackmail Slovak-American leaders. The League once again emphasized how it had made every effort to resolve the Slovak Question within the confines of the Czechoslovak Republic, but, asserting that it “fights with fire and sword everyone who is in favor of autonomy of the Slovak nation,” it repeated its warning should Prague continue to treat it with disdain.<sup>21</sup>

Many more publications followed. The Friends of Slovak Freedom, for example, released two protests in 1923. One defended the validity of the Slovak-Americans as representatives of the Slovak people and declared that the Slovak-Americans would not stand down and would use all means to achieve Slovak autonomy. In another protest, the FSF condemned Prague’s press censorship in Slovakia and its targeted smear campaigns against the Slovak-American autonomists. The Slovak Catholic Federation in America likewise sent an “Open Letter” to Masaryk in 1923. The document bemoaned how Masaryk treated the Slovak-Americans as equals during the war, to which they responded with loyalty and support, before he lured them into “an invisible net of imperialistic aspirations, renounced openly what is to every nation and to us ‘ignorant’ Slovaks inviolable, priceless, sacred”. It then appealed for Masaryk “to acknowledge and fulfill what you had promised us, the American Slovaks,” for the sake of Czech and Slovak unity

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*of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia 1910–1944 (DoS CS 1910–44)* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1982). “The conflict between Czechs and Slovaks,” NSS, B:168, F:SLA, IHRC. “Žilina Memorandum” (Doc 102) in *Seton-Watson*, 319–333.

<sup>21</sup> “Aby už raz bolo jasno a aby prestaly rôzne narknutia proti Slov Lige,” *PF:Bielek*, SI. *Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburgskej Dohody do ústavy Č.-S. Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922). “An Appeal,” *PF:Bielek*, SI.



and the security of the state. The Slovak League then produced a pamphlet that challenged the idea that Masaryk personally had liberated the Slovaks. The document defended Slovak-American agency in the revolution, reminding of their contributions during the war and noting how Masaryk treated them as legitimate Slovaks when he needed their support. When Prague continued to ignore these petitions, the SLA upheld its threats to take the issue to the world stage. It appealed to the League of Nations in 1932, asking the world body to recognize the Slovaks as an independent nation, to demand the implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement, and to conduct an investigation of ill treatment against the Slovaks. It likewise continued to petition the United States and other governments for support.<sup>22</sup>

In their political behavior, Slovak-American political activists adopted the mentality and behaviors of an exile organization trying to change the political orientation of its homeland, even though they had fixed residency in America and wanted to effect change in Slovakia that would have no direct impact on their own lives. True political exiles in turn abetted this sentiment, using the Slovak-Americans as proxies to their own exile movements. Thomas Masaryk encouraged Slovak-American involvement in Czecho-Slovak national politics when he needed their support for his own exile organization during World War I, and thus reaped the consequent protests, later dismissing them as outsiders. This result did not stop later Czech and Slovak political exiles from turning once again to the Slovak-Americans when they needed support, whether Edvard Beneš and Milan Hodža during World War II, Catholic nationalists, such as Karol Sidor and Ferdinand Ďurčanský after the war, or non-communist leaders exiled in 1948.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, historians can view these Slovak-American national activists as

<sup>22</sup> The Slovak-Americans produced most of these publications in both Slovak and English and sent them to Washington and Prague. Friends of Slovak Freedom, "Resolution, 28 XI 1923," & "Protest against Censorship and Confiscation of Slovak Publications by the Government in Slovakia," in Pankuch, *History*, 182–186. *Open Letter to Thomas G. Masaryk, President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic* (Slovak Catholic Federation of America: 1923). "Ohlas Amerického Memoranda u Nás," B:SLA, SI. Slovenská Líga v Amerike, *V Záujme Pravdy!* (Pittsburgh: P. Jamriška, 1930). "To the Supreme Council of the League of Nations at Geneva," *SLA Cab, F: Supreme Council of the League of Nations at Geneva, 1932*, SI.

<sup>23</sup> Milan Hauer, "Beginnings of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile 1939–1941," in *Exile in and from Czechoslovakia during the 1930s and 1940s*, Charmian Brinson & Marian Malet, eds. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 103–132. Jan Rychlík, "The Slovak Question and the Resistance Movement During the Second World War," in *Slovakia in History*, Mikuláš Teich, et al, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 193–205. Štefan Polakovič and František Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943–1948)* (Lakewood-Hamilton: Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988). Francis D. Raška, *Fighting Communism from Afar: The Council of Free Czechoslovakia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Prokop Tomek, "The Highs and Lows of Czech and Slovak Émigré Activism," in *Anti-Communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, Ieva Zake, ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 109–126.

“imagined exiles,” having adopted the role and behaviors of an exile organization despite not being exiles conditionally.

Although the Slovak-American efforts to gain Slovak political autonomy were unsuccessful at the time, the process had a clear impact on Slovak national development. Slovak-American efforts to assert an independent Slovak identity played a key role of sabotaging Magyarization before World War I and then Czechoslovakization afterwards. They helped spur the breakup of Austria-Hungary, and produced the Pittsburgh Agreement, the most important symbol of Slovak nationalism in the interwar period. Their activism and coordination with Slovak autonomists in Slovakia likewise strengthened nationalist activities. Slovak nationalist leaders, such as Hlinka, Jozef Tiso, and Emil Stodola openly expressed praise for the Slovak-Americans as genuine Slovaks who continued to fight for Slovak freedom. Many Slovak nationalist leaders, including Hlinka and Tiso, likewise made pilgrimages to the United States in the interwar period to show their respect and thanks to the Slovak-Americans. This process helped enroot among the Slovaks a sense of independent identity and national political assertion, which held firm leading up to the Velvet Divorce between the Czechs and Slovaks in 1993.<sup>24</sup>

The influence of the Slovak-Americans also played a role in encouraging Slovak leaders to embrace democracy a component of Slovak identity. They saw the American Slovaks as having reached full Slovak self-consciousness, emboldened by American liberty, and believed that the United States should serve as the ideal model for a democratic Slovakia. Hlinka, for example, highlighted the sense of natural connection between Slovaks and Americans: “America is a superior nation and a master democratic republic. It has a splendid constitution, which not only guarantees the rights and liberties to the people, but sees that they get them as well... A good Slovak who comes to America makes a good American”. Tiso also openly praised the Slovak-American sense of independence and their pride in their Slovak identity, and interpreted the Slovak-American’s experience as proof of Slovak merit for self-determination. Tiso never gave up his sense of solidarity with the Slovak-Americans, and regularly referenced his visit to America to affirm a desire for a democratic Slovakia. Even when Tiso fell under the influence of Nazi Germany, his government continued to push for a close relationship with America. In these various ways, the Slovak-Americans

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<sup>24</sup> “Hlinka on Scotus Viator” (Doc 109), in *Seton-Watson*, 345–353. Emil Stodola, *Prelom: Spomienky, Úvahy, Štúdie* (Praha: L. Mazáč, 1933), 193–194. “Nový výkrik bratov z Ameriky,” 24 II 1924, Bratislava (No 43), in Jozef Tiso, *Prejavy a Články (1913–1938)*, Miroslav Fabricius & Ladislav Suško, eds. (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2002), 157–159. Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi Druhá Naša Hlava: Život Dr. Jozefa Tisu* (Cleveland: First Catholic Slovak Union, 1947), 182–189. Sidor, *Hlinka*, 510–511, 543–552. “Vianoce Matičnej Delegácie,” *Slovensko*, 2, 5 & 6 (Jan–Feb 1936), 87–88.

continued to influence the Slovak homeland in spite of their permanent foundation in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Michael Cude

**The Imagined Exiles: Slovak-Americans and the Slovak Question  
during the First Czechoslovak Republic**

Summary

Michael Cude's article examines how Slovak immigrants in the United States related to their homeland, particularly on questions of national sovereignty (the 'Slovak Question'). Free from the grip of denationalization efforts in pre-First World War Hungary, Slovak leaders in America established organizations geared toward Slovak national development and political activism, eventually leading to an effort to pressure Hungary from abroad to open up to cultural and political autonomy for the Slovaks. When the Czechoslovak independence movement was organized in exile after the outbreak of the First World War, its leaders attempted to utilize these existing Slovak-American organizations for financial, military, and diplomatic support. This campaign pushed many Slovak-Americans to absorb a sense of direct influence on the affairs of their homeland, and, consequently, it caused them ample frustration when this influence later dissipated in the First Czechoslovak Republic. In response to this frustration, Slovak-American political activists replanted their fight over the Slovak Question against the newly formed government in Prague. Although the Slovak-Americans were not a true exile group, they embraced the mentality and approach of exiles, fighting from abroad to advance Slovak national aspirations. In addition, they regularly served as proxies in support of true political exiles. In this regard, historians can view these Slovak-American national activists as "imagined exiles," adopting the role and behaviors of an exile organization even though they were not exiles conditionally. Although stymied in their goal of Slovak autonomy within the First Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak-American efforts nonetheless facilitated the adoption of a transatlantic Slovak national activism, and contributed to an embrace of democracy as a guiding feature of Slovak national identity.

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<sup>25</sup> "Americký Záznak, 13 IX 1918," in Milan Hodža, *Články, Reči, Študie*, Vol 2 (Prague: Novina, 1930). Palickar, "Monsignor Hlinka—The Man," & "My Interview with Msgr. Hlinka," in Palickar, *Slovakia*, 51–59. Sidor, *Hlinka*, 543–552. Čulen, *Svätoplukovi*, 182–189. "Dr. Joseph Tiso to the Slovaks in America," in Slovak League of America, *Correspondence in Re Slovakia and the Declaration of the Aim and Principles of the Slovak League of America* (Slovak League of America, 1940), pp. 7–16. "Doc No 309, 23 V 1940," & "Doc No 407, 9 VI 1940," *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, 9 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947). Michael Cude, *Transatlantic Perspectives on the Slovak Question, 1914–1948* (PhD Diss., University of Colorado-Boulder, 2013).