

# THE PREREQUISITES OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

*Bobumila Wierer*

Not only was the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) as a state primarily the work of T. G. Masaryk, but its state ideology as well bore essentially the mark of the political and philosophical faith of its first President. Masaryk regarded the Czech Hussite revolution and especially the Reformation of the Bohemian Brethren as humanistic movements, which in the 18th century strongly fertilized the democratic ideas of the West. Although historians had in part severely criticized these theses, the Czech resistance during the First World War adopted Masaryk's philosophy of history as its own. The practical result of this philosophy of history was opposition to the Catholic House of Habsburg, and thus also to the Austrian Monarchy. The Czechoslovak state ideology, which bore the imprint of Masaryk's ideas, psychologically influenced the foreign policy of the new state vis-à-vis Austria and Hungary. Essential for the origin of the Czechoslovak Republic was also Masaryk's successful attempt to unite the Czech historical Staatsrecht program, developed in the 19th century, with the modern national law based on natural law. This construction was necessary in order to justify the union of Slovakia with the Bohemian lands.

Geopolitically considered, the CSR could point only in the Bohemian area to natural boundaries, which already in Moravia were lacking to a small extent, and in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia to a great extent. The composition of the population — the result of centuries of intensive ethnic contest — promised in 1918 a secure state-constituting majority, but not a state consciousness embracing all the nationalities of the state, for the CSR was founded as a national state. And with the national separation of the Slovaks, the majority sustaining the state decreased. On the other hand, the reserve of the Sudeten Germans vis-à-vis the CSR also diminished gradually.

Economically, the Bohemian lands were highly industrialized. As the production capacities were tailored to the economic areas of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, many branches of industry lacked sales opportunities in the relatively smaller CSR. The question of the distribution of state investments among the individual ethnic groups created difficult problems. Still more difficult and questionable became the execution of the Land Reform. Since the socially dissatisfied groups of non-Czech nationality tended to turn to neighbouring countries for support, a successful foreign policy of the CSR required extraordinary ability and skill, for the domestic political problems mentioned above had to be harmonized with the foreign policy plans.