

Abstract

Lusatia in the plans of building the new Czechoslovakia. Great expectations and early disillusionment of the Czech Slavists.

During the Great War, especially in the last year of the war, a number of representatives of Czech political and cultural life reflected upon an idea of a renewal of the Czech state in a historical borders of the former Czech crown lands. The independence of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed on October 28, 1918, by the Czechoslovak National Council in Prague. Only several years before, an independent Czechoslovakia had been a dream of a small number of intellectuals and politicians. The transformation of the dream into reality was a formidable task. While the creation of Czechoslovakia was based on certain historical precedents, it was, nevertheless, a new country carved out of disparate parts of the old Hapsburg Empire.

This study deals with the matter of how Czechoslovak scientists, first of all slavists, intervened in the forming of Czechoslovak political programme. Slavists' role in the communal life of Czechoslovakia has been transforming due to changes that took place in both local and international politics. For a long time before they had no chance to participate at official state politics as there was not a sympathetic for Slavonic cooperation on an international level in Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now in the new state and new Europe, where many other independent slavonic states arose, they had a vision that it is possible to create on the basis of slavonic mutuality the partnership of all slavonic states. And not only to cooperate with existing slavonic states, but support dependent slavonic states' demands for sovereignty or autonomy too.

Simultaneously negotiations about the borders of a new state took place. The final decision was made at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919. Czech delegation was led by the prime minister Karel Kramář and foreign minister Edvard Beneš. They tried hard to persuade the Allies that the Czechoslovakia should have its historic crownland borders. In addition, they persuaded the conference that the boundaries should extend eastwards to include the Slovak Upper Hungary. The Czechs requested the inclusion of Ruthenia to provide a common frontier with Romania too. But the Czech deputies entered the Peace Conference with much bigger territorial requirements, nevertheless they had to withdraw in many cases, for example in the matter of Kladsko, Lusatia or a corridor to the Yugoslavia.

Lusatia had specific role in that political play for territorial claims, as there existed relatively strong Lusatian national movement, demanding autonomy within Germany or incorporation to the new Czechoslovak republic. Lusatian representatives were supported by many of Czechoslovak Slavists, especially by Adolf Černý. As the member of Czechoslovak delegation at the Paris Peace Conference he tried hard, with the aid of two representatives of Lusatian Slavs, to draw diplomats' attention to the problem of Lusatia, but without success. The question of Lusatia was not of vital importance for Czechoslovak diplomats and without transparent support of Czechoslovak state the unofficial Lusatian delegation at the Peace Conference was not able to put the Lusatian demands through the Conference's agenda.

Describing and understanding of that situation and the Czech political representatives' initial ideas of a new territorial layout of the Czechoslovakia as well as their afterwar realization/non-realization is the main task of this paper. It aims to put the process of political talks about Lusatia to the context/comparison with the way how the Czech political representatives enforced the Czech claims to another territories, e.g. Těšínsko, Kladsko, Vitorazsko, to compare arguments, used by Czech statesmen in diplomatical talks about those territories. But it is clearly visible that although politicians used thesis of national self-determination, Slavonic mutuality or territorial integrity of the state, at the end everything was conditioned on the economical and geopolitical requirements of the new state.

After the Second World War there was the same situation – the map of Europe was changing and the representatives of Lusatian Slavs and Czechoslovak supporters of Lusatia expected, that the Lusatian question will be resolved. But it was only a repetition of the same scenario as in the year 1919. It makes possible to compare both historic events and find parallels. It illustrate, that neither scientific arguments or peoples' wishes cannot compete with political aims.