

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

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**Franco-Czechoslovakian relationship during the first Republic  
through *La Revue Française De Prague***

Bachelor Thesis

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## Declaration of Authorship

The author hereby declares that she compiled this bachelor thesis independently, using only the listed literature and resources.

Prague, June 25, 2018

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with the cultural relations between France and Czechoslovakia during the first Republic which can be considered like its golden age. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate how these relations are reflected in the magazine *La Revue française de Prague* (1922-1938) whose publication period corresponds to this golden age but also to the decline of those relations. Indeed the Munich agreement of 1938 impacted them greatly and marked a fracture. As the newsletter of the Federation of French Alliances of Czechoslovakia, the magazine is a mirror of the intellectual relationships between these two countries and a contemporary testimony of the evolution of those in this limited period of time.

**Keywords:** international cultural relations, Czechoslovakia, France, Revue française de Prague

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## -Introduction-

“From an intellectual point of view, Czechoslovakia’s role is to collaborate and help, while maintaining its national character, to the European cultural evolution under the direct influences and inspiration of Latin civilization, expressed by the French genius”<sup>1</sup> Edvard Beneš thus spoke in 1928 to qualify the relation of Czechoslovakia to France. A well-known Francophile, Beneš's remarks represent a certain aspect of the nature of Franco-Czechoslovakian cultural relations during this period. To better understand this relation let’s recall some historical facts.

At the end of the Thirty Years War, which began with the events of 1618 in Bohemia symbolizing the fracture between Catholicism and Protestantism, the political and cultural position of the Czechs has been weakened as well as the status of their language. Czech statehood has been then harshly impacted before being overrun by Habsburg’s dynasty which took advantage of that and grew from it. The country flooded by emigration becomes subject to germanization. With the revolution of 1848 a national revival starts to take shape. At this period France represented an inspiring political model to aspire to independence but also to an integration to occidental Europe as France represented this “ European liberal occident”<sup>2</sup>.

Thus it brings us to the notion of francophilia, If the word “frankofilství” was officially introduced in Czech dictionary during the inter-war period the word was already used in 1895 by the poet Karrel Hlavacek<sup>3</sup>. Therefore francophilia as largely defined by Stéphane Reznikow in his work *Francophilie et identité tchèque (1848-1914)* can be understood in the Czech case as possessing a patriotic character. As Louis Leger, famous French slavist, points out: “what is truly the condition sine qua non of the Franco-Czech friendship, is the common struggle against a common enemy”<sup>4</sup>. France and more precisely French culture represented an antidote against German influence.

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<sup>1</sup>Extract from a speech pronounced by Edvard Benes, then minister of foreign affairs, at the congress of the French alliances of Lyon, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December of 1927, in *La Revue française de Prague*, vol VII, 1928, p.1

<sup>2</sup> Reznikow, Stéphane, *Francophilie et identité tchèque (1848-1914)*, Honoré Champion, Paris, France, 2002, p.23

<sup>3</sup> Hlavacek Karel, *Sokolské basne a studie*, Prague, Kvanicka et Hampl, 1930, p.83 cited in *Francophilie et identité tchèque (1848-1914)*, p.11

<sup>4</sup> Leger Louis, *l'intérêt tchèque et l'intérêt français*, Les annals des nationalités, n7-10, 1913, p.298

Contrarily to German culture French culture wasn't imposed but it was sought, France didn't represent a threat on the political level as it had no political ambition over Czechs. On the contrary it represented a haven for independence.

Through French culture it was a cultural emancipation that was sought, one that could lead to independence. As Masaryk conceived it;” I was always a partisan of a cultivated politic, partisan of an authentic democracy; a narrowly politician politic never sufficed to me.”<sup>5</sup>

The supportive role of France in the independence of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the first nation to recognize the independence of Czechoslovakia<sup>6</sup>, reaffirmed positively the Franco-Czechoslovakian diplomatic relations and comforted Czechoslovaks in the idea that France was a great nation carrier of emancipation.

The accession of the first republic marks the beginning of our period of interest, the golden age of the Franco-Czechoslovakian relations. This notion originated from the magazine of the French Institute of Prague, Stepanska 35 that published between 1992 and 1993 four issues summarizing the history of the institute and through it a history of the Franco-Czechoslovakian relations. The second issue published; *The Golden Age (1919-1938)* summarizes the golden age of the institute and in parallel the one of the relations between the two countries. The main reason for this is that this period corresponds to the first republic of Czechoslovakia which is generally considered its golden age<sup>7</sup>.

Thus in my work I am going to focus on this period and more precisely through the magazine “*La Revue française de Prague*” which was published between 1922 and 1938. The magazine is the organ of the Federation of the French alliances in Czechoslovakia which connects all the sections of the French alliance present on the Czechoslovakian territory. The French Alliance (*L'Alliance française*) is an institution whose purpose is to diffuse French language and French culture. Therefore the magazine constitutes a testimony of the cultural Franco-Czechoslovakian relations of this period which is why I chose to focus my interest on it, to observe how those relations are reflected there.

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<sup>5</sup> Sabiguou Alain, *Tomas Masaryk*, éditions Fayard, France, 2002, p.12

<sup>6</sup> In the constitutive decree of Czechoslovak army of December 1937 and on the 29<sup>th</sup> June with the note from the chief of quay d'Orsay in a note addressed to the Czechoslovak national council in *La naissance de la Tchécoslovaquie et de la France un chemin commun vers une Europe démocratique (1914-1925) catalogue d'exposition*, Ministerstvo zahraničních vecí CR, 2008, pp.21-22

<sup>7</sup> Marès Antoine, *La Tchécoslovaquie sismographe de l'Europe au XXe siècle*, Instituts d'études slaves, Paris, France, 2009, p.12

Therefore this thesis fits in the study of international cultural relations and most precisely between Czechoslovakia and France. If the subject has been studied in various though limited works the *Revue française de Prague*, my primary source have been left aside even though it constitutes a rich testimony of the nature of the cultural Franco-Czechoslovakian relations during the first republic. I will thus proceed here to a textual analysis of the magazine seconded by sources that deal with cultural and political relations between the two countries to contextualize my findings.

Through discursive and content analyses I will attempt to highlight how the magazine reflected the cultural relations between the two countries at that time.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters correlating to a contextual part, in which I will present important elements necessary to the understanding of what the magazine is; the French Alliance, the French Institute and the foundation of the magazine.

In my second part I will analyze how is the period of “golden age” is represented by illustrating how the magazine incarnated a tool for the diffusion of French language, a propaganda instrument for French culture, a mirror of the concept of Francophilia as opposed to Germanism while trying to participate in the intellectual rapprochement of the two countries.

And finally in my last chapter I will examine how the magazine reflected the decline of Franco-Czech relations provoked by the Munich agreement, namely the different perceptions of French and Czech intellectuals and the response of the Alliance to the event.

Therefore in this work I will attempt to bring a modest contribution in the understanding of the cultural Franco-Czechoslovakian relations during the first Republic of Czechoslovakia through the yet unexplored source that is *La Revue française de Prague*.



## -1. Historical context of the magazine-

### 1.1 The Alliance française de Prague

The Alliance française is an association which was created in order to diffuse French language in the colonies and abroad. The first Alliance was created in 1883 in Paris by the initiative of Pierre Cambon who was a resident minister in Tunisia and the academic Pierre Foncin. The Alliance then proceeded to open committees abroad, functioning locally and independent from the State. This was part of the exterior politic symptomatic of the end of nineteenth century's context that called for a political and moral renewal after 1870.

Culture is then perceived as an efficient tool to gain influence internationally. Intellectual expansion became even more considered in the 1890s with the law proposition to open a section of "oeuvres d'occident" then followed by the obtainment of credits for it in 1906 and the first credits for diffusion of French books. This also coincides with the opening of the first French institute in Florence in 1908.

The appeal of this association abroad is that it delivers an idealistic image of France which pacifism and universalism appear as a counterbalance to threatening emerging powers in different countries. Such as describes Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu when he talks about the progress of French in parts of Europe conquered massively by German economy<sup>8</sup>. Even though the first committee of the Alliance, created in Tunis, was conceived as a support for colonization it was also made to be an "anti-Germany cultural weapon"<sup>9</sup>.

It's Louis Leger paired with Soběslav Pinkas who took the initiative to open a committee of the Alliance in Prague. They were both artisans of Franco-Czech rapprochement, Louis Leger as a famous French slavist and historian militated to bring together the two nations through his writings but also through his actions; in 1906 he protested against the closing of the French consulate in Prague<sup>10</sup>. He was a member of the

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<sup>8</sup> Chaubet, François. *L'Alliance française ou la diplomatie de la langue (1883-1914)*, *Revue historique*, vol. 632, no. 4, 2004, pp. 763-785.

<sup>9</sup> Chaubet François, *La politique culturelle française et la diplomatie de la langue. L'Alliance française (1883-1940)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, ,( 2006), p.13

<sup>10</sup> M. Braunstein, H. Ehret, M. Girard ,G.G. Lemaire, A. Marès, O. Poivre d'Arvor, S. Reznikow, *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague* ,Edice Štěpánská, Prague, République Tchèque: Les cahiers de la Stepanka,1993, p.115

administration council in Paris's Alliance between 1889 and 1913<sup>11</sup>. He met Soběslav Pinkas in Paris where he was living as a painter for sixteen years. He was also a correspondent for French newspapers for more than thirty years and even participated to the foundation in 1869 of the very first Franco-Czech journal "Correspondance slave" which recounted political news connected to the different nationalities that cohabited in the "triple kingdom". He thus became the first president of the Alliance located in Prague created in 1886<sup>12</sup>.

In the 1890s the French literature was the most translated literature in Czech, French theater plays flooded Prague's theater scene (as can be seen in Vinohrady's theater between 1907 and 1914 where French theater represented about a third of the representations)<sup>13</sup>. This well spread influence was also encouraged by the fact that the Czechs felt threatened by German influence as there was about three millions Germans in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia at that time. Thus France culture was welcomed as a counterbalance to it and also represented an inspiring political model, a laic republic with universal suffrage.

The Alliance opened other sections in different regions on Czechoslovak territory, in May 1921 the Alliance counted 35 sections which multiplied to 51 in October 1922 and then to 63 in 1936 to lower to 28 in 1947<sup>14</sup> and remain as 6 in present day of 2018<sup>15</sup>.

The members who founded the different sections were often teachers that taught French<sup>16</sup> but among its members it also welcomed several important cultural and political personalities such as František Ladislav Rieger, Alberto Vojtěch Frič, Jan Podlipný, Julius Gregr and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk<sup>17</sup>.

The Alliance mainly subsisted through the contribution of its members and thus its actions were limited by its budget, nevertheless it managed to create a library that encountered a keen interest; in 1888 the library held 135 books which multiplied to 2500 in 1907<sup>18</sup>.

It also organized social gatherings, about ten every year; it consisted of conferences usually focused on Franco-Czech relations along with musical or theatrical entertainments. These

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<sup>11</sup> Reznikow.S « *Le précurseur de l'Institut français de Prague, l'Alliance française de Prague 1886-1914* » in *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague*, p.14

<sup>12</sup> *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague*, p.118

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p.15

<sup>14</sup> Hnilica Jiří, *Les nouvelles élites tchécoslovaques une formation française (1900-1950)*, Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 2015, p.71

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.alliancefrancaise.cz/Presentation-du-reseau?lang=cs> 10/05/18

<sup>16</sup> Hnilica.J, p.74

<sup>17</sup>Reznicow.S, p.17

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p.18

were considered as prestigious festivities and were even announced in Czech press. In its eagerness to promote French language the Alliance also awarded to a few felicitous students a trip to France as the Alliance of Paris established classes for a foreigner audience. That's how in 1905 a young Edvard Beneš benefitted from the Alliance who covered his tuition fees to enter the Sorbonne<sup>19</sup>. Even though the Alliance didn't organize classes itself before 1920<sup>20</sup> it cooperated with institutions where French was taught. It can be considered as the predecessor of the French institute Ernest Denis as it accomplished similar deeds but on a smaller scale because the Alliance didn't benefit as much from the institutional support that enjoyed the institute later. Without overlooking its effectiveness it can be say that the Alliance was chiefly a symbol of Franco-Czech relations as Soběslav Pinkas describes it: "this connexity (sic) which exists between our patriotic feelings and our sympathies for France"<sup>21</sup>.

## 1.2 Foundation of the magazine

As the sections of the Alliance became more and more numerous it was decided to federalize them in order to improve the organization of the actions of the different sections. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1921 the principal representatives met in the Prague city hall and they officialized this new association which was officially named "*Federace odbocek francouské Alliance v Ceskoslovensku*" with at its presidency Ladislav Pinkas the son of Sobeslav Pinkas. This improved the functioning of the sections regarding the distribution of books, the subscription for newspapers as well as the organization of conferences but also of the management of subventions. And to ameliorate the communication between the different sections the magazine was created, it was meant to be a moral link between them beside its role as a cultural periodical<sup>22</sup>. The initiative for the creation of the federation came from the commander Pendarès (general secretary of the federation), who was in Prague due to the fact that he was part of "La mission militaire française" which was installed in Czechoslovakia after the agreement of the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1919. The mission was composed of French officers

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<sup>19</sup> Reznicow.S, p.20

<sup>20</sup> Hnilica.J, p.73

<sup>21</sup> Reznikow.S, p.20

<sup>22</sup> Hnilica.J p.71

and was sent in order to organize and train the newly created Czechoslovak army<sup>23</sup>. Besides supervising the new army the mission also had a budget for propaganda to distribute posters, books and projections of movies that highlight the strength of French army and thus its role in the creation of Czechoslovakia. The Alliance was cooperating with the mission as it often received in its sections some of its members as conference speakers. Pendariès also participated in the creation of the revue and was designated administrative director<sup>24</sup>.

Daniel Essertier was the chief editor and literary director of the revue. Sociologist aggregated of philosophy he taught at the French institute between 1920 and 1926<sup>25</sup>. Actor of French cultural propaganda Essertier translated the works of T.G.Masaryk in French and was appreciated by Czech authorities who subsidized his stay in Prague until 1927 even though he stopped to teach in 1926<sup>26</sup>.

The magazine was meant to be a “hyphen” between the sections as we mentioned before but more widely between France and Czechoslovakia through articles about literature, idea movements, science and arts of both countries in order for its reader to better know each other’s country. Furthermore the magazine cooperated with the French Institute by delivering summaries of the different classes proposed by the institute such as literature, history, geography, French laws, philosophy and history of art for those who couldn’t have access to it but still wanted to benefit from the knowledge spread by the “miniature French university”<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> La naissance de la Tchécoslovaquie et la France un chemin commun vers une Europe démocratique (1914-1925) catalogue d’exposition, Ministerstvo zahranični veci CR, 2008, p.140

<sup>24</sup> « Lycées français de Prague, sections bilingues une intense coopération culturelle », S.Reznikow in *Une histoire de l’institut français de Prague*, p.38

<sup>25</sup> *Une histoire de l’institut français de Prague*, p.130

<sup>26</sup> Hnilica.J p.144

<sup>27</sup> « *Avant-propos* », *Revue Française de Prague*, vol I, 1922, p.1

### 1.3 The French Institute of Prague

Other tool of the expansionist exterior cultural politic of France; the French institute of Prague was created after the war in 1920. It was presented as a way for the two countries to acquire better knowledge about each other mostly focusing on the cultural aspect while also solidifying political and economic relations. The institute succeeded to several other institutes already present in Europe such as the one in Athene, Florence, Madrid and Petrograd which inspired the model of the newly created institution. The institute benefitted from a welcome reception in Czechoslovakia as it represented a counter influence of German presence, the French science and thought were perceived as an antidote against the “scientific German imperialism”<sup>28</sup>.

Furthermore in addition of being an intellectual hearthstone of French culture it was also a teaching center that proposed not only French and Czech language classes but a wide variety of classes<sup>29</sup>. Directed by the literary teacher André Tribal the institute firstly focused on the teaching of literary, history and philosophy with a team of teachers composed of Louis Brun, Alfred Fichelle, Daniel Essertier and Leopold Lewtow<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> J.Hnilica, p.133

<sup>29</sup> J.Hnilica, p.134

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem

But then new sections appeared; legal and economic and then later in the thirties scientific and technical, they answered to a demand from the student for a more complete formation as can be seen on this table:

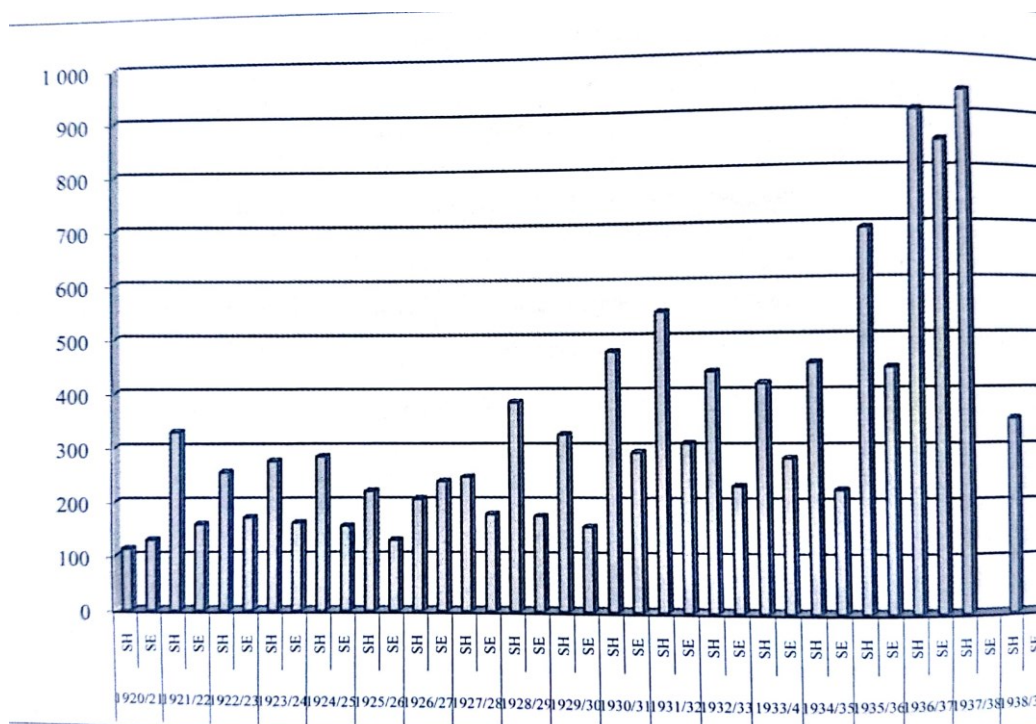
Sections Matières	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
<b>Littéraire, historique, philosophique</b>	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Littérature																				
Grammaire																				
Traduction																				
Histoire de l'art																				
Histoire																				
Psychologie																				
Sociologie																				
Philosophie																				
Géographie																				
<b>Juridique et économique</b>								■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Droit																				
Economie																				
<b>Scientifique et technique</b>												■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Chimie																				
Electrotechnique																				
Travaux publics																				
Architecture																				
Constructions mécaniques																				
Aéronautique																				
Médecine																				
<b>Pédagogique</b>																				
<b>Cours annexes</b>																				
Français commercial																				
Tchèque pour les Français																				
Français pour les Allemands																				
Français pour les Russes																				
Français pour les Tchèques																				

Table 1- Sections created and subjects taught in the closed and reserved classes in the IFP, from 1920 to 1939<sup>31</sup>

The students could then receive two different kind of diplomas; a “brevet d’étude française” after the completion of two semesters and a certificate after the completion of three trimesters.

<sup>31</sup> Hnilica.J, p151

From its opening in 1920 the institute attracted more and more students, from barely one hundred subscriptions in 1920 it multiplied to more than nine hundreds in 1937 as can be seen on this graph:



Graph 1- Total number of subscribed audience at the French Institute from 1920 to 1939<sup>32</sup>

The institute also possessed a library with a wide offer of books: ten thousands books and eight thousands periodical in 1927<sup>33</sup>. Beside its educative role the institute also organized conferences open to the public about literature sometime hold by a famous author, about Art when it corresponded to the program of the classes of the institute or if an exhibition was taking place but also about politics, economics and finance which aroused a great interest public-wise. In order to complete the formation of the students the institute awarded them at the end of their year a scholarship for a trip to France for the summer, with no obligation to conduct a specific project. The scientific and technical section then adopted a different path in the way to manage those trips as they proposed internships in French companies, at first

<sup>32</sup> Hnilica.J, p.174

<sup>33</sup>Marès.A, « *l'Institut Ernest Denis, une université en miniature 1920-1951* » in *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague* p.29-33

lasting between one or two months and then in 1937 internships of ten months up to one year were organized; from 6 in 1906 it added up to 124 in 1938<sup>34</sup>.

Supported by political and academic authorities the institute wasn't only a "tool of cultural propaganda"<sup>35</sup> it also played a role in the education realm though to qualify it as a university in miniature as does the magazine might be a stretch as it was more of a complement of academic and technical French teaching<sup>36</sup>.

### 1.3.1 Ernest Denis

The institute was first given the name of Ernest Denis as homage for his work to promote and solidify Franco-Czech relationship.

It's with his letters addressed to Czech friends that the revue starts its very first publication and especially to Sobeslav Pinkas to whom he was close as when he went to Prague he was welcomed by Pinkas's family<sup>37</sup>.

Through the ministère de l'instruction publique, des Cultes et des Beaux-Arts slavophiles had a vector to transmit their ideas and would be sent on missions in slavic countries to observe and learn about the country. Ernest Denis was sent in Bohemia to carry such mission in 1872 by the initiative of Picot who he came into contact with as he was the stepbrother of Ernest Denis's teacher from Ecole Normale Supérieure Ernest Desjardins. Denis was sent to Prague when he was 23 and didn't know much about Bohemia at that time. There he found the subject of his thesis "Jean Huss et la guerre des hussites". The exact nature of the mission is unclear due to lack of testimonies stating it but it's clear that he was expected to become a specialist of Bohemia and play a role in the Franco-Czech relationship<sup>38</sup>.

Denis then came to be considered a "bohemist" as he wrote about Czech history; *La fin de l'indépendance Bohême* published in 1890 and *La bohême depuis la Montagne Blanche* published in 1903 earned him the nickname of "successor of Palacky"<sup>39</sup>.

He defended the Czech interests when the hostilities of the war started, in 1915 he founded

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<sup>34</sup> Hnilica.J p168-181

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p.141

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem p.183

<sup>37</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol I,1922, p.5

<sup>38</sup> Reznikow.S, *Francophilie et identité tchèque*, pp.179-182

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p.117



the revue “La nation tchèque” in France, conceived as an organ of the Czech national council the revue was an essential tool of information on the situation of Czech and Slovaks in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy and of promotion for their independence<sup>40</sup>. The same year he created a Franco-Slavic study committee which would then later become the Institute of Slavic studies. Through multiple conferences and interventions to the ministry of foreign affairs he pleaded for the independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire of Czechs in union with Slovaks. Tragically he died a few months only after he inaugurated the French institute that bore his name<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> J.Hlinica, p.55

<sup>41</sup> A.Marès, p.118

## -2.The stakes of the magazine in the golden age of Franco-Czechoslovak relations-

### 2.1The constitution of the magazine

The magazine is first planned to be published every three months and after the success of the first year of 1922 it's decided that it would be published every two months.

Through its 82 issues published from 1922 to 1938 the magazine is organized around different themes revolving around French and Czech culture mainly. It includes a lot of articles about personalities; a category focuses on French in Prague where the reader have access to portraits of French intellectuals that have been in the city (the first portrait to appear in the magazine is about Descartes and his supposedly participation in the White Mountain battle).

Furthermore a section is dedicated to portraits of poets followed by extracts of their poetry to open the reader to new discoveries as it was often about not well-known individuals.

The magazine occasionally includes articles about specific French regions (ex :“Au pays Breton, “le lyrisme populaire en Auvergne”...).

Though the section that occupies the most space would be the one about literature that deals with events, conferences, issues related to literature and provide reviews and critics about the latest publications.

There is also an important section reserved to Arts where it deals with exhibitions in Prague, conferences centered on art, article about different problematics connected to art... The magazine decides later to include pictures of paintings in its pages and to invest in better quality paper as a way to confer a more privileged place to Art.

Then there is the section of movements of ideas where emerging currents of thoughts are presented and discussed.

The magazine also includes a category named “things and people of Czechoslovakia” where it displays portraits of Czechoslovakian personalities and reviews about publications connected to Czechoslovakia.

The magazine also created a section dedicated to the classes and the conferences of the French institute. Few summaries about the classes delivered in the institute are presented and then the program for the next semester is issued.

Then comes an essential rubric: “The life of the Alliances” which was the original idea behind the creation of the magazine: a way to connect the different sections of the Alliance. In this rubric the reader can learn about the activities of different alliances, the parties, the conferences organized... We can see there how the sections cooperate with each other; by sending their lecturers to one another or through the organization of common expeditions ,so the members of different sections can meet each other, and various reunions in each other sections.

Another frequent rubric is called “echoes”; it deals with news related to culture that take place in Paris and Prague.

Finally the magazine ends with answering the mails written by their readers, mainly Czechoslovak.

## 2.2. The promoting and diffusion of French language

One of the main preoccupations of the magazine is the diffusion and promotion of French language and its learning.

It can be seen pragmatically with the publishing of its “linguistic investigations” where it attempts to analyze issues in the learning of French by Czech and how they can be solved.

This can be seen also in several articles of the magazine such as *On French language*<sup>42</sup> published in the seventh issue of the magazine: in this article the author, Paul Claudel then ambassador of France in Japan, has for objective to convince its audience of the benefits of learning French. He does so by firstly evoking the scope of the French language in the world; spoken in France which is a “big and powerful country of forty millions inhabitants”<sup>43</sup> French is also spoken “outside of its borders by fifty millions of Europeans and Americans”<sup>44</sup> and also “extends its domination over a colonial estate that counts one hundred fifty millions

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<sup>42</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol.II,1923, pp.181-186

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p.182

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem

people”<sup>45</sup>. He then praises the merits of French language as being essential in industries such as art and luxury. He affirms that an individual needs to receive two cultures in order to function optimally; “a national culture” and “an international formation”<sup>46</sup>. His national culture concerns his life on a personal level and how he conducts it while the international formation allows him to play an important role on the vast connected ensemble that is the world, implying the idea of globalization. And according to the author French language is said to be perfect for that as it’s universal, it’s not tied to the native and everyone can appropriate it contrary to English that he describes as a language of action as opposed to French the language of deliberation, and he claims that there is a lack of neutrality as the speaker is forced to bend to a certain attitude of spirit. This neutral characteristic of French language is what allows it to be the best idiom to convey objectively ideas. Moreover he concludes that French is the “most perfect instrument for the formation of intelligence and for communication with the rest of humanity at all time”<sup>47</sup>. At the end of this ode for the French language there is an editorial note added to recall an important aspect of the language that the author didn’t think about as he was addressing himself to Japanese but which matters in Europe. Indeed it’s important for the magazine to remind that French has liberating virtues, it’s the language of salvation for the people oppressed by another nation. The note is also there as a protestation against the suppression of French and Latin in Czechoslovakian middle schools and high schools, denouncing that by doing so the nation would be deprived of “one of its best tool to counter germanization”<sup>48</sup>.

Another proof of the magazine’s interest in spreading French language is the article published in the tenth issue of the magazine: *La France vu à travers sa langue, Etude de sociologie linguistique*<sup>49</sup>. This article is a summary of three conferences given by the linguist Ferdinand Brunot who is then a teacher at the French Institute. He advocates the unifying characteristic of the French language, once composed of many various languages and dominated by Latin, it succeeded in prevailing over those other languages and did so naturally thanks to tolerance as “the patria became one by mutual contentment”<sup>50</sup>. He also recalls, probably alluding to Germany and Austro-Hungarian Empire, that “France is a moral fact, not a product of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibidem

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p.186

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem

<sup>49</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol II, 1923, pp.319-325

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p.321

conquest”<sup>51</sup>. But mainly he focuses on the fact that the French language is not only unifying on a geographical level but also on a social level. It was first adopted by the higher spheres and then spread to the modest parts of society and as doing so evolved into a language that encompasses practicality and fineness.

In the twentieth-six issue of the magazine the ideas of Ferdinand Brunot are evoked again while the incitement to learn French is now directly expressed by the magazine.

Indeed in this article named *a essay of linguistic sociology, propagation of French in the XVIII century*<sup>52</sup> the author advertises the freshly published book of Ferdinand Brunot ; the volume VII of the *History of French language*. With much enthusiasm the writer of the article invites its reader to discover this work ;” What incomparable service does not M. Brunot renders, not only to the scholars, to the wise, but to all the French, to all the foreigners, who have at heart to know better our language, to love it, if it is possible, even more!”<sup>53</sup>. The author praises the talent of Brunot and even states that his book *The thought and the language* is to pedagogy what Descartes’s *Discourse of method* is to philosophy, saying that he doesn’t know who deserves the most his admiration between the linguist, historian and sociologist that is Brunot. He finally ends the article by addressing again the reader to explore this book so that “his ideas will be enriched and enlarged”<sup>54</sup>.

Thereby the magazine chose to publish articles in which French language is glorified in order to convince its readers of the utility to learn it. There is an assumed proselytism as it’s also noticeable in the editorial notes. The language is the first step in the adoption of French cultural values but it is also a mean to counter German influence which oppressed the use of Czech language, by choosing French over German that was imposed on Czech people for a long time they make a patriotic choice.

### 2.3 French propaganda, francophilia against German influence

Besides contributing in the spreading of French language which is the first goal of the alliances, the magazine is also a tool for propaganda as defined in the Oxford English dictionary ;“information ,especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem

<sup>52</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol IV, 1925, pp.35-38

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p.35

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, p.38

political cause or point of view”<sup>55</sup>, of French ideas and one of the most important one being the notion that French culture is a remedy against German influence.

In the periodical Germany is constantly portrayed as bellicose as it tends to be a political power in contrast with France which is here portrayed as pacifist as it tends to be a cultural power who intends to rule with its ideas rather than with actual weapons.

In the rubric “la vie des Alliance” we can observe frequently traces of this.

An example is in the first issue of the magazine already in the opening paragraph the idea of French culture as a weapon against German influence is present; when talking about the Alliance present in Budějovice it is said that “a few Czech citizens of this administratively Germanized city had spontaneously understood this profound truth, that there is no better way to defeat German influence and to work for national independence than to absorb the French language, ideas and spirit.”<sup>56</sup> It then describes the visit of the general Mittelhauser, leader of the French Mission in Czechoslovakia there to help improve and train the country’s army.

After having congratulating and salute the efforts and reliability of the Czechoslovakian army, the inspector general Machar goes on praising the qualities of the French mission’s officers that played for this result; they are described as “conscientious punctual workers”<sup>57</sup> who start to work the earliest and leave the latest and how their work is a great benefit to the army.

In the report of the Alliance of Zvolen few pages later the idea of diffusion of French culture as a mean to embrace freedom is explored again with the case of Slovakia. The appeal for French culture is justified by the fact that nations that were once oppressed are sharing the same passion for freedom as France and thus they are finding a way to espouse it through the cultivation of French language and culture as those words summarize it; “to speak French was like to be able to breathe a freer, lighter air; it was the possibility to lift for a moment the weight of servitude”<sup>58</sup>. French culture is presented as the antidote, the great civilization capable of countering the influence of the “masters” that forced them to “inhale an air contaminated by their breath” and which from school and on “slowly and ruthlessly bent their soul”<sup>59</sup>. Its appeal is also said to be produced by the belief that it will contribute to bring back their “original ethnicity” because “French thought is one in which neither personalities nor

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<sup>55</sup>Concise Oxford English Dictionary, eleventh edition revised ,edited by Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson,Oxford university press, 2008, p.1150

<sup>56</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol I, 1922, pp. 53-56

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p.53

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, p.56

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, p.56

nationalities dissolve: on the contrary, they reform themselves, they reconstitute themselves”<sup>60</sup>. Thus the report concludes by lamenting on the scarcity of French speakers in Slovakia due to the neglect of French teaching provoked by the cautious instinct of the Magyar regime which suspected this French influence.

In the fourth issue the rubric is dedicated to the second congress of the federation of the sections of the Alliance present in Czechoslovakia where the development and the review of the activities of the Alliance are discussed among representatives and actors of the more than forty sections present. Ladislav Pinkas gives a speech where he delivers with satisfaction the progress of the Alliance that counts fifty one sections in 1922 which is fifteen more sections or as he calls it “centers of propaganda”<sup>61</sup> than in 1921. A speech in which he reminds the ties of France and Czechoslovakia and that among all the other nations it’s toward French culture and civilization that they are drawn to as he states it; “ the mentality of both our country are alike”<sup>62</sup>. And he continues in adding how French spirit is the counteractive agent of German influence; “let us penetrate more and more of this French spirit so brilliant and so profound, at the same time we shall rid ourselves more easily of that kind of German plaster of which we are still here and there more or less impregnated.”<sup>63</sup>

Following his speech comes the one of the commandant Pendariès the secretary of the federation who illustrates the fact that French appeal in Czechoslovakia at this time didn’t arise only from the elite but from the society as a whole; “Small employees, artisans, soldiers, rich and humble, had the desire to acquire the knowledge of our language”<sup>64</sup>. An appeal existing because of the “pure love for the civilization that this language conveyed”<sup>65</sup>. He also recalls the fact that through the Alliance France is not only promoting the spreading of its language but it’s also promoting the political idea of national renewal as the Alliance is made to be a place to “cultivate in common the development of your national consciousness”. He implies that France should be a model of political unity, comparing French ideas to a “cement” capable of connecting different members of a same family like it does with a Breton and a basque it should be similar that with a “Slovak of Zvolen” and a “Czech of Prague” thus

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p.56

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, p.248

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, p.249

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, p.250

the “French family” would inspire the “Czechoslovakian family” built and animated by the same ideals<sup>66</sup>.

The congress coincided with the commemoration of the centenary of Louis Pasteur and for this occasion M.Honnorat, senator and delegate of the French Alliance of Paris, gave an allocution about the inauguration of a statue of Pasteur in Alsace where he taught for a while. His account of the event reveals a somewhat nuanced testimony of the perception of Germany by France compared to the rest of the texts composing the magazine as it acknowledges the greatness of Germany and calls for an alleviation in Franco-German tensed relations. As he explains that the statue was placed next to the statue of Joseph Wolfgang Goethe, installed there as an attempt to Germanize Alsace, he insists on the fact that the statue’s location is not meant to undermine the prestige of German thought or to compete with it but rather to be a sign of appeasement. These two symbols of their country’s greatness placed next to each not only illustrate the desire to show that the “enslaved Alsace” let place to the “freed Alsace” but also that France is thriving for a world of peace<sup>67</sup>. He then makes a parallel between France and Czechoslovakia to demonstrate their similar position as having been oppressed by another nation qualifying them as ; “those who do not forgive us, neither you nor us, for having broken the chains they thought they had forever tied on our shoulders.”<sup>68</sup> He tends to depict France as this pacific nation that despite being a victim of the “criminal pride” of Germany decides to promote the culture of science as promulgated Pasteur as a remedy for the hatred and ignorance that fuel conflicts between peoples.

The rubric concludes with the list of the people that were graced with honorific distinctions on behalf of French government that named one officer of public instructions and several academy officers in order to thank them for being actors of the intellectual reconciliation of Czechoslovakia and France showing a clear investment of French Government in the Alliance.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, in the issue number twenty three in the rubric *La vie des alliances* we can observe France’s military propaganda as it came to help the Czechoslovakian army in 1918. The rubric is devoted to the departure of the general Mittelhauser then chief of the general staff of the Czechoslovakian army. It’s the occasion to reinstate that the relation between France and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p.253

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, p.251

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p.252

<sup>69</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol I,1922, pp. 247-253



Czechoslovakia is besides being military, as they might have to “fight side by side against the common enemy”, is most importantly based on a “spiritual communion”<sup>70</sup>. The exploits of Mittelhauser and his officers are then told; as they found in 1918 a “Czech “army” that’s offers a spectacle of an extraordinary chaos”<sup>71</sup> as they try to desperately push back the invaders. The general and his team will manage to turn the situation around as the general inspector of the army Machar sent by the government will see in June 1919. He describes the headquarters of the West army as a busy and well working factory in which the general Mittelhauser is demonstrating his efficiency. Mittelhauser who as an Alsacian is said to feel particularly connected to the cause for which they are fighting as he is familiar with this kind of “barbaric invasion”. He managed to unify the previous chaotic army not by using “constraint” but rather with “persuasion”. And thus Machar concludes that by the admirable design accomplished by the general he has participated in refuting the German idea that France is a country in decay<sup>72</sup>. An idea that was widely spread at that time by German propaganda.

The idea of the importance of French culture for the affirmation of Czechoslovakia’s freedom is also developed in the article written by Hanuš Jelínek “*French culture in Czechoslovakian countries until XIXth century*”.

Already in the first paragraph of the article the author expresses its dislike toward German influence qualifying its “Kulturträger”, the transmitter of culture, of arrogant, intolerant and having a taste for domination. As an antidote against this German influence the Czechs had to turn to occidental civilizations and particularly France. This appeal for France the author traces it back as early as the twelfth century when Czech youth were going to get their education in France. After telling the stories of different protagonists that played a role in shaping Franco-Czech he concludes by reminding how the ideas developing in France in the XVIIIth century, the age of enlightenment, influenced the politic of Joseph II, revived the interest for the forgotten Czech language and literature and set the basics for national renewal. The author points out that the Czechs were not always the “vassals” of Germany and had long relied on French thought for the affirmation of their nation<sup>73</sup>.

We can also observe this portraying of an aggressive Germany in the summary of the French institute class *The politic of France from 1870 to 1914* in the first issue of the magazine. The

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<sup>70</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol IV, 1925, p.63

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem

<sup>72</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol IV,1925, pp. 61-63

<sup>73</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol I, 1922, pp. 129-144

author, Alfred Fichelle teacher at the institute, describes the situation between France and Germany after 1871 presenting Germany as wanting to rule Europe by terror through Bismarck intentions to “watch, isolate and frighten France”<sup>74</sup>. He goes on explaining the tensions and conflicts between the two countries by highlighting the aggressivity of Germany as “burning for revenge” and wanting to “crush” its enemies. He then proceeds to emphasize on Germany’s responsibility in starting the war in 1914 ; “the war breaks out, by the fault of Germany and its pan-germanist party who wished for perfect crush of France so that our country never get in the way of Germany again” whereas France “had not sought the conflict and did everything to avoid it”<sup>75</sup>. All this while conveying the idea that Germany did all this because of its envy for French prestige that was “surrounded by the sympathies of the entire world” thus Germany couldn’t cope with what “Renan called “its brilliant power of rebirth and resurrection””<sup>76</sup>. In this Manichean account in which France is depicted as the pacifist greatness that arouses the aggressive jealousy of Germany, the author concludes by underlining that France entered bravely into combat with the “firm conviction that soon the hour of immanent justice would come for its beloved provinces of the Est”, implying once more the moral superiority of France over Germany<sup>77</sup>.

It’s visible in the magazine that there is a desire of France to be recognized as the legit model, the leading nation showing Czechoslovakia the right path. As it’s expressed in the beginning of the thirty-eighth issue where the direction evokes in an opening foreword the tenth anniversary of Czechoslovakian republic. The article reveals how France approves and applauses this successful independence and this national renewal while expressing a patriarchal attitude toward the country; “the new Republic was turning, moved, grateful, admiring, towards France, asking for guidance in its first steps”. It illustrates how the magazine tends to portray France as an inspiring model of freedom and a source of encouragement to develop its national identity, its patriotism as it is the only mean for people to then achieve great deeds. It also demonstrates how the magazine implies a direct responsibility of France in the success for independence of Czechoslovakia<sup>78</sup>.

But if the magazine is mainly working on persuading Czechoslovakian of the evidence of the intellectual relation with France it also addresses itself to French people who still need to

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, p.47

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, p.48

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, p.49

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, p.49

<sup>78</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol VII, 1928, pp. 213-214

be convinced of it. In doing so they thrive to solidify the idea on both side for more efficiency as this article; *Old country, young republic, presentation of Czechoslovakian to French people* by Daniel Essertier<sup>79</sup>, chief of the magazine, demonstrates. In this article he has for objective to describe a nation that until its independence had been long forgotten to French people. A total ignorance leading French immigrants in 1830 Prague to mistake the Czech language for a German patois. He insists on the fact that this is a strategic territory surrounded by great powers that proved nevertheless to be very resistant as he calls the western part a “corner of steel” because “there is nothing harder than a Czech head”. And it’s not to be forgotten than Czechs are unified with Slovaks in their common hatred for Germans and Magyars who look out for any sign of discord as a possibility for re-annexation. Magyars who as he tells are responsible for the misery of the Ruthenians that the Czechoslovakian government had to solve; “Today, by means of millions, and by dint of goodwill, the Czechoslovakian State is regenerating this people as not only the League of Nations but also the humanity entrusted it with a mandate to do so”<sup>80</sup>.

He continues on denouncing the injustices that Germany imposed on them first as “colonists” or “pacific invaders” who then started to talk like “masters” and pretended to be the “superior race” and should be the ones ruling the territory<sup>81</sup>. The author highlights that the Czechs made mistakes that led to their situation; they underestimated the Germans, through the Hussite heresy they turned against themselves the catholic Europe and finally they committed the ultimate fault to allow a Hapsburg on the bohemian throne. Thus with the white mountain battle the “glorious bohemian lion is defeated by the rapacious eagle”<sup>82</sup>. But the admirable force of their people shined again in the XVIIIth century when a breath for national revival traveled the Czech lands and led to the independence two centuries later in 1918. All these centuries of suffering and oppression are thus part of the reason of Czechoslovakian tie with France; “they share the same ideal: the constitution of a prosperous, pacifist and unified Europe.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol VII, 1928, pp.217-233

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem, p.217

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem, p.220

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem, p.225

<sup>83</sup> Ibidem, p.233

### -3.The cessation of the magazine as reflection of the decline of the relations -

#### 3.1 Munich or the betrayal

The last issue of the magazine was published in 1938 and all the issues of this year together added up to only 175 pages which is the smallest amount for any year of the publication of the periodical. The reason for that is symbolized by the episode of Munich which is a fundamental milestone in the relations between the two countries.

Czechoslovakia represented then for Hitler a gateway to have access to Central Europe but rather than attacking it straightforwardly he opted for a wariier solution. He then used as a pretext the problem of the German minority of the Sudetes. It's through Konrad Henlein leader of the German party of Sudetes that the claim to incorporate to the Reich the territory inhabited mostly by Sudetes was made. Those territories had a singular strategic role as they contained essential fortifications for the defense of Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack. Even though Prague refused those claims, France and Great Britain agreed to it, after deliberation, mainly out of fear to trigger a war. Thus the 29 of September of 1938 at the Führeraus of Munich during the reuniting of France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany, the last stone of betrayal was laid, the agreement forcing Czechoslovakia to give away a part of its territory to Germany was signed<sup>84</sup>. By doing so France broke the promises made in the Geneva agreement, which had been preceded by a treaty of alliance and friendship between the two countries signed by Edvard Benes and Raymond Poincare and also followed by a treaty of mutual guarantees signed in 1925 by Edvard Benes and Aristide Briand<sup>85</sup>.

This will provoke an unpleasant shift of attitude toward French people in Czechoslovakia. The anger of Czechoslovakian people is perceptible, those who acquired French diplomas or decorations throw them away, officers from the French military mission don't dare to walk in uniforms anymore by fear of being insulted and almost half of the sections of the Alliance of which their president resign dissolve in the same year<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Eubank, K., *Munich in La République Tchecoslovaque 1918-1948 une expérience de démocratie*, Victor S. Mamatey- Radomir Luza, Librairie du regard, France, 1987, pp 226-238

<sup>85</sup> *La naissance de la Tchecoslovaquie et la France: un chemin commun vers une Europe démocratique (1914-1925) Catalogue d'exposition*, p.139

<sup>86</sup> Marès, A, *La Tchecoslovaquie sismographe de l'Europe au XXe siècle*, p.113

This will considerably taint France's prestige and have not only political but cultural consequences, in the realm of Czech francophilia this can be seen as a fracture of the relations that developed since the XIXth century<sup>87</sup>. As it can be observed in the extensive literature devoted to this traumatic episode of Czechoslovakian history.

I přírodě je špatně ze slunečna  
a zvrací stíny.  
Francie, kdysi věčná,  
pohřbívá činy.

Jen její zločin zeje  
ze sobeckého kouta...  
Vždyť vůle k svobodě se děje.  
Toť víc než vztah. Toť pouta.

Nikdo se neraduj tam u vás zištnou lstí  
z vteřiny ticha míru zasvěcené.  
Jen zradili jste a už trest se žene  
a začne vaší podlostí.

Sto let je nic mně, básníkovi.  
Povídám nic, a tedy: ber kdo ber,  
můžeme počkat. Už teď mezi slovy  
ne vy, kdos jiný stojí u kamer  
a natáčí ...

Vladimír Holan, Odpověď Francii (zkráceno)

Thus here we are gonna observe how the magazine testifies of this episode and how it contributed to the haste of its downfall.

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<sup>87</sup> Hnilica, J, p.115

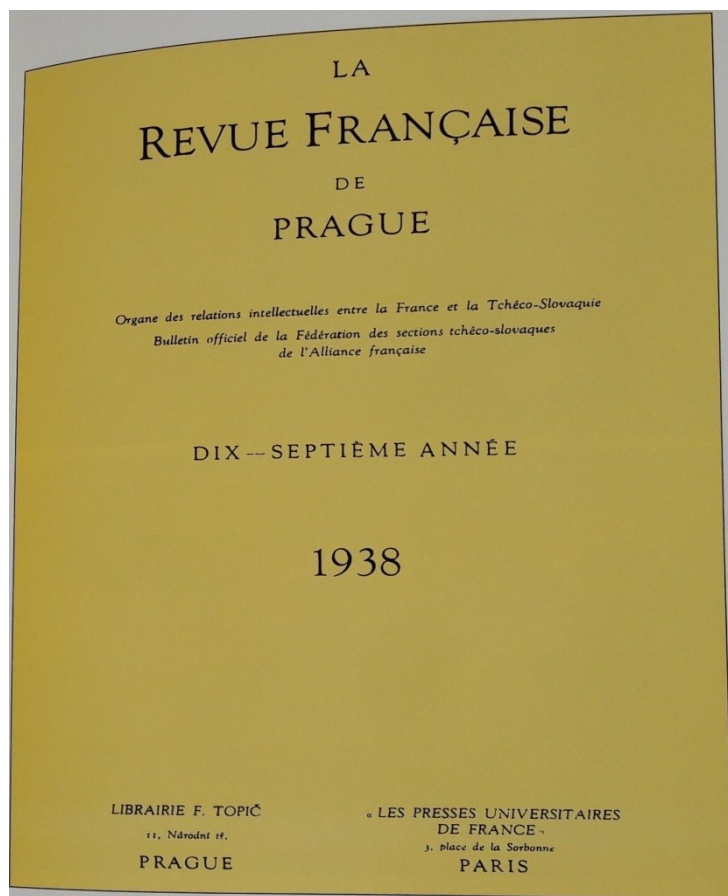


Figure1: Last issue of the magazine in 1938<sup>88</sup>

### 3.2 The reactions of the French and Czech intellectuals

In the first issue of 1938 the poem by the Czech poet Joseph Hora called “Domov” translated into French by J.Gagnaire is published, this poem is part of the movement of Czech literary reactions that surrounded the events of 1938 alongside emblematic works like “Září 1938” by Vladimír Holan from which the poem above is extracted or “Torzo naděje” by František Halas<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Annex in *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague*

<sup>89</sup> Dagmar Ševčíková, *Když zvonil zrady zvon. Odras Mnichovské dohody v české poezii (diplomová práce)*, Brno, Mazarykova Univerzita Pedagogická fakulta Katedra české literatury ,2010

In this poem the author describes the torments inflicted on his homeland and also evokes the hope for future reconstruction. Those two thematic are characterized first by the lexical field of suffering; “drained”, “tear off”, “blood and tears”, “death”, “hunger”, “crumple”, “shattered”, “hit”, “rip” just to quote the first two first stanzas. Secondly by the semantic field of flourishing which appears 8 times in the poem, supplemented by the strong presence of the symbolism of nature; “flower”, “fruit”, “tree”, “fields”, “groves”, “vines”, “thyme”, “flowering”, “spring”... The poem reveals that despite the pain and the suffering there is hope for a renewal, that this has already happened on several occasions as it’s highlighted with the idea of repetition emphasized by the anaphora “how many times” used seven times in the poem. The last stanzas express this idea of everlasting with the repetition of the word “infinite” twice. The author translates a state of spirit that is the love for his homeland “in the middle of Bohemia” and the faith in its capacity to “bloom again” as it did multiple times in the past in face of the pain that is inflicted by the “foreign hands”<sup>90</sup>. It gives us a perspective on the Czech sentiment regarding what was happening to them. However it’s interesting to notice that the magazine decided to publish a poem where there is no reference to betrayal or to France contrary to poem like *Odpověď Francii* by Vladimír Holan or *Zpěv úzkosti* by František Halas where he evokes the “bells of betrayal” of the “sweet France”. Furthermore few pages later in the rubric “literary chronicles” where selected new publications are briefly reviewed, one column is dedicated to the poem. Whereas the poem is described as a “symphony to Bohemia” there is no mention of its political dimension. There is barely no mention to its connection to its contemporary context, and when citing another poem called “Spain” from the same collection “Domov” he qualifies it as not being circumstantial so much as the “feeling that animates it is of eternal humanity”<sup>91</sup>. As if there was an intention to avoid referring to the distressing context of the time.

In the same issue while reviewing a new Czech magazine “Kritický měsíčník”, the magazine is said to defend a democratic idea and inspired by minds like Masaryk and Salda supports the notion that the country has to look for its own path. Though after presenting the magazine the writer ends her text with a reproach to the magazine; for being too engaged in their democratic and antifascist articles and losing a sense of impartiality while diving in a “bitter and partisan atmosphere”.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, pp 30-33

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, p.52

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, p.66

Hitherto until then in this first issue of the year 1938 there had only been allusions to the uneasiness which was hovering, brief and evasive allusions. The rubric of the life of the Alliances gathered the usual feedbacks about what conferences or parties they organized but nothing referred to the political context that weighted heavily on people's mind.

But that changed with the second publication of the year 1938, the eightieth issue. The general secretary Alfred Fichelle opens the number with a note to the reader about what he qualifies as a storm that degenerated into a cyclone sweeping in its path the work of rapprochement undertaken since almost a generation. While deploring what happened using a vocabulary rich in negativity; "sadness", "bitterness" he also reminds that the magazine won't try to establish an account of responsibilities or neither it's in their intention to tell the story surrounding the event. He thus evades this disagreeable part and shifts to the second aspect of his discourse in the third paragraph; the future, word that he uses four times. A future centered on the notion of reconstruction and solidity as their lexical fields evidence; "different base", "born", "better future", "reestablishing", "unshakable base" "reassuring", "armature", "eternal", "invincibly", "enlarged bases", "consolidate". He ends his argument by reaffirming the solidity of the intellectual relations between the two countries that it will help this reconstruction. The message he transmits is that the support of France is spiritual; "spiritual armature", "best spirits", "spiritual values" as opposed to practical. He lets appear that France remains a support in the ideas on which were built the first republic of Czechoslovakia but this is not reflected on the practical level where France backs down<sup>93</sup>.

This note is followed directly by the emblematic article "Maginot line and Descartes line" by Georges Duhamel then general president of the Alliance Française. Firstly published in the Figaro on the fifth of November the article is said to be published in the Revue Française on the demand of its reader. After a silence which lasted all October it's only after receiving a message from the Prague Office on the 22 of October that Georges Duhamel finally reacts<sup>94</sup>.

In his discourse he develops the idea of the Descartes line as being like the Maginot line a fortification line against Germans but a moral one constituted the French culture. As he specifies that this Descartes line is not yet absolutely destroyed he uses the past tense to refer

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<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, 77-78

<sup>94</sup> A, Marès. La Tchécoslovaquie sismographe de l'Europe au XXe siècle ( p. 4-290). Paris, France: Institut d'études slaves (2009), p.113



to it and then to people haunting the libraries of the Alliance or to the benefits that French spirit brought to them. The tone of the article is of dismay; the situation for the sections of the Alliance in Czechoslovakia is disastrous as they are crumbling, this is all the more significantly regrettable for the alliance as it's the European country which counts the most sections with the densest network in the world. And also alarming as this signifies the atrophy of French cultural influence. His discourse is directed toward French people, among which he wants to convince of the consequences of the Munich agreement as they may not realize it's not only a defeat for Czechoslovakia but also for France. And as the article aims to convey the seriousness of the impact that this event represents it also reminds to the reader that beside the impact on the cultural level there is also the commercial one; French products won't sell so well once the cultural shininess fades away<sup>95</sup>. The tone of the discourse remains rather resigned and laid compared to articles like the one of Hubert Beuve-Méry, correspondent for the Temps and teacher at the French Institute in Prague, "Munich or the betrayal". In this article Beuve-Méry expresses his indignation to France and denounces what has been done to Czechoslovakia animated by a vivid exasperation, his journal Le Temps even refused to publish his article and thus leading to him resigning from it<sup>96</sup>.

In the same issue another helpful article to better understand how this event played an essential role in Franco-Czechoslovakian intellectuals relations; "letter of a Czech catholic to Paul Claudel" by the writer Jan Cep<sup>97</sup>. This address to Paul Claudel, who was France's consul in Prague from 1911 to 1913 symbolizes an address to the French people in general, at least its representatives, he refers to him as being French four times in the article, and he talks in the name of the Czechoslovakian people as a whole as he uses the pronoun "we" all along. In his discourse there are three main different aspects that dominate his thought. As in the poem of Jan Hora there is the evocation of the homeland suffering a pain inflicted by the foreigner ; "in these days of pain, despair and shame" with the use of a somewhat pitying symbolic; "the orphan people", "this poor people", "it's not its fault", "tragic country", "unfortunate country"... The second aspect also in common with the poem of Hora is the notion of an everlasting solidity of the country and thus accompanying the idea of reconstruction as summarized in this sentence; "at the moment of supreme peril, however, it has found its soul

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<sup>95</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, pp.79-81

<sup>96</sup> Hubert Beuve-Méry, *Munich ou la trahison* in *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague* (pp 4-174) , ed les cahiers de la Stepanska, Institut Français, Prague,(1993), p.53

<sup>97</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, p.83-85

and being, recognizing the heritage and spiritual springs with which he has always lived.” And shown as well here; “this land is ours and it will remain this way until the end of centuries”<sup>98</sup>. And finally the author reveals the aspect of the questioning of the nature of the cultural relations that unify the two countries. He first reminds of the French ignorance of his country with bitter words when talking about some that came after Paul Claudel; ” understanding nothing of our country and despising it secretly in their soul”, “they couldn’t understand us, as they didn’t love us”. An ignorance that was already mentioned before in the article of Hanus Jelinek *French culture in Czechoslovak countries until the XIXth century* in which he tries to remedy to it. An ignorance that goes both ways as he points out that Czech only have a partial knowledge of French culture thus according to him the cultural relations were not based on “deep roots” and therefore will be “swiped away by the current”. This illustrates the shift in the intellectual relations, skepticism, distrust is developing then. He reaffirms it in the end of the article by saying that from then on they will be more selective in the literary that comes from France and adopt a more critical approach to what French cultural content is diffused. Though this stance is nuanced in that he doesn’t affirm that the whole French people is ignorant, he repeats the whole name of Paul Claudel nine times in the text and four times followed or preceded by the use of the word “French” as if by using the name Paul Claudel he is also referring to all the other French that truthfully know the country<sup>99</sup>.

Right after this address coming from a Czech perspective is the testimony of a French woman, member of the Alliance who expresses in her article “recognition to French Alliances of Czechoslovakia”<sup>100</sup> her gratitude for the Alliances spread all over the country that helped to connect with the country. In this text she adopts a rather apologetic tone. While enumerating all she loves and what she is thankful for about the country she also notify the imbalance in the relations between the two people. While on one side French were love and trusted and they took it for granted, thought it was “natural and legit” on the other side as she specifies it French were only beginning to love and understand Czechoslovakia. And after describing all that she reveals an intention to boost the reconciliation, in her last paragraph she details how Czechoslovaks are not renouncing to French culture and even speak for them using seventeen times the pronoun “they”, forcing a certain narrative. Beside this intention for pushing this

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<sup>98</sup> Ibidem, p.85

<sup>99</sup> Ibidem

<sup>100</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, pp.88-92

argumentation of Czechoslovaks still in demand of French culture she also reaffirm those three aspects present in the previous articles; moving toward future; “courage for the future”, “they are already all stretched toward the future”<sup>101</sup>, the idea of reconstruction;” they are striving to rebuild” and the idea that there is a French ignorance and even indifference that prevails in the relations between the two countries; “maybe it’s not too late for France to care about the abroad, to learn to know it and to love it.”<sup>102</sup>

In its last issue the magazine decide to publish a series of testimonies collected from various French newspapers in the objective to appease the bitterness in the Czechoslovakian people. The extracts originate from articles written by intellectuals; Jacques Madaule, Maurice Schumann, Claude Aveline, Jean Cassou and André Mazon. The testimonies are all in favor of the Czechoslovaks and denounce the decision that France took. The one of André Mazon is the longest, titled “a recent birthday” in his article he links this event with the independence of Czechoslovakia that was declared twenty years prior that almost day for day. If he also evokes the future he does it in a rather negative way; “threats for the future”, “menacing future”, “worrying future” whereas he looks back on the first republic praising its successes: “one of the least imperfect state of Europe”, “a disciplined and stable democracy”. He defends the country while maintaining that it had no responsibility in what happened as it assured its minorities an “exemplary treatment” refuting the pretext of the German of Sudetes that was used. And as in previous articles there is a feeling of disarray and fatality that comes from it as if France had no other choice; “the interior drama that we lived in those last few weeks”, that France after all by doing so avoided a war as Jacques Madaule and Maurice Schumann noted in their article. Thus the narrative drawn here is that France was forced to make a choice between two undesirable outcomes and chose the least worst of them<sup>103</sup>.

In its rubric the chronicles of theater a whole article is dedicated to the theater play of Karel Capek *Matka* as the Czech writer Junia Letty is reviewing it. A play that portrays the dilemma of a mother to let her son go to the war. If the play met a good success in Prague at the narodni divadlo in 1937 it was then removed in the season of 1938 as the play represented a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibidem, p.92

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem, pp. 145-150

too clear parallel to the events then taking place and as she points out “the instinct that pushes men to avoid the suffering”. Thus she is doing a review of the play as it’s being presented in Paris at the Pigalle theater under the title of *The time that we are living in* confirming that the play’s link with the ongoing events. A link that French critic noticed as well as points out Stephan Praciel in its review of the play in the newspaper *L’Humanité* on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1938; “it’s the thought of the Czech people, of its sufferings and despair”. And he goes on how the author foresaw what was going to happen as the play was first played in Prague in the winter of 1937 but it was said to be created by Capek in 1934; “where is found the whole principle that animated, between 1918 and 1938, the Czech theater as a whole: to be a concept of topicality- messianic and prophetic- a mirror where the Czech nation on the move was reflected.”

Therefore in the critic of Junia Letty we can perceive suggested references to the situation of Czechoslovakia while the country in question in the play is fictional; “the country have been an easy prey for the ferocious aggressor”. She also insists on the idea of the “exterior constraints” term that she uses twice and then again the “foreigner pressure”. We can detect her opinion through the subtext, when talking about how the mother deliberate about whether she is gonna let her son go to the war; “this last sacrifice she won’t consent to it and beside it will serve to strictly nothing”. Thus she contests the decision of the mother that finally let go of her son, and she uses the pronoun “we” as she was talking in the name of the Czech people; “we would have preferred to see her holding until the end, incarnating, with a cornelian rigor, this individual revolt against any foreign pressure”. She uses the word “any” even though there is only one foreign pressure in question in the play thus sending a more general message, perhaps she sees in the son her country that was sacrificed and in the mother France that after being tormented by hesitation and doubt finally sacrificed Czechoslovakia. She again use the pronoun “we” when notifying that this foreign pressure is the “most interesting and original element” of the work of Capek. She reiterates the parallel with the present situation of the reality and the situation of the play in the end while revealing the strong pessimism that weighs at that time when concluding on the play as being ;”a vision barely stylized of “the time in which we are living” in which we will live worse and worse, until we die from it”<sup>104</sup>. It is interesting to note that in this year of 1938 Capek was suggested by French

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<sup>104</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, pp -151-155

writers for the Nobel prize, a gesture of solidarity that won't be realized as Capek died before it could happen<sup>105</sup>.

### 3.3 The Alliance's response

As the eleventh congress of the federation of Alliance taking place on the 8<sup>th</sup> May of 1938 nothing but success and encouragement prevailed over the meeting of the almost 200 members from about fifty different sections. A meeting honored by the presence of the French minister Delacroix suggesting the importance of the reunion.

The alliance is at its most prosperous time registering the greatest number of sections since its creation in Czechoslovakia in 1886 as the general secretary of the federation Alfred Fichelle specifies the complete census of committees then oscillates around seventy of which sixty-seven are confirmed as being fully active.

Between congratulations on the success and the work of the alliances, the medal and honorific titles ceremony and the program of the festivities nothing referred to the political context which weighed then, as if all was well. They even proceeded to elect the members of their administration council. "The big Czechoslovak family of the French alliance" as Fichelle qualifies it is then reunited for this congress which is said to be remembered as a "the memory of a beautiful day of Franco-Czechoslovak friendship and has been the testimony of the extent that the action of the French Alliance took in 1918". Curiously there is no mention to 1918 before this conclusion in the account given by the magazine of the eleventh congress<sup>106</sup>.

Though the one unusual element is this telegram sent to Alfred Fichelle by the general secretary of the Alliance of Paris. In this telegram the administration's council of the French Alliance decided to express as they say in an "exceptional way" their reconnaissance for the efforts of the Czechoslovak federation in diffusing French culture. An exceptional specific praising which happened on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June that to say three months before the signature of the Munich agreement<sup>107</sup>. Thus somehow it was decided to not make any mention of the political

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<sup>105</sup> Yvon Lacaze, *Les relations culturelles franco-tchécoslovaques et la crise de Munich* In: *Revue des études slaves*, tome 66, fascicule 2, (pp.381-400), 1994, p. 392

<sup>106</sup> *Revue française de Prague*, vol XVIII, 1938, pp.161-166

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, p.167

context during the congress even though and as the telegram<sup>108</sup> confirms it they were aware of what was going on even though the big decision has not been made yet.

On the next page following the conclusion of the account of what appeared to be an elate congress is the account of the exceptional reunion of the bureau of the federation of the alliances of Czechoslovakia. Taking place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October the reunion is not solicited immediatly following the signature of the agreement of Munich ,as it took place a month before, but by the reactions of “disarray and despair” of the sections. The magazine hence publishes an extract of the bureau’s address to the French alliance of Paris. The address opens with an hyperbolic that sets the tone of the discourse which is of indignation; “France [...] associated itself with what the Czechoslovak nation as a whole considers as the biggest injustice known to the modern history”.<sup>109</sup>

It opposes the love of Czechoslovakia for France; “attached to the French culture” ,“sincere attachment”, “best friend and ally” to the betrayal of France; “sacrificing”, “international punishing decree”, “at the expense of Czechoslovakia”, “horrible mutilation of the country”<sup>110</sup>.

Beside this letter the bureau also decide to issue at the same time a statement to be distributed to all the sections on the Czechoslovakian territory. The statement reflects on how the situation is the alliances is at its worst, it’s a list of instructions for the alliances to follow. Firstly the alliances are asked to not dissolve but to stop their activities while only maintaining their library. Secondly it asks the sections to not accept any subsidies coming from their patroness society in France. Thirdly it proposes to change the name “Alliance française” that could sound unpleasant to people in this context and replace it with “Cesko-francousky krouzek”, the Franco-Czech circle. Finally it reminds to the sections that considerate to break their affiliation with the alliance of Paris that they will then lose the advantages that comes with it like books and conferences.

This whole message is in fact a form of protestation to the Alliance in Paris as they didn’t show any support to the Federation of the Czechoslovakian alliances; “moral support that it wishes to have received, at the most difficult times from the French Alliance as the mother

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<sup>108</sup> Ibidem

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem, p.169

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem

society”<sup>111</sup>. The reunion took place one month after the signature of the agreement, the alliance of Paris thus had plenty of time to send their support to the Federation but they didn’t which must have irritated the Federation and motivated this note where the federation order the sections to take drastic measures without the approval of the alliance in Paris<sup>112</sup>.

An address to which the president of the alliance of Paris, Georges Duhamel responds in a personal letter addressed to the president of the Federation of the alliances Czechoslovakia, M.Vanicek who will the following year resign from his functions, evoking the lack of spontaneity in the support received from the alliance in Paris, at a point where the alliances lost almost half of its members<sup>113</sup>.

His response thus is articulated around two main ideas; first is that the French people is also hurt, as much as “a brother can suffer for his brother”; “French lived in anxiety”, “ it stirred up the soul of the greatest number of French”. “my compatriots suffered in their mind”. He wants to rectify any impression that French are looking at the event with “cold and indifferent eye”<sup>114</sup>.

The second idea is about the focus on the future of the relations between the two countries. He insists on the cultural aspects of those relations; “the French alliance is not a work of cultural propaganda. It’s a work of intellectual culture”. And thus he aspires of a reconciliation to pursue those relations; “the first moment of bitterness and disarray passed, it seems to me that this misfortune shouldn’t determinate a break, but rather to promote a rapprochement” as if he is instructing the Federation to pursue their efforts instead of letting them down<sup>115</sup>.

This will get even clearer in the last note published by the magazine. As the administration council of the alliance hold a meeting in Paris on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1938 Duhamel writes another letter to Vanocek in order to reaffirm a demand to pursue the work of the alliances. He wants to make clear that the alliances and the political stand of France are two different things; “the Alliance is not a political organism but a work of culture and friendship” .He calls

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<sup>111</sup> Ibidem

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem, pp. 67-68

<sup>113</sup> Lacaze Yvon. Les relations culturelles franco-tchécoslovaques et la crise de Munich. In: Revue des études slaves, tome 66, fascicule 2, 1994.( pp. 381-400). P. 395

<sup>114</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, p.170

<sup>115</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, pp. 169-170

for a “task of resurrection”. He argues that the survival of the Alliance is “a precious pledge of resistance for the upcoming events”<sup>116</sup>.

### 3.4 Conclusion on Munich perception in the magazine

Thus Munich agreement led to the end of the first republic of Czechoslovakia, the end of twenty years of prosperity in the development of the country. An end marked by the resigning of Edvard Benes who foresaw the upcoming disaster when reading the Munich agreement; “this is a betrayal that will bring its own punishment” then denouncing the cowardice of France and Great Britain<sup>117</sup>. It also meant the end of the activities of Alliances in 1939 precipitated by the German invasion, they will only reborn in December 1945 with around thirty sections and then completely shut down officially the 18<sup>th</sup> March of 1951 by the communist Czechoslovakian authorities. It’s only after forty years that they will be reinstated and are still functioning to the present day<sup>118</sup>.

Therefore the magazine offers to us the perspective of Czechoslovak as well as French intellectuals. In the two first issues though there is only evasive references to the political situation taking place in the year 1938 in a “feverish atmosphere” as points out Junia Letty in her article<sup>119</sup>. In the last issue though we can observe articles from which different axes are recurrent; the suffering of the country; the betrayal and deception is evoked alongside with the robustness accompanied with the certitude of everlasting. These notions support the omnipresent idea of reconstruction. An idea that is both supported by the Czechoslovakian and French perspective. In the French viewpoint there is a general desire for appeasement through evocation of sadness, the sharing of the suffering, a desire to show support as with the homage to the Chodes, inhabitants of the sacrificed regions annexed by Germany<sup>120</sup>. And there is also reminding that although what happen is unfair and terrible it was done to prevent a war, there is an attempt for justification to mitigate the vividness of Czech reactions. And above all the magazine supports the idea of maintaining the cultural and intellectual relations between the countries, it hopes for a continuation or a then a renewal. Though if until then the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibidem, p.170

<sup>117</sup> Mila Lvova, Mnichov a Edvard Benes, [Munich et Ed.Benes], (pp.7-185), Prague,(1968), p.176

<sup>118</sup>M.Braustein and S.Reznikow, *Lycée français, sections bilingues... Une intense coopération culturelle*, in Une histoire de l’institut français de Prague, p.38

<sup>119</sup>Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, p.60

<sup>120</sup> Revue française de Prague, vol XVIII, 1938, p.133



Alliance aspired for its committee to be “foci of Czechoslovak patriotism”<sup>121</sup> this will never be the case again after the Munich agreements.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibidem, p.162

## -Conclusion-

As presently demonstrated the magazine is a rich source of material and can be exploited for various other research questions. I limited myself to analyze it from the prism of the international cultural relations and so I can distinguish different aspects of these relations through the magazine.

First of all the magazine testifies of the nature of the exterior politic exercised by France in Czechoslovakia; it focuses on cultural influence. The diffusion of French thought and art is essential but the diffusion of the language is at the core of the influential process. This is the main purpose of the Alliance, to spread the language and this is reflected through the magazine which fulfills its proselytizing role with the constant praising of French language. If French had many virtues to attract the Czechoslovak audience, namely being an international language especially in the XIXth century when it was used all over Europe in various fields or being a language of the elite but what mainly drove them to learning French was to counter the German language. Their language being repressed for a long time French represented the ideal alternative, a substitution to German language. Thus the magazine tends to portray French as being the idiom of freedom, to think in French is to think freely.

This is connected to the whole propaganda for French culture present in the magazine. Any articles referencing to France, until 1937, is uncritical toward France and is written with the intention to convince its readers of the benefits of French culture. At this point francophilia was represented as a way to be patriotic, to embrace French culture was to reaffirm the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak nation over the German influence.

This duality between francophilia and germanism is strongly supported in the magazine's discourse. Germany is frequently depicted as an aggressive and destructive entity compared to the pacifism and constructive France. Germany incarnated a common enemy and it was then in the interest of both France and Czechoslovakia to unite against its influence.

Finally the magazine is a contemporary testimony on the reactions of the Munich agreement and how it impacted the relations between the two countries. The last issue of the magazine was published the same year, symbolizing a fracture in the intellectual rapprochement of the two nations. An event perceived as a profound betrayal from the Czechoslovak perspective as is shown in the articles published in this last issue. Indignation is depicted in articles of both sides, for French it's a feeling of shame and sadness that dominate. Though the notion of

reconstruction is omnipresent and the motivation from the French side to pursue the intellectual relations is very present.

Even though the magazine presents its goal as participating in the intellectual rapprochement between the two countries by bringing to the readers a better knowledge of both nations in fact the intention to convince the Czech reader prevails. The magazine principally aims at a francophile audience and thus it has to be kept in mind when considering how it reflects the relations studied.

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Table and figure :

Table 1- Sections created and subjects taught in the closed and reserved classes in the IFP, from 1920 to 1939,p.13. Source: Hnilica Jiří, *Les nouvelles élites tchécoslovaques une formation française (1900-1950)*, Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 2015, p.151.

Graph 1- Total number of subscribed audience at the French Institute from 1920 to 1939, p.14.Source: Hnilica Jiří, *Les nouvelles élites tchécoslovaques une formation française (1900-1950)*, Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 2015, p.174.

Figure1: Last issue of the magazine in 1938, p.29. Source: M.Braunstein, H.Ehret, M.Girard ,G.G.Lemaire, A.Marès, O.Poivre d'Arvor, S.Reznikow, *Une histoire de l'institut français de Prague* ,Edice Štěpánská, Prague, République Tchèque: Les cahiers de la Stepanka,1993.

