

Factors that Drove Czechoslovaks to Emigrate to the U.S.

Jana Fornůsková

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prof. PhDr. Vlastimil Švec, CSc.
děkan

L.S.

doc. Ing. Anežka Lengálová, Ph.D.
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ABSTRAKT

Ve své bakalářské práci se zabývám otázkou emigrace Čechoslováků do Spojených Států Amerických se zvláštním důrazem na hlavní příčiny vystěhovalectví z českých zemí do USA.

V první části této bakalářské práce je zpracována problematika emigrace z českých zemí z historického hlediska, v dalším oddíle jsou pak podrobně zpracovány hlavní emigrační vlny, které se odehrály v letech 1948 a 1968.

Třetí část popisuje prostorovou distribuci českého etnika v USA a jeho asimilaci, přičemž čtvrtá a poslední část mé bakalářské práce se soustředí výhradně na emigraci Čechů do Chicaga.

Klíčová slova: emigrace, imigrace, Češi, české země, Československo, Čechoslováci, Spojené Státy Americké, příčiny emigrace, emigrační vlny, asimilace, Chicago

ABSTRACT

In my bachelor thesis, I deal with the issue of Czech emigration to the United States of America while the main focus is on factors that drove Czechs to emigrate to the USA.

The first part of my bachelor thesis describes emigration from the Czech Lands from historical point of view; the next part aims to explain the major emigration waves of 1948 and 1968 in detail.

The third part addresses spatial distribution and assimilation of Czech minority in the USA and finally, the fourth and the last part of my bachelor thesis discusses the Czech emigration to Chicago in particular.

Keywords: emigration, immigration, Czechs, Czech Lands, Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovaks, the USA, push factors, emigration waves, assimilation, Chicago

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and certify that any secondary material used has been acknowledged in the text and listed in the bibliography.

November 13, 2008

Jana Tomisková.....

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INTRODUCTION

In my bachelor thesis, I deal with emigration from the Czech Lands to the USA in particular. The main goal of my thesis is to provide an overview of major emigration waves because emigration itself played a very significant role in the history of our country and should therefore be remembered. Moreover, I address the most significant push factors that drove Czechs to leave their homeland.

In the first section of my bachelor thesis, I aim on the history of Czech emigration to America since the early 17th century until the eventful year 1948 in order for reader to get acquainted with the political development in the Czech lands. The most significant historical events that were directly related to emigration together with the main motives of Czech emigrants can also be found in this chapter.

The second part is focused on the period of the years 1948-1989. Flee that occurred during that era deserves our attention especially because of the fact that it has only been ended recently. In other words, it is a part of modern history of our country that should not be forgotten. I mention at least some of the injustices the Czech people experienced during those 41 years.

My bachelor thesis is not complete without the third chapter where I discuss the spatial distribution and assimilation of Czech minority in the USA. Here, I talk about the most significant pull factors that motivated many Czech people to leave their homes for America. I have picked three US states (Texas, Iowa and Wisconsin) that belonged to those destinations that were most popular with Czech immigrants. In addition, I mention common obstacles that had to be overcome after the arrival to America as well as the way to assimilation of the Czech ethnicity.

The last section addresses the situation of Czechs in Chicago. I have chosen this city to talk about because it is famous for being one of the most important centres of Czech immigrants in the USA. Moreover, as the Chicagoan settlement is different from the rural settlements in Texas for example, the process of assimilation is slightly different, too. The way of assimilation of Czech minority is explained in sub-sections where I talk about the attitudes of Czechs to education, politics or cultural life.

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The United States of America have always been attracting many people of all possible origins. They have been coming in great numbers in order to explore and to settle in a newly discovered continent. English, French, Swedish and many others came seeking religious as well as political freedom. Some of them just wanted to escape the poverty they suffered at home and find cheap land and better living conditions for themselves and their families. In 1607, the first permanent colony was founded by English newcomers. It should also be mentioned that the main intention of the English King James I. (1603-1625) was not to control The New World but to take advantage of its natural resources. The first settlers were therefore not concerned with the prosperity of the newly established colony but rather with tobacco growing and gold searching. As a result of this attitude, early settlers had to face considerable difficulties. Diseases, conflicts with Native Americans and high rate of mortality were among the most significant complications.¹

Having suffered big population losses; newly established colonies were in urgent need of labour force. New immigrants were therefore more than welcomed by that time. Arriving from various parts of the world, many newcomers began forming a new nation. First restrictions of immigration came during John Adams' presidency in period between the years 1797-1801. However, it took some time before the laws were applied which resulted in even greater immigration wave. Furthermore, federal government was not in charge of counting newcomers before 1891. Previously, only local governments were responsible for immigration issues. In other words, it did not take much for white immigrants to become American citizens. All they had to do was to apply for citizenship and stay in the USA for five years. A major development in US immigration policy occurred in 1920s when several highly restrictive acts were passed in order to decrease the number of newcomers both from Europe and Asia.²

As has been shown in previous paragraphs, people from the entire world pictured America as a place where they could finally realize their dreams and hopes for the future. In his book "Czechs in America", Ivan Dubovický claims that "[...] the migration of people

¹ Stephanie Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans* (New York, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 7, David Mauk, John Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 48, 51, BBC Home, "Historic Figures," *James I, King of England, VI King of Scotland (1566-1625)*, 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/james_i_kingshtml.

² Hasia Diner, "Immigration and U. S. History," *America.gov*, <http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/February/20080307112004ebyeessedo0.1716272.html>, Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 58, 59.

is a universal phenomenon that accompanied humanity throughout its entire history” (Dubovický 2003, 7). It is obvious that reasons why people leave their homelands are changing constantly. At the same time, however, people will always be attracted by countries with prosperous economy and stable political conditions where they can live better lives than in their home countries that cannot offer their inhabitants what they are longing for. The USA can undoubtedly serve as a great example of such country even though it has not always been entirely positive about the notion of migration.³

Unfortunately, unlike the USA, Czech lands rather belong to those less fortunate countries that have experienced many waves of emigration. Ivan Dubovický suggests that the most common reasons were location of our country and more influential European countries. Moreover, Czech nation was weakened considerably by various political, cultural or religious conflicts that were undoubtedly among the most significant factors that pushed Czechs from their homelands.⁴

1.1 Beginnings of Emigration from the Czech Lands to America

Vast number of Czechs (about 200, 000) left for The New World in the first half of the 17th century. By that time, Europe and especially Czech lands suffered from the destructions caused by the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) that stemmed from the hatred of Catholics against Protestants and visa versa. This war had extremely negative consequences for those Czechs who did not belong to the Catholic Church. In 1627, an orthodox Catholic Ferdinand II made it clear for all the Protestants that they belonged to the “banned group” (Mauk and Oakland 2006, 59) which means that they were not allowed to stay in Czech Lands any longer unless they converted. As a result of this resolution, those people were either expelled from Czech lands or they left voluntarily.⁵

Thanks to Amerigo Vespucci’s letter that was translated to Czech language, people in Czech lands were more or less aware of the existence of The New World at the beginning of the 16th century. It should also be mentioned that famous Czech educator Jan

³ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 48, Ivan Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America* (Praha: Pražská edice, k. s., 2003), 7, Andrea Baršová and Pavel Barša, *Přistěhovalectví a liberální stát: Imigrační a integrační politiky v USA, západní Evropě a Česku* (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita v Brně, Mezinárodní politologický ústav Brno, 2005), 51.

⁴ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 7.

⁵ František Čapka, “Dějiny zemí Koruny české v datech,” *VII. Vláda Habsburků a protireformace*, http://www.libri.cz/databáze/dějiny/úvody_4.html#habs, Lucie Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” (diploma diss., Ostravská Univerzita v Ostravě, 2005), 16, *Rodinná encyklopedie světových dějin* (Praha: Reader’s Digest Výběr, s. r. o., 2000), 634, 635.

Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was concerned with the New Continent, too. Inferential evidence exists, according to which Jan Amos Comenius was invited to America by John Winthrop himself who asked him to become a head of Harvard College. Comenius did not accept his offer, however, and went to Sweden instead where he and his work were very popular by that time also with a wealthy industrialist Ludvík de Geer, who promised to provide Jan Amos Comenius with financial means. In spite of that, the legacy of Jan Amos Comenius reached America thanks to Moravian Brethren who came there in 1735. They can be understood as a group of Protestants who escaped religious oppression. In The New World, they were mainly preoccupied with missionary work. What is more, they contributed greatly to preservation of Czech culture in the United States.⁶

I would like to highlight the fact that it was not easy at all to emigrate from the Czech Lands. This is especially true about the period of reign of Maria Theresa of Austria (1740-1780) who took several steps to foster her power both in Austria and the Czech Lands. Not only had she introduced numerous reforms such as compulsory schooling but she also made the emigration illegal in order to prevent people from leaving their homeland. This restriction, however, appeared to be rather ineffective if compared to the “Patent of Tolerance” which was applied by Joseph II in 1781 and which ensured religious freedom for Protestants. As a result of this, the emigration slowed down considerably. The change in legislature that made it possible for Czechs to emigrate voluntarily occurred in period after the eventful year 1848. Historically, Czechs emigrated primarily for religious and political reasons. These factors remained but there were more and more people who were leaving Czech lands for reasons of prosperity, too. Furthermore, there is another factor that should not go unrecognized. Many Czechs were dissatisfied with their status in Habsburg Monarchy which was marked by the notion of inferiority.⁷

1.2 Emigration from the Czech Lands to the USA until the 1890s

For the most of Czech people, America symbolized a country which could offer them freedom and protection of their rights though they knew from letters of those Czechs who already lived there that reality of everyday life might differ considerably from their initial

⁶ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 9, 10, 11., František Kožík, *Světlo v temnotách* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1970), 81, 82.

⁷ Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” 27, Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 7, Jiří Kořalka, Květa Kořalková, “Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století,” in *Češi v cizině 7* (Praha: Ústav pro etnografii a folkloristiku AV ČR, 1993), 33, Rodinná encyklopedie světových dějin (Praha: Reader’s Digest Výběr, s. r. o., 2000), 626.

expectations. In spite of this uncertainty, they joined emigrants from other European countries who were referred to as the 'old immigrants'. Irish, Germans but also Scandinavians belonged to biggest groups of newcomers who took advantage of quickly developing and relatively cheap transport. The Irish who first arrived to the U.S. towards the end of 1830s and who were predominantly Catholics (just like many Czechs) were not integrated into American society at first. Just on the contrary, they were exposed to the hatred of those who considered themselves to be native-born Americans and who distinguished strictly between settlers and immigrants. The former group encompassed merely British Protestants who believed that "[...] the basic social and political character of the USA was transplanted to New England from the mother country" (Mauk and Oakland, 2004, 57). The important idea is that it was exactly then when the notion of discrimination that is also being referred to as nativism emerged that remained a characteristic of American society until the 1960s and that has not been completely overcome yet.⁸

As noted in previous section, economic motives were decisive not only for Czechs but also for the Irish and the majority of people coming to America in period between years 1820-1890. In that era, many American companies were still lacking labour force, so that many skilled and unskilled workers could find jobs quite easily. As the size of Czech community was rather small if compared to the Irish one for example and the English knowledge fairly limited, the Czechs had to struggle in order to win their place in local politics or get better paid jobs. From this we can see that work and good salaries were certainly very significant pull factors.⁹

As far as the intensity of emigration from the Czech Lands is concerned, the numbers of people who were leaving for America rose especially in the 1850s (1853-1857). Ivan Dubovický suggests several reasons why many Czechs decided to leave their country exactly in these years. First, many Czech farmers found themselves in miserable financial situation because of the crop failure that occurred in 1851. Second, there were many young men who feared possible military service in Austrian army during the Crimean war (1853-1856), so that they chose emigration instead. According to Květa

⁸ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 7, 15, Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 55, 56, Stephanie Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 9, Diner, "Immigration and U. S. History", Baršová, Barša, *Přistěhovalectví a liberální stát*, 52.

⁹ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 55, 56, Michael F. Funchion, "Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class – The Shaping of an Ethnic Group, 1870 – 1900," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter D'A Jones (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 81.

Kořalková and Jiří Kořalka, there were thousands of people leaving each year.¹⁰

There were numerous obstacles to be overcome on the way to The New World and I would like to mention at least some of them. First of all, it was extremely demanding journey. Significant majorities of Czechs started their journeys in Vienna where they got on train to Prague and further to Germany where there were several major leaving points for further voyage to America such as Hamburg and Bremen. In the latter ones camps for emigrants were established where special attention was paid to hygiene in order to prevent passengers from contagious diseases. This means that each and every person had to be clean and healthy prior to his or her trip to America. Second obstacle was the journey across the Atlantic Ocean to America itself. Usually the ships were overcrowded, so that the passengers could barely find a bed for themselves. Furthermore, it was only after the year 1848 when the passengers started to be supplied with food on their journey to America. Until then the entire families were fully dependent on food they brought with them. Other difficulties to overcome were numerous diseases that were spreading very quickly among exhausted and hungry emigrants.¹¹

All the immigrants had to be registered immediately after their arrival to America, and after 1891 when the famous “screening depot” (Mauk and Oakland, 2004, 59) Ellis Island was opened they could only hope that government officials would allow them to become new citizens of the USA. Many Czechs who arrived to New York continued either to states such as Wisconsin, Ohio or Illinois where large numbers of Czech immigrants settled. Those Czechs who entered The United States through Galveston would typically settle in fertile plains of Texas where there was almost unlimited supply of inexpensive land.¹²

Czechs who were considering leaving for America in the 1860s were stopped by the Civil War which took place in period between the years 1861-1865. This conflict originated in intolerance of the Northern states towards slavery that was considered legal in the Southern states. The United States became one country again in 1865 and as President Lincoln said in his famous speech he delivered in Gettysburg in 1863: “This nation, under

¹⁰ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 14, 15., Eva Eckertová, *Kameny na prérui* (Praha 2: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, s.r.o., 2004), 61., Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” 27-31, Kořalka, Kořalková, *Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století*, 30.

¹¹ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 16, 17, Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” 27-31.

¹² Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 59, Alena Figarová, “Fond vystěhovalectví v muzeu ve Frenštátě pod Radhoštěm,” (diploma diss., Masarykova Univerzita v Brně, 2008), 24 – 28.

God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from this earth.” Soon, many new immigrants of all possible origins were streaming to the United States again. Czechs were not exception as we can see from figures published in Jiří Kořalka’s and Květa Kořalková’s discourse analysis. They claim that only in 1860s, more than 177, 000 people left their homeland and the emigration even rose in 1880s when the number of Czech emigrants reached 251, 000 people in total.¹³

1.3 Emigration from the Czech Lands to the USA: 1890-1938

The immigrants who started coming to the USA in the 1890s were referred to as the ‘New immigrants’. Those newcomers were most typically of Italian, Polish, Greek and also Czech origin and had at least one thing in common. Desire to improve their economic situation drove them to immigrate to the USA that was experiencing rapid industrial development in that era. As a result of this development, new kind of emigration emerged. In general, those emigrants were people who came to America to gain experience and inspiration. Czech businessmen were not exception. One of the most famous Czech industrialists Tomáš Baťa (1876-1932) also went to the USA for reasons of personal development. In order to enhance his own business at home he left for Lynn, Massachusetts in 1904 and was hired to work on an assembly line as an ordinary worker. Not only did he obtain valuable information about so called ‘mass production’ but he also realized a lot about how to increase productivity of his employees. Though it was not easy to put newly acquired ideas into practice in his factory in Zlín, the results were worth it. Tomáš Baťa contributed greatly to the economic upturn of his entire country at the beginning of the 20th century. By then, the Czechs considered themselves to be a part of a fairly modern society and, moreover, they kept fighting for extension of Czech political powers within Austrian Empire. There were at least two reasons why the Czech society experienced upheaval and why the emigration pattern altered by that time. First, as a result of modern and more efficient technologies, Czech industrial production was growing steadily that had a great impact on Czech economy. Second, quickly developing industry

¹³ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 26, Figarová, “Fond vystěhovalectví v muzeu ve Frenštátě pod Radhoštěm, “ 24 – 28, Brian O’ Callaghan, *An Illustrated History of the USA* (Great Britain: Longman, 2004), 53, Kořalka, Kořalková, *Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století*, 30, The Civil War, “American Civil War,“ *Historiography: Multiple Explanations of why the War began*, 2006, <http://www.tagate.com/wars/page/american.shtml>.

provided vacancies for many Czech men.¹⁴

Apart from the strong economics, it was also Czech political scene that played a very important role in increasing quality of life in the Czech Lands. In this context, I would like to mention political movement which was referred to as “realism” and which intended to democratize Austrian Empire with emphasis on economic and social issues. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Karel Kramář were among the most profound members. In my opinion, it was of utmost importance for Czech people to realize that it was possible to improve their status within Austrian Empire by enhancing the quality of Czech nation. However, the era of promising development for Czech nation was soon to be interrupted for four years. On 28th July 1914, a month after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand d’Este and his wife, Austrian Empire declared war on Serbia. Gradually, many other countries including Great Britain, Russia, Germany and France were joining this terrible conflict that is referred to as the First World War (1914-1918) today. The outbreak of the war obviously ruined all the intentions and concepts of Czech politicians who had to decide instantly whether to take the Austrian Empire’s side or to fight for the independence of the Czech nation.¹⁵

Exile appeared to be the only solution for those who wanted the Czech lands to become an independent state. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who was among the most important figures in the independence movement, and many others had to leave their homeland as there was a real danger of persecution. This emigration can be referred to as ‘temporary emigration’ because it only lasted for four years and thanks to help of Czech Americans and other Czechs who lived in France, Switzerland or Russia during the wartime the mission was accomplished successfully. Ivan Dubovický also mentions that generally, there were many volunteers who took part in the fights on the Western Front among Czech Americans. Their financial support could not go unrecognized as well as the positive influence they had on the public opinion of Americans regarding Czech

¹⁴ František Čapka, “Dějiny zemí Koruny české v datech,” IX. *Utváření novodobého českého národa*, http://www.libri.cz/databáze/dějiny/úvody_5.html#nar., Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 58., Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 31., Ed Dinger, “Bata Ltd.,” *Answers.com*, 2009, <http://www.answers.com/topic/bata-ltd.>

¹⁵ František Kolář, *Politická elita meziválečného Československa 1918-1938: Kdo byl kdo za první republiky* (Praha: Pražská edice, k. s., 1998), 162, 163., František Čapka, “Dějiny zemí Koruny české v datech,” X. *Směřování k samostatnému státu*, <http://www.libri.cz/databáze/dějiny/text/t80.html#19140000>.

independence.¹⁶

The independence was achieved again in 1918 and soon, many emigrants returned home to newly established Czechoslovakia. This implies that the emigration of ordinary Czechs to the United States almost did not exist by that time. When the war was finished, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was doing his very best to create a state from which the people would not have to escape any more. From the first days in his office, he emphasized the basic values such as tolerance, justice as well as freedom for all Czechoslovaks without exception. Restrictions of emigration did not practically exist. Each and every individual possessed the right to leave his/her country if they wished. The men, however, could not emigrate before they completed their compulsory military service. Moreover, so called Ministry of Social Affairs existed in Czechoslovakia that was in charge of regulating the emigration. This regulation intended to protect certain groups of people including elderly people or people with disabilities that would not eventually be accepted by target country.¹⁷

The immigration policy of the USA was rather strict after the WWI. Having passed several highly restrictive immigration quota laws, the US government demonstrated its unwillingness to accept more immigrants neither from Europe, nor from Asia. The Emergency Quota Act that can be described as “[...] the first general limitation of immigration” (Mauk and Oakland 2004, 60) was adopted in 1921. This made the situation more complicated for Czechs who wanted to immigrate to the U.S.A by that time. According to the new ruling only 358, 000 immigrants from Europe could enter the USA each year. Final version of this legislature was yet come, however. As I have already mentioned, many Americans, namely those of British origin, believed that some immigrants should not be allowed to enter the country, using the pseudo-science called ‘eugenics’ as a main argument. This racist ideology combined with the US patriotism resulted in adoption of ‘national origins quotas’ in 1924 that were even more restrictive than the ones from 1921. The intention was to privilege immigrants from the United Kingdom, so that the quotas for other European countries including Czechoslovakia were

¹⁶ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 32, Kořalka, Kořalková, *Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století*, 36, Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” 27-31.

¹⁷ Kořalka, Kořalková, *Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století*, 36, Josef Novák, “The Legacy of TGM,” *Tomas Garrigue Masaryk*, 1997, http://old.hrad.cz/president/Masaryk/index_uk.html, Tesařová, “Češi v Americe,” 27-31.

reduced from 3% to 2% “[...] of the foreign-born in the USA from that country at the federal census of 1910” (Mauk and Oakland, 2004, 60).¹⁸

1.4 Emigration from Czechoslovakia to the USA since 1938

New wave of immigration to the United States of America rose as a result of Nazi occupation. This emigration was culminating in years 1939 and 1940 when the US government passed special laws that made it possible for Czechoslovaks and other European refugees to immigrate to the United States of America no matter how high or low were the quotas for their countries. Nevertheless, many of them, especially Jews, were sent back where they came from. There were at least two reasons why the USA did not accept those refugees. First, there was general assumption that the country could not provide jobs for that many people. Second, the notion of anti-Semitism was spreading very quickly not only in Europe but also in America. From this we can see that there had been certain contradiction between two principles in American immigration policy: nativism and liberalism.¹⁹

The principle of liberalism won after the Second World War when the Congress could not but to change the immigration laws. The dissatisfaction with post war development in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Cuba or Hungary caused another huge immigration to the USA. From the beginning of the Cold War onwards, the USA accepted many non-quota refugees and it was suddenly more than clear that the quotas were rather a shame for US foreign policy. Finally in 1965, under Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency (1963-1969), the Immigration Act was adopted that was based on notion of equality. On the other hand, there were still many limits and restrictions. As an illustration, almost three quarters of all the visas were assigned to the immediate family members of US citizens.²⁰

As far as the emigration from Czechoslovakia is concerned, it was not that easy to leave the country after 1945. When the Red Army set the Czechoslovakia free from Nazism, the majority of emigrants could finally return back home. Their happiness was only temporary, however just like the democracy in Czechoslovakia that appeared to be too fragile to endure the pressure of Soviet Union. For instance, the refusal of Marshall Plan

¹⁸ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 60, Diner, “Immigration and U. S. History“.

¹⁹ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 60, 61, Baršová, Barša, *Přistěhovalectví a liberální stát*, 53.

²⁰ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 61, Baršová, Barša, *Přistěhovalectví a liberální stát*, 54, Diner, “Immigration and U. S. History“.

comes to mind that can provide the best illustration of endangered Czechoslovakian sovereignty. Simply put, Czechoslovakia failed to renew democracy and in 1946 happened what Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk feared most. By that time, the Communist Party won the last democratic elections in Czechoslovakia and over the following two years, was fostering its position in the country.²¹

Many people figured they did not want to live in constant fear and they decided to act before it was too late. Though the representatives of the Communist Party tried to make impression that they would not stop anybody who wanted to emigrate, the reality was quite different. In fact, all non-communist politicians were under constant control of state police (StB.). This reveals that it was not safe to wait too long for those who wanted to emigrate. Generally, the earlier people left the better for it was getting more and more difficult to cross the western border. In spite of the soldiers with dogs and border fences that were built at the beginning of the 1950s, many people managed to emigrate successfully. It has been estimated that approximately 100, 000 people left Czechoslovakia from 1948 until 1950.²²

After Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, the change in attitudes towards emigration occurred that enabled many people to emigrate if they were invited by their friends or sometimes also family members from abroad. Since early 1960s, the entire Czechoslovak society was waiting for better times to come. So called 'Prague Spring' which started in January 1968 represented the climax of those expectations. Soviet Union and its leaders, however, did not share the enthusiasm of Czechoslovakian reformers who believed they could create what Alexandr Dubček named "socialist democracy". The invasion of Red Army that took place in 1968 brought all their hopes to end.²³

Period of fear and persecution began for those who rejected the notion of normalization. People were not only worried about their own existence but also about their

²¹ Zdeněk Jirásek, *Československá poúnorová emigrace a počátky exilu: Prameny a studie k dějinám československého exilu 1948-1889* (Brno: Prius, 1999), 7, 8, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, "The official website of the Czech Republic," *A period of recovery*, 2007, <http://www.czech.cz/en/economy-business-science/general-information/economy-development-and-potential/economic-history/a-period-of-recovery/>, Tesařová, "Češi v Americe," 42-45, Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 60.

²² Zdeněk Jirásek, *Československá poúnorová emigrace a počátky exilu*, 11, Tesařová, "Češi v Americe," 42-45.

²³ Pavel Tigrid, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, (Praha: Prostor, 1990), 90, Tesařová, "Češi v Americe," 42-45, František Čapka, "Dějiny zemí Koruny české v datech," *XI. Léta první republiky a protektorátu*, http://www.libri.cz/databáze/dějiny/úvody_6.html#soc.

children's future. There was a real danger that children of those who openly disagreed with communist regime would never be allowed to study at high schools or universities. Moreover, it was very difficult to predict what was going to happen with Czechoslovakia after the August 1968. Specialists, educated people, politicians and many others therefore decided to leave the country that used to be so different before the communist coup in February 1948. In other words, very little remained from the Masaryk's Czechoslovakia where there was space for all hard working and educated people who followed the rules and taught their children to do the same. This was, however, not true anymore.²⁴

²⁴ Tesařová, "Češi v Americe," 54. "The official website of the Czech Republic," A period of recovery.

2 MAJOR EMIGRATION WAVES

In this section of my bachelor thesis, I want to aim on the factors that drove Czechoslovaks to leave their homeland in the period of the years 1948 and 1989. In my opinion, it is highly important not to forget about thousands of those who rejected to come to terms with political development in Czechoslovakia and decided to emigrate instead. Although it is a phenomenon so typical for our society, emigration in the 20th century was rather overlooked for many decades in our country, especially after the Communist Party came to power in 1948. One of the possible reasons might simply be related to the fact that communists were not willing to admit that many individuals wanted or even had to leave the country both for political and economic reasons. The question of immigration was not among discussed issues during the communist era when there was little focus on modern history.²⁵

In his discourse analysis, Zdeněk R. Nešpor highlights the fact that there is still little good scientific evidence about Czechoslovak emigration westwards. It is, however, of utmost importance to understand the factors that caused the emigration and to know the historical background in order to be able to learn from the past as it is the aim of this thesis. Czech nation saw periods of suppression that only ended 20 years ago and it is therefore essential for us to determine the relationship between the past and present times. This means that on our way to democracy, we have to keep in our minds that people suffered to get what many of us take for granted today. We should maintain the notions of freedom, justice and democracy and behave in accordance to these.²⁶

2.1 Emigration Wave of 1948

On 14th March 1948, sad news about the sudden death of Jan Masaryk, the son of the founder of democratic Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, spread all around the world. After the communist takeover, Jan Masaryk kept his post of foreign minister as he promised to President Dr. Edward Beneš (1884-1948) but, at the same time, he disagreed with the policy of the Communist Party and was afraid that the risk he took might have been too big. He was even considering emigration but he died only two weeks after the

²⁵ Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. Století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90. let* (Praha 1: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002), 11.

²⁶ Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 11, 12.

creation of new communist government. Václav Kotyk believes that Jan Masaryk's death was embodiment of the decay of Czechoslovakia that failed entirely to re-establish its democracy. Moreover, it was thought of as a warning for the rest of the society.²⁷

The United Nations demanded investigation of Jan Masaryk's death. Long talks that followed, however, were marked by complete disinterest and reluctance of Soviet Union's delegate to act. This implies that political independence of our country was under threat. The Czechoslovak public was shocked and so was the American one. Generally, these events together with the ban of organizations such as Skaut or Sokol influenced opinions of many Czech Americans whose attitude towards the Soviet Union was rather negative at that time. Nevertheless, there were still many people who opposed that it was not Stalin's intention to threaten the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia. Jan Masaryk himself was convinced that all Stalin actually wanted was to win the war. As a foreign minister, he relied fully on agreement between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia which was signed in December 1943 and which was looked upon as a guarantee of independent development of Czechoslovakia.²⁸

The problem with Soviet Union's foreign policy was, however, that it was lacking anything that could be referred to as ethics. In spite of this, many politicians believed that Czechoslovakia should stay in good political terms with the Soviet Union for they did not want to give up the idea of profitable cooperation between the two Slavic nations. From this we can see that there was general assumption that nothing could happen to our independence and freedom. Today, we might think of these solutions and decisions as entirely wrong and unrealistic but one simply has to realize that the future of Czechoslovakia was decided long before our country was forced to reject Marshall Aid by the Soviet Union in 1947. Václav Kotyk is convinced that sooner or later Czechoslovakia would have ended up as it did anyways.²⁹

As I have already mentioned, a great emigration wave rose in 1948 as a reaction to the situation in Czechoslovakia. With total number of at least 100, 000 emigrants, this exodus is undeniably the greatest in the Czech history. The changes that occurred in society were too dramatic and it was not that difficult to recognize that something was

²⁷ Pavla Horáková, "Jan Masaryk died 54 years ago", *Radio Praha, Český rozhlas 7*, March 10, 2002, <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/24973>, Václav Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk*, (Praha: Ústav dějin střední a východní Evropy ČSAV, 1993), 78.

²⁸ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 48., Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk*, 54.

²⁹ Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk*, 61, 65.

going wrong. People were soon to realize that it was only the Communist Party that decided what was going to happen in the country. In other words, as Czechoslovakia was under the Soviet sphere of influence, communists were in control of everything that was going on in economy, media, education, culture etc.³⁰

The USA appeared to be the best choice to many emigrants from Czechoslovakia in 1948. Destruction of the entire Europe was most probably among the main reasons why the USA and not any European country became such a popular target destination. While a considerable number of Czechoslovak immigrants settled in Chicago or New York that still counted as major Czech immigration centres, Washington, D.C. was becoming more and more popular among those immigrants who wanted to participate actively in politics. They hoped to keep in touch with the most profound Czechoslovak politicians who would help them to get a greater opportunity to draw US government's attention to the alarming situation in their home land. Many were talking about the temporary character of this situation and were convinced that the USA would intervene.³¹

The political atmosphere in Czechoslovakia was getting more tensed every day. By that time, a significant shift occurred in geographical terminology as a result of refusal of Marshall Plan by Czechoslovakian government. Marshall Plan can be described as financial aid designed by the US minister of foreign affairs G. Marshall that was intended to help the European countries including Soviet Union to recover after the WWII. Even though Czechoslovaks have always been part of Europe and western world more than any other Slavic nation, they were suddenly 'relocated' to Eastern Europe. It really did not matter about the location. Czechoslovakia did not belong to what we call Central Europe anymore. Many people did not want to come to terms with this fact. Having left everybody and everything behind, the first Czechoslovak political refugees reached Austrian or Bavarian borders in February 1948, still hoping that it would soon be possible to return back home again. The number of emigrants from Czechoslovakia was growing bigger and the emigration reached its peak at the beginning of 1950s.³²

The discontent of Czechoslovaks with the Communist regime was strengthened by many injustices that were going on in their country. It should be emphasized that in 1951,

³⁰ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 49.

³¹ Jan Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, (Praha: Tiskárna Dr. Eduard Grégr a syn, s. r. o, 1999), 15., Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 49, Pavel Tigrid, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, 26, 27.

³² Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 14, Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk*, 62.

there were thousands of political prisoners in Czechoslovakia who were often forced to work in labour camps that had a lot in common with concentration camps as we know them from Nazi Germany. Political processes were among the common tools of newly established regime. It is therefore not surprising at all that people were frightened because, as Jan Filípek points out, they could never be sure who would report against them. The notion of isolation together with fear and anger characterized the Czechoslovak society by that time. It has been estimated that from 1948 till 1954, approximately 200, 000 people were sentenced to death. Generally, the history of those processes is marked by the cruelty of the communist regime as well as sad memories of those who survived or relatives of victims of this machinery that was not based on justice but lies made up by the Communist Party.³³

As an illustration, I would like to mention political process with Dr. Milada Horáková which played an important role in the history of fabricated processes in Czechoslovakia. Milada Horáková was among those people who recognized quite early the real danger of communism. It was her main intention to maintain the cooperation among the members of banned political parties and protect those people against persecution. She was also among the most important representatives of political opposition in Czechoslovakia, trying to reunite those who disagreed with communist propaganda and form a new political party. In so doing, she hoped to express her protest against regime. She would not listen to her immediate friends and family members who urged her to emigrate before it was too late, and she kept helping those who needed it.

The process with Milada Horáková began on May 31, 1950. The important thing about this process is that it was for the first time ever when the Soviet pattern of interrogation was put into practice including memorizing of allegations etc. This did not, however, work out in Milada Horáková's case. She managed to defend herself quite well and, moreover, she presented her ideas about democracy as well as her political views and opinions. Even though many famous politicians, scientists and personalities such as Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Trygve Lie or Winston Churchill were begging for her life, she was not spared. Dr. Milada Horáková met her death in Pankrác Prison on June 27, 1950.³⁴

Emigration could have saved her life but she insisted on staying in Czechoslovakia

³³ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 41, 42, Karel Kaplan, *Největší politický proces, M. Horáková a spol.* (Brno: Doplněk, 1996), 5.

³⁴ Kaplan, *Největší politický proces, M. Horáková a spol.*, 88, 110, 156, 157, 162, 163.

instead and fought an evil regime that had so to speak unlimited power over all the institutions in the country, regime that killed or expelled hundred thousand of innocent people. Dr. Milada Horáková decided not to give up her fight for better life in our country for she did not want to adjust to the life in communist society. I think that she should be spoken of as a heroine. She is undoubtedly a person to remember, to be proud of.

Political processes of the 1950s can serve as good evidence of the fact that there was no space for people with opinions and viewpoints that were in contradiction with Marxist ideology in Czechoslovakia. Those people, it should be remembered, were educated and successful personalities who enjoyed respect of public for what they achieved prior to February 1948. Their contribution to the welfare of Czechoslovak state was of a great importance. There were mainly politicians, managerial staff, doctors, teachers, writers, small businessmen whose businesses were confiscated, students who lost their chance to complete their studies at Czechoslovak universities and many others. Though the Communist Party argued that the country only got rid of those who were preoccupied with subversive activities, the consequences of this flee were noticeable especially after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 when our society was lacking people who would contribute to renewal of democracy in our country.³⁵

It is also very important to take into account that people did not leave their country because they were seeking excitement or adventure. On their way to freedom they had to cope with numerous complications and those who managed to cross the borders successfully were talking about the whole process of emigration as the greatest personal experience. They were determined to start their lives over again in a free American society that has always been a symbol of economic success as well as personal independence.³⁶

When it comes to economic success in particular, it is certainly something that could not be achieved in Czechoslovakia during communist era. Earlier in my thesis, I mentioned one group of emigrants that consisted mainly of small business owners and skilled workmen. The main reason why those people left our country was the process of 'nationalization' of private sector that started early in 1948. Big companies, banks and factories were confiscated right after the WWII was finished but, at the same time, the Communist Party promised that it would protect small business. This turned out to be a lie

³⁵ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 43.

³⁶ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 44., Mauk , Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 48.

when new Constitution came into being in May 1948. It had serious consequences for private sector in Czechoslovakia that stopped to exist only a year later. Not even small salesrooms or workrooms could stay in private hands any longer. What is more, it did not really take much to become a new manager of confiscated companies because it was not qualification but membership in the Communist Party that played the main role in admission process.³⁷

Nationalization together with political persecution was among the most significant push factors that drove many people to immigrate to the USA. Those who emigrated for the first reason did not want to watch the gradual decay of their business; the latter ones were seeking life in democratic country where they could finally enjoy basic liberties while the liberty of speech was probably the most important one for this group of emigrants. Besides that there were still certain hopes that the western powers, namely the USA would not accept dictatorship in Czechoslovakia. Those hopes were fuelled by promises of US politicians about how they would like to defeat the communist regime. Dwight D. Eisenhower who was elected President of the United States of America in 1952 said he would never exchange his dignity for his own safety. Four years later, the USA had the opportunity to act when the Red Army invaded Hungary to suppress insurrections against the Communist Party. Neither the USA nor the UN took the initiative to resolve the conflict, however. Nobody took Hungary's part because the USA feared the open conflict that might have evolved in nuclear war. This is how the 'policy of liberation' vanished and quietly transformed into 'ideological influence'. Thus, the Voice of America (est. 1942) and Radio Free Europe (est. 1949) that were established in order to provide news for people from Communist countries became the only means of how to keep in touch with western world for those who stayed in Czechoslovakia.³⁸

³⁷ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 69, 70., Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, "The official website of the Czech Republic," *A period of recovery*, 2007, <http://www.czech.cz/en/economy-business-science/general-information/economy-development-and-potential/economic-history/a-period-of-recovery>.

³⁸ Tigríd, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, 26, 27, 28, 29., Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 50, Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 42, 50., The White House Washington, "About the White House •Presidents," 34. *Dwight D. Eisenhower 1953-1961*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/DwightDEisenhower/>, Hoover Institution, "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty," *About Project*, 2007, <http://hoorferl.stanford.edu/aboutProject.php>.

2.2 Emigration Wave of 1968

In the mid 1960's, a change in political climate occurred that was initiated by Czechoslovak communists themselves. Antonín Novotný, the president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the head of Czechoslovak Communist Party, was replaced by pro-reform leader Alexandr Dubček who was determined to humanize the communism in Czechoslovakia. From the very beginning of this process that was referred to as Prague Spring, since January 1968, there were doubts whether this experiment would work out or not. Many Czechs abroad were rather sceptical about this development. They claimed that any totalitarian regime was wrong in principle and could not therefore be reformed.³⁹

Prague Spring together with the hopes of many Czechoslovak people was ended quite soon, in August 1968 when the armies of Warsaw Pact entered Czechoslovakia. Another emigration wave followed that lasted till November 1989. During the first weeks after the occupation, it was not that difficult to cross the borders as all the checkpoints were opened again after 20 years. The total number of emigrants was approximately 100,000 and according to Pavel Tigrid so called 'August Emigrants' can be divided into three groups. The first group encompasses people who experienced persecution and who took advantage of the possibility to leave the country easily with their entire families. Second group consists mainly of educated people and students and those who wanted to reform the Communist Party and who decided to go to exile after August 1968 form the third group. If we take a closer look at this group in particular, we realize that it is quite different from the two previous ones. The thing is that it consists of communists who supported the reform movement but failed and had to leave the Party. Just like the normalization of Czechoslovak society emerged gradually, those people took their time, too. Some of them waited till September 1969 but when Alexandr Dubček was given a post of ambassador in Turkey and thus was removed from political scene, their lost their patience. Another factor that contributed to their final decision to emigrate was renewed censorship as well as the fact that they often lost their positions both in the Party and their civic occupations.⁴⁰

People who left in 1968 just wanted to make sure that neither they nor their families would have to go through the terror of prisons, labour camps and persecution of any kind

³⁹ Tigrid, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, 58, 84, Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 21., Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 46, 47.

⁴⁰ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 21., Tigrid, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, 92.

again. Many Czechoslovaks emigrated for reasons of economic prosperity as well as career advancement because in Czechoslovakia, they would have never managed bigger progress if they had not become members of the Communist Party. Jan Filípek mentions, however, that this kind of immigration was not that welcomed in western world. Not many countries were eager to accept people who wanted to take advantage of prosperous economies of those states. This is why immigrants had to use persecution as a main reason for their emigration even though it was not always true. Zdeněk R. Nešpor highlights the fact that the main difference between the emigrants of 1948 and those who emigrated 20 years later was that the latter ones would not organize themselves in order to be active politically. Neither did they show much interest in what was going on in their homeland, which had big impact on the second generation of emigrants in particular. This reveals that they managed to assimilate quite quickly and unlike the emigrants of 1948 they were not willing to maintain their customs that much. It should be mentioned, however, that not all those people were only motivated by better life that was waiting for them in the United States. Jan Filípek also points out that for RAF pilots, for example, August 1968 was practically the first chance to leave Czechoslovakia. Similarly, some students, especially those who took part in protests against the presence of Red Army in Czechoslovakia, could not but leave the country. Helplessness, defeatism as well as disillusion were the most common words the student activists used to describe how they felt about the whole situation.⁴¹

Flee from Czechoslovakia after the year 1968 did not last for too long. Towards the end of 1969 the borders were closed again for those who wanted to leave the country. This reveals that the emigration slowed down considerably in the 1970s. According to statistics approximately 70, 000 people left Czechoslovakia in the period of the years 1968 and 1969 while “only” 4, 500 people emigrated in 1970 and this number became even lower during the 1970s. The majority of people who decided to stay in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic mostly accepted the reality of everyday life in communism but some of them joined illegal movements such as Charta 77 and in so doing they expressed their disagreement with communist regime. Those were often urged to leave the country by the communists themselves. Another group of emigrants consisted of people who were allowed to travel westwards time to time such as sportsmen or artists and also tourists who

⁴¹ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 23, 24., Milan Otáhal, *Okupace, moc, společnost 1969/1989* (Praha AV ČR: Maxdorf, 1994), 13, Tigrid, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*, 92, Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 52.

just did not return home from vacations. Those people decided they did not want to be members of society whose values turned out to be reversed and absurd.⁴²

The number of emigrants increased again in the 1980s as a result of unsatisfactory situation of economics in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Worse living standard of many Czechoslovaks was among logical consequences of such development. Many were disgruntled as the differences between people were growing bigger. Besides that a phenomenon called “black market” became an essential part of everyday life in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Black market came into being in Europe during the WWII when it was difficult or even impossible to buy goods in shops and normally it ceased to function as soon as the market was restored. This did not happen in our country, however. Just on the contrary, the black market flourished as the supply of products was not able to meet the needs of everybody.⁴³

The major pull factor that drove people to leave their homeland in the 1980s was economic prosperity and the advantages of life in developed Western European countries. To be accepted by those countries appeared not be that easy, however. Germany, Switzerland, Austria and many other democratic states were tired of accepting so many immigrants just because of the fact that they were dissatisfied with the conditions of their lives in their homelands. This seems to be the main reason why the majority of Czechoslovak emigrants from 1980s ended up in the United States of America. Thanks to the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) it was much easier to get asylum in the USA than in any other European country. In order to reduce the number of illegal newcomers, the US government passed this law in 1986. It meant considerable improvement in situation of both new immigrants as well as those who had been there already.⁴⁴

In order to provide a complex picture of the major emigration waves, I have put together several sources, be it books written by renowned authors who deal with the question of emigration or memories of those who experienced emigration themselves. I

⁴² The Memorial of the Victims of Communism, “ » Museum » 2nd Floor » Room 82,“ *The spring in Prague (1968) - Charta 77 (1977) - The velvet Revolution (1989)*, 2009, <http://www.memorialsighet.ro/en/sala.asp?id=38.>, Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 49, 52, 53.

⁴³ Filípek, *Odlesky dějin československého exilu*, 111., Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 48.

⁴⁴ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 65, Nešpor, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty*, 53, 54.

think that we can be grateful to those people who recorded and shared important facts with us, readers, so that we could learn more about various problems the inhabitants of our country had to cope with since 1948. These facts should be remembered, so that the history will never repeat itself and our small nation in the heart of Europe will not experience such big population losses any more. Let's hope that the lesson has been learned and notions such as fabricated political processes, labour camps or censorship will only remain a dark part of the history of the Czech Republic.

3 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND ASSIMILATION OF CZECH MINORITY IN THE US

In this part of my bachelor thesis, I would like to focus on those destinations in the USA that were most popular with Czech settlers in general. Another thing I want to discuss is what Ivan Dubovický refers to as ‘transformation into Amerikán’. In other words, it is my intention to describe the process of assimilation and adjustment to the new society as well as willingness of Czech people to keep their own culture. This was an ongoing process and it is therefore important to provide a reader with historical context he or she can use for better orientation in my discussion. In order for this to be achieved, I will start talking about Czechs who left their homeland for America during the second half of the 19th century. As I have already mentioned, Czech lands had been overburdened with excessive emigration for most of their history. Evidence exists according to which nearly 500, 000 Czechs emigrated in that era while approximately one half decided to undergo long and dangerous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to the USA. In addition, I would like to explain about the initial difficulties they had to face as well as accomplishments they achieved.⁴⁵

It should be mentioned that those who decided to leave their homes for the USA in the 1850s were very poorly informed about what to expect in the New World. Though numerous articles were being published regularly in Czech newspapers they were mostly simple stories that did not provide readers with quality facts about real life in America. Just on the contrary. In order for more Czechs to be motivated to immigrate to the USA, those Czechs who were already in America would hold out on some negative features of life in there. This was especially true about people who settled down in Texas and who were longing for more immigrants of Czech descent. From this we can see that it was very difficult to obtain concrete information one could rely on. As a result of this, Czechs mostly decided to go to those American states where there already were some immigrants of Czech descent they knew from before or where they could get cheap land or find a job. As I am fairly limited with space, I have picked three American states which means I am going to focus on Czech immigrants in Texas, Iowa and Wisconsin respectively.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kořalka, Kořalková, *Základní tendence českého vystěhovalectví a české reemigrace do počátku dvacátých let 20. Století*, 30., Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 7.

⁴⁶ Eva Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 41, 70, 76.

3.1 Czech immigrants in Texas

Texas is the first state I want to talk about in connection to places where there are the biggest Czech communities to be found in the USA. There are several reasons why so many Czechs moved exactly to Texas. First, the majority of Czech immigrants came from Moravia which means that they were used to live further away from bigger cities. Second, they were merely farmers seeking cheap and fertile land. Much of this land was suitable for cotton as well as tobacco-growing. Because of the high temperatures that can reach 45°C in summer, it was also possible to grow corn, sugar cane as well as wheat. On the other hand, I think that it would have been wrong not to mention those Czechs who chose the suburban areas of big cities for their new homes. Czech immigrants are often referred to as first ‘suburbanites’. By that time it was a golden rule that everybody who worked hard could achieve economic success regardless his or her class or occupation.⁴⁷

The Czech settlement on Texas plains was expanding as more immigrants were coming. Some of the villages were even given Czech names such as Vsetín, Velehrad, Hostyn or Praha. Many immigrants stayed in older German villages of Ellinger or Fayetteville. Surprisingly, Germans and Czechs who could be thought of as feudal enemies did not mind living close to each other because the cultural clash between those communities was not that big. Unlike the Americans who were migrating a lot, both Czechs and Germans had usually stayed in the same village for the rest of their lives. They did not participate in exploration of new areas in Western or Northern Texas but were trying their best in order to improve their farms as well as the living conditions within their communities. The notion of belonging was very important to Czech immigrants and it was exactly the land ownership that made them feel as a part of their new homeland.⁴⁸

Moreover, Czechs were interested in the history of Texas which was in some respect similar to that of Czech lands. The difference was, however, that Texas became independent from Mexico in 1836 while Czech lands had remained part of Austrian Empire until 1918. This reveals that Czechs found freedom as well as dignity in the USA where “[...] the people do not carry heavy burdens on their own shoulders, they have animals for that purpose” (Patterson 2005). I think there is an important question to be

⁴⁷ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 49, 58, Stephanie Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans* (New York, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 13, Figarová, “Fond vystěhovalectví v muzeu ve Frenštátě pod Radhoštěm,” 15.

⁴⁸ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 94, 95, 156., Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 54, 55.

raised. What did the notion of democracy and freedom mean to Czech immigrants? Eva Eckertová points out that the notion of democracy was closely related to Catholic religion within the Czech communities which made them quite different from the American ones. This was not true about all Czech immigrants. Just on the contrary, to some of them, religion and Catholicism in particular meant constant persecution that followed the defeat of Protestants in the Thirty Years War. This is probably the main reason why there were so many freethinkers, Protestants and atheists among Czech Americans. I think that it was rather natural that some disagreements occurred between Czech Catholics and Protestants. The former blamed the latter ones for denying their own culture and their endeavour to assimilate as quickly as possible. Czech Catholics also could not get over the fact that it was easier for Czech Protestants to become a part of predominantly Protestant American society. Czech Protestants, on the other hand, did not like the intolerant attitude of Catholics towards other faiths.⁴⁹

Most Czech immigrants were very proud of their traditions, as we can see from the articles published in the Czech newspapers 'Svoboda'. Thanks to Eva Eckertová we can have a closer look at the difficult process of naturalization of Czech immigrants who struggled to preserve their own culture but wanted to be part of American society at the same time. They treasured their right to vote as well as Thomas Jefferson's democratic principles. The Americans, however, did not like the Czech immigrants very much mainly because of the way how they presented themselves. Similarly the Czechs who always acted as a group in public could not understand American individualism. This reveals that there was rivalry between the Czech minority and Americans that was caused by unwillingness of both cultures to be tolerant towards each other.⁵⁰

It should also be mentioned that not only American individualism but also everything from climate to life style seemed to be exotic and very different from what the Czechs knew from before. We cannot therefore be surprised that many of them were rather disappointed with what they found at the end of this exhausting journey. Not only had they to cope with numerous problems including the lack of water but at the same time they knew they had to stay there because they would have no money for another journey. This

⁴⁹ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 113, 115, 138, Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 85, 87, Bill Patterson, "Our Czech Heritage," *Bohemian Culture in Iowa 150 YEARS – 1850 TO 2005*, 2005, <http://ourfarflungfamily.com/Our%20Czech%Heritage.html>.

⁵⁰ Cyril M. Klimesh, *Přicházeli z daleka: Historie městečka Spillville ve státě Iowa a jeho českých osadníků* (Praha: Nakladatelství Epoque, 2008), 183., Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 138, 139.

was particularly true about those who were among the first Czech immigrants who ended up in Texas in the 1850s. They faced many troubles, so that they could hardly avoid comparing Texas to their homeland. In Eva Eckertová's book we can read fragments of letters written by those people and realize that many described Texas as a sad country where there were almost no marks of civilization to be found.⁵¹

3.2 Czech Immigrants in Iowa and Wisconsin

Iowa appeared to be more suitable for Czech immigrants because of its milder climate, so that it often happened that e. g. Czechs who originally planned to settle in Texas would change their minds after their arrival to Galveston and continued northwards. One of the possible answers to the question why those Czechs chose Texas and not mid-west as their final destination is to be found in Eva Eckertová's book. She explains that they wanted to build their farms in American south rather than mid-west because they wanted to avoid long winters and snow. Some of them realized, however, that Texas and its landscape were too different from what they were used to from their homeland. The first 'Czech Iowans' settled in Howard, Tama Johnson, Winneshiek or Linn Counties. Those who decided to stay in the two latter ones would typically build their farms in villages named Ely, Spillville, Fairfax, and Cedar Rapids etc. When it comes to Tama County, there were many Czechs living in the villages of Chelsea, Vining or Belle Plaine. It was their plan to purchase a piece of land on the plain and cultivate it. Having managed to improve fertile plains, the Czechs gained respect of American farmers who typically did not bother to clear those plains and used them as pasture land.⁵²

Several authors agreed that the Czech immigrants in Iowa, Texas or elsewhere had something in common. There was a very strong bond between Czech settlers and their land. Land ownership determined the social status and a man's good reputation depended on his farming skills. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that another state I want to mention in connection to Czech immigration is Wisconsin. In order to persuade the emigrants to come to Wisconsin, the newly established state (1848) put a lot of effort into advertising. Soon, it was possible to read articles promoting Wisconsin in many newspapers all over Europe and America. This obviously raised awareness of great

⁵¹ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 77, Figarová, "Fond vystěhovalectví v muzeu ve Frenštátě pod Radhoštěm," 29., Patterson, "Our Czech Heritage".

⁵² Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 69, 70, 134, 136.,

possibilities that Wisconsin offered to its new citizens. First of all, just like in Iowa, the climate was healthier for Czechs than in Texas for example. Second, as Bill Patterson highlights in his essay, American states were 'non-secular' which means that the settlers enjoyed complete religious freedom. Another advantage was absence of slavery which was very important for new immigrants who did not have to compete with cheap black labourers if they wanted to earn some money after their arrival to America.⁵³

Most families who chose Wisconsin as the target state, stayed in Milwaukee. Miloslav Rechcigl mentions that it was usually the first place where most Czechs settled after they arrived to Wisconsin. Other places where many Czechs could be found were Racine or Manitowoc. The latter one was well known due to its forests that provided wood for house construction. As they were cheap and easy to build, log houses became very popular among Czech immigrants. Before they managed to build real house, pioneers had to live in so called 'dugouts' that were very primitive shelters. From this we can see that the beginnings of their stay in America were not easy ones for Czech immigrants.⁵⁴

3.3 Process of Assimilation of Czech Ethnicity

As noted earlier in my thesis, it was not that complicated to get US citizenship prior to the establishment of Ellis Island. Nevertheless, as David Mauk and John Oakland point out, a dangerous notion of 'nativism' developed by 'old' immigrants emerged that was marked by intolerance and discrimination of many different kinds. It is difficult to say to what extent the Czech immigrants were exposed to this nativism but it was exactly around the year 1850 when this highly exclusive concept was culminating. The members of so called American Party were convinced that British immigrants were somewhat better than the rest of the immigrants of other than protestant denomination. They felt that Anglo-American character of the country was endangered by newcomers who were bringing their own culture and new habits to the United States. As this campaign was directed primarily against immigrants of Catholic denomination, it also happened that at home privileged Czech Catholics experienced the hatred of American Protestants first hand. From this we can see that all the immigrants were not in the same situation at the very beginning of their

⁵³ Miloslav Rechcigl Jr., "Czech Pioneers in Wisconsin," *SVU, Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Science*, http://www.svu2000.org/cs_america/wisconsin.htm., Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 135, Patterson, "Our Czech Heritage".

⁵⁴ Cyril M. Klimesh, *Přicházeli z daleka: Historie městečka Spillville ve státě Iowa a jeho českých osadníků*, 68, 101., Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 20, Rechcigl Jr., "Czech Pioneers in Wisconsin".

stay in America. British settlers were the most fortunate ones for the American culture was not much different from their own. The Czechs, however, just like other non-British immigrants had to overcome many barriers on their way to naturalization. Language barrier was undoubtedly among the most significant ones. In 1868 the first school was established by Czech settlers in Bluff (Hostyn) in Texas. The language of instructions was Czech even though the law existed according to which all the children in the United States had to be taught only in English. Shortly afterwards, the problems regarding understanding grew bigger and it became necessary to adopt English as a means of communication in public and speak Czech only within the community and with immediate family members. As a result of this development, the Czech schools gradually ceased to function.⁵⁵

Education played a very important role in the process of assimilation of Czechs immigrants. The previous paragraph reveals that from the first days in America onwards, the emphasis of Czech immigrants had been on education because they believed that through education they would gain respect of other immigrant groups and Americans as well. In addition, as most Czechs who came to America were literate, they were disappointed when they realized that the majority of American farmers could neither read nor write. The Czech immigrant communities, on the contrary, encouraged the parents to send their children to school long before the schooling was compulsory in the US.⁵⁶

In the second half of the 19th century, education in America was viewed upon as the best way how to unify all the immigrants. In other words, under Andrew Johnson's presidency (1865-1869), the US government decided to Americanize all newcomers through education. As a result of this, two bodies of opinion emerged within Czech communities. The first group consisted mainly of parents who feared 'denationalization' of their children. The second group encompassed educated people such as journalists or lawyers who believed that English knowledge was necessary for those who wanted to become full members of American society. They claimed that Czechs should think more about future and get along well with their American neighbours. These opinions were given a push at the beginning of the 20th century (1909) when the concept of the 'melting pot' was first introduced in the USA by playwright Israel Zangwill. He was convinced that

⁵⁵ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 56, 57, Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 19, Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 90, Figarová, "Fond vystěhovalectví v muzeu ve Frenštátě pod Radhoštěm," 30.

⁵⁶ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 22, Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 119-122., Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 257.

people of all origins living in the USA should form one new nation together.⁵⁷

In order for assimilation to be achieved it was essential to make the whole process of acknowledgement of English language and Anglo-American culture as positive as possible. This is why the enlightened Czechs who were in favour of quick assimilation did not want to push English language on Czech people. Just on the contrary, their major intention was to explain the most significant events in American history, national holidays, laws, democracy etc. Another important factor that contributed to assimilation was undeniably rapid technical development and subsequent modernization of rural areas. In my opinion this can also be thought of as the very beginning of restrictions of immigration to the USA because machines replaced human labour force, so that it was no longer necessary for US government to attract Europeans including Czechs to fill vacancies. It is therefore clear that the lower was the number of newcomers from Czech lands the smaller was the chance for the Czech language and culture to be preserved.⁵⁸

It did not take long and many farmers were leaving their small farms that could not compete with bigger land owners. People were therefore forced to move to bigger towns and cities where they could find easier a job. In so doing, they lost their contact with Czech language. This implies that what was a homogenous community once did not exist anymore as they moved to different parts of the USA. WWII also played a very important role in the process of assimilation because many men left their villages and never returned. The fourth generation of immigrants typically lived in cities and did not show any particular interest in Czech language. The mission of assimilation was accomplished at that very moment. From the end of WWII onwards, however, there were thousands of Czechoslovak immigrants streaming to the US who ensured the survival of Czech language and culture in the New World. I will also come back to this issue in the next chapter where I will talk about the Czech culture more in detail.⁵⁹

The main purpose of this chapter was to focus on those places in the USA that were most popular with Czech emigrants. It was not always easy to pinpoint the exact reasons why people chose those places in particular as there were numerous factors in play such as desire to own land or to find job. It turned out to be logical that people usually prioritized

⁵⁷ Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 58, 25, Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 123, 142, 143.

⁵⁸ Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 57, Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 144, 145, 196.

⁵⁹ Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 14, 15, Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 194-196.

those US states where there were some Czechs already. The minimal knowledge of English language was certainly among the main reasons together with the strong solidarity that was characteristic feature of the Czech minority in the USA.

4 CZECH IMMIGRATION TO CHICAGO

In this section of my bachelor thesis I plan to deal with the Czech Immigration to Chicago in particular. Previously in my thesis, I concentrated mainly on those Czechs who settled in the rural areas of the USA (Texas). Therefore I chose Chicago to talk about as it was the most popular destination of Czechs who were coming to the USA to find themselves a job in order to become a part of industrialized Chicago's society. Till the first half of the 19th century, Chicago was a forgotten place on the frontier where there were only several log houses to be found. Today, Chicago is a huge city whose cosmopolitan character has been shaped by immigrants of many nationalities from the entire world. The first Czechs came to Chicago, Illinois in the 1850s. Shortly afterwards, first Czech districts emerged such as Czech California or Plzeň. Even though bigger groups of immigrants such as Italians or Irish far outnumbered the Czechs who were not coming in such big numbers, the Czech contribution to Chicago's public and political life was of a great significance.⁶⁰

First of all, I would like to mention the major pull factors that motivated the Czechs to immigrate exactly to Chicago. What seems to be important was finishing of the Erie Canal and subsequent improvement in transportation. Having connected the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Erie Canal became a basis for Chicago's further development. Similarly, the railroads that provided a very important connection with the East made it possible for newcomers to populate also the Northern parts of Illinois that experienced a dramatic growth with Chicago as its major centre. Nevertheless, the consequences of rapid transformation of Chicago were not positive for everybody. The farmers, for example, experienced huge outflow of young labour force to the city where there were great job opportunities.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Alizia Cozine, "Czechs and Bohemians," *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 2005, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/153.html>, Internetový magazín M37, "Chicago – my Kind of Town, 1998, http://www.m37.cz/CHICAGO/chicago_my_kind_of_town.htm., Jaromír Marek, "Češi v Chicagu," *Radio Praha, Český rozhlas 7*, October 28, 2004, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/clanek/59622>., Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 13-15, John Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration and their Contributions to Vocational Education in Chicago between 1875 and 1935," (diploma diss., Chicago State University, 2003), 21.

⁶¹ Drew VandeCreek, Ph.D., "Settlement and Immigration," *Illinois during the Gilded Age*, 2002, <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/gildedage/settlement.html>, Lucie Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago: A Land of Hope, A Land of Despair?," (Bc. diss., Masaryk University in Brno, 2008), 5.

Chicago's location was among decisive factors for those Czech immigrants who did not have enough money to pay for another journey westwards. This was, however, especially true about Irish newcomers who reached Chicago in the period of the years 1840 and 1850. I think that Irish should be mentioned not only because of the fact that they belonged to the biggest immigrant groups in Chicago but also because of the consistence of their community which was very similar to the Czech one. They would typically settle at the same place where their ship landed because they were very poor. Those Irish settlers who had at least little money began with a phenomenon known as 'chain immigration'. Often, it was only man who travelled first in order to earn money and pay for tickets for the rest of his family. As result of this Irish communities formed in areas nearby the huge factories and mines. The Czechs were not exception. From the very beginning of the Czech immigration to America, those Czechs who feared hardships connected with moving to unknown country followed their countrymen who already lived there.⁶²

Once the Czech immigrants managed to get over the initial troubles, they started looking for jobs which was not always easy. Though Chicago seemed to be offering numerous possibilities, the newcomers had to accept almost every job after their arrival to Chicago which means that they were often forced to do a work that was unpopular with Americans. Nevertheless, their commitment to work and their skills could not go unrecognized. They were considered to be brave and honest people who did not mind working hard all day long in order to become a part of American nation. The Czechs were also well aware of the fact that the city was in urgent need of labour force. As there were plentiful natural resources such in Illinois, it became necessary to built industries to convert those resources to goods. This implies that Chicago's potential to become a great business centre was growing higher and higher and so were the chances of regular workers to get better wages.⁶³

Czech immigrants mostly inhabited the area called Near West Side also because of the fact that it was not far away from the industrial city centre. They were quite fortunate because this area was not much affected by fire that caused a big damage in Chicago in 1871. Though the financial loss was huge, Chicago and its inhabitants managed to recover quite quickly thanks to New York City whose money helped to renew the majority of

⁶² Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 74., Mauk, Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction*, 56, VandeCreek, Ph.D., "Settlement and Immigration".

⁶³ VandeCreek, Ph.D., "Settlement and Immigration", Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 29.

destroyed buildings. Subsequently, time of prosperity began for building companies. As there were many skilled builders among Czech immigrants they did not hesitate and took part in the process of Chicago's renewal. In most cases, however, it was not an intention of Czech immigrants to stay in inner city areas. As soon as they managed professional progress and earned some more money they moved out of the city centre and established themselves in the suburbs where they finally found what they were looking for. They benefited from the closeness of the city but, at the same time, they enjoyed the life in the countryside. Evidence shows that today most Czech Chicagoans still live in suburban areas such as Stickney, Forest View or Brookfield.⁶⁴

4.1 Czech Chicagoans and their Attitude to Education

It is also obvious that the bigger is the community, the higher is its tendency to involve in political or public life. As I have already mentioned, the Czechs in America had been greatly concerned about the question of education from the very beginning of their arrival to America onwards. It was especially true about those who decided to settle in big industrialized cities like Chicago. They realized that big change occurred in vocational education where the skilled workers did not play such an important role anymore. They were not responsible for training the new labour force. This responsibility was shifted to board of education that was convinced that young workers would probably achieve higher proficiency through carefully planned training process at school. In order for this to be achieved, the Industrial League of Illinois was created in 1852 that was supposed to shape both the public and political opinion in favour of vocational education.⁶⁵

Finally, in 1867, the Cook County Normal and Training School was founded in Chicago. Education was free of charge which means that almost everybody could enrol this institution. The education authorities believed that the absence of school fee would be good enough motivation for parents to send their children to school. There was general assumption among lower class families that children would learn more about their future job in real life than at school. In my opinion the real reason was much simpler than that. To put it simply, many families were in need of money, so that they sent their children to work

⁶⁴ Vera A. Wilt, "Czech Americans," in *The Ethnic Handbook: A Guide to the Cultures and Traditions of Chicago's Diverse Communities*, ed. Cynthia Linton (Illinois: The Illinois Ethnic Coalition, 1996), 47., Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 56, 57, VandeCreek, Ph.D., "Settlement and Immigration", Cozine, "Czechs and Bohemians", Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 30.

⁶⁵ Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 78, Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 62.

as soon as possible. In this context I would like to mention Jaroslav J. Zamrhal, the very first headmaster of Czech origin at Chicago's public school, who came with new teaching plans for vocational education while his major focus was on drawing and its impact on the quality of young worker's final performance and Dr. Frank Jirka who was a member of Board of education in Chicago. Both of them kept highlighting the importance of vocational education and education in general for they believed that everyone possesses certain potential that needs to be discovered.⁶⁶

4.2 Czech Chicagoans and Communication within their Community

At this point I would like to stress the importance of communication among Czech immigrants in Chicago that was mainly realized through newspapers. Historically, the very first Czech newspapers were published on 21st January 1860 in Wisconsin. In Chicago, there were many newspapers printed both in Czech and Slovak languages. John Kugler suggests dividing those newspapers into two groups in accordance to the kind of information they conveyed: "First, there was the organizational papers, printed with dues paid by members who were very subjective in their writing; second, there were independent papers that depended upon circulation to make money and were more objective and popular." (Kugler 2003, 68) The latter ones were newspapers and magazines of all possible kinds including magazines for women and children but also for those who were interested in political affairs etc.⁶⁷

The main function of Czechoslovak print was not only to inform and entertain the readers but also make it possible for them to adjust to the new society gradually and more easily. The thing was that the very first generation of Czechs and Slovaks in Chicago managed to survive without the English knowledge without any particular problems. The entire neighbourhoods were Czech, so that we cannot be surprised that Czech people preferred to go shopping to Czech shops or that they gathered in Czech pubs. It was therefore of utmost importance to help them to become familiar with the new environment. In order for Czechs to have their expectations met, the journalists published articles that provided readers with information about other Czech immigrants elsewhere in America,

⁶⁶ Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 38, 48, 49, 102, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 21, 22.

⁶⁷ Milena Štráfeldová, "Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíška budoucnost," *Radio Praha, Český rozhlas* 7, 2008, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/cz/clanek/104877>, Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 67, 68, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 28-30.

about the emergence of new Czech associations but, above all, the intention of Czech press was to draw the readers' attention to progress achieved by other Czechs. In so doing the publishers hoped to enhance the self confidence of Czech immigrants.⁶⁸

It was of utmost importance to foster the 'Czech Chicagoans' self confidence because of the rapid modernization of the society that required certain participation in the Chicago's political life. Having experienced troubles with discrimination and incomes that were often lower than those of other immigrant groups, Czechs began organizing themselves within their communities in order to improve their position at labour market. It should be also mentioned that the Czechs strictly avoided creating various unions, believing that "[...] they would cause more harm than good" (Kugler 2003, 73). They took part in the Railroad Strike of 1877 instead together with many other workers of all possible origins. When this upheaval reached its peak, the police intervened and put the riots to end. Nevertheless, through this strike, immigrant workers in Chicago gained strong ally in Socialists (Social Labour Party) that took their side in their fight for better working and living conditions. This reveals that Chicago was about to become one of the greatest socialist cities in the USA by that time. Political leaders took action in order to solve the negative situation. The first step to be taken was the creation of so called 'craft unions' initiated by Mayor Carter Harrison (1825-1893) who is often thought of as a founder of organized strikes as we know them today. Another solution of great importance was adopted in 1917 when the Smith-Hughes Act was passed in order to direct more money into education. The main purpose was to lower the number of unskilled workers for whom it was getting more and more difficult to get steady jobs.⁶⁹

4.3 Czech Chicagoans and Politics

As the position of Czechs as a community within the American society was improving and they were earning more money, a shift in their political preferences occurred, too. I also want to point out that because of their unity, it was not very difficult to predict to whom the Czech Americans would give their vote. As I have already mentioned, the Czechs were very proud of their communities which means that they often voted for the same political

⁶⁸ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 139, 140, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 30, Milena Štráfěldová, "Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíška budoucnost".

⁶⁹ Richard Schneirov, "Strikes", *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 2005, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1211.html>, Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 75.

party as other members of the community. This reveals that their votes played a very important role especially in the local politics. While they were in favour of the Republican Party prior to the Civil War “[...] Chicago Czechs changed their allegiance in local politics after the Democratic Party nominated a Czech for alderman in 1883.” (Cozine 2005) This was undoubtedly a very significant moment in the history of Czech immigrants in Chicago. The most important events, however, were yet to come.⁷⁰

It was not easy for those Czechs who wanted to engage in politics to manage significant progress because of the fact that many political posts at the local level were already taken by Irish who came to Chicago earlier than Czechs. Historically, the very first Czech who succeeded in US politics was a lawyer Augustin Haidušek (1845-1929) who arrived to Texas with his parents when he was only 12 years old. Having defeated an American candidate, he became the Mayor of the town of La Grange in 1875. As his qualities were remarkable, he continued his political career in the Texas legislature. In 1896, he was appointed new head of bank in La Grange.⁷¹

Two years after Augustin Haidušek's death, another Czech politician of great importance became a Mayor of Chicago city. His name was Anton Čermák (1873-1933) and he came to the U.S. at a young age in 1892. Having spent his entire life in the core of Czech community in Lawndale, Čermák was well aware of his fellow countrymen needs. This might have helped him on his way to Chicago's city government because the immigrants have always been more concerned about local issues and supported those politicians who promised to solve their problems. Besides, he became famous due to his opinions that were in direct contradiction with the issue of Prohibition. Prior to his election as Mayor of Chicago, he served as a “[...] secretary of the United Societies for Local Self-Government, a coalition of Germans, Czechs, other immigrant communities, and brewing and distilling interests.” (Cozine 2005) Unfortunately, Anton Čermák's promising career was ended in 1933 when he was assassinated in Miami. His death is, however, considered to be a mystery. Some specialists claim Anton Čermák became a victim of Chicago's

⁷⁰ Cozine, “Czechs and Bohemians“, Kugler, “A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration”, 73.

⁷¹ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 72, 140., Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 76, 77.

underworld while others are convinced that Čermák died as a hero when he stopped a bullet that was originally meant to kill the President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁷²

4.4 Czech Chicagoans and Cultural Life

So far, I have merely been talking about the most profound Czechs who achieved success in political sphere by law making or by solving problems in public education. I feel that it is time to point out that there were also many Czech Chicagoans who contributed to cultural life which was undeniably equally important part of everyday life in Czech community. Large numbers of Czechs gathered in various organizations, circles or clubs. In her thesis, Lucie Duzbabová claims that there were approximately 500 Czech associations in Chicago prior to the WWI. Today, the number is much lower. Ivan Dubovický is talking about 200 Czech organizations in the entire USA. Nevertheless, it is more than clear that the Czechs have always belonged to socially active immigrant groups.⁷³

It has long been a tradition among Czechs to organize themselves into various circles where they could perform drama, sing or read quality literature. We cannot therefore be surprised that they followed these routines after their arrival to the New Continent. There were several major reasons why people founded those associations. First, especially the first generation of immigrants was not too eager to socialize with other than Czech ethnicity because of the language barrier. Second, some newcomers were seeking help or advice within those societies because they did not have anybody else to contact. Least but not last, it was also the purpose of those organizations to maintain Czech language and traditions which was in contradiction with the notion of assimilation on the one hand but made the life of immigrants more pleasant on the other. As an illustration, I would like to mention a famous sports organization called Sokol that was introduced in the USA quite early (in 1865). No wonder that the Czechs in America liked the notions that characterized

⁷² Cozine, "Czechs and Bohemians", Kugler, "A Study of Czechoslovak Immigration", 76, 77, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 25-28, Jaromír Marek, "Češi v Chicagu," *Radio Praha, Český rozhlas* 7, 2005, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/clanek/59622>.

⁷³ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 57, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago", 28-30.

Sokol. It was among its main hopes to enhance its members' feeling of belonging to the Czech nation.⁷⁴

Earlier in my bachelor thesis, I mentioned that the first generation of Czechs in Chicago did not need the knowledge of English language that much for the entire neighbourhoods were only populated with Czech ethnicity. This does not, however, count for second and third generations of Czech Chicagoans. While their predecessors were mainly reading newspapers and magazines written in Czech language, the younger generations of Czech Chicagoans who went to American schools and spoke fluent English could choose between American and Czech print. They often went for the American one because it provided them with a little bit different kind of information than the Czech print. They wanted to keep themselves updated and in so doing they hoped to become a part of American society more easily. Their starting point was, however, much better than that of their parents. The process of Americanization of new generation had been speeded up considerably as a result of their better understanding of American cultural background as well as language, of course. In other words, they felt more American than their parents did.⁷⁵

Czech print can serve as a nice illustration of the process of assimilation of Czech ethnicity in Chicago. Not only had the young generation rejected the Czech newspapers, it also had shown less interest in maintaining the Czech cultural heritage than their parents and grandparents. This was, however, not true about all Czech Americans who had already been born in Chicago. Vera A. Wilt points out that great numbers of them still remember to celebrate Czech national holidays and other important days such as St. Wenceslaus (Sept. 28) or Czechoslovak Independence Day (Oct. 28) even today. What is more, several events take place every year including so called Houby Festival or Moravian Folk Fest that enable Czech Chicagoans to present their unique culture to their fellow citizens as well as to identify themselves with their Czech roots.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Eckertová, *Kameny na prérii*, 125., Sakson-Ford, *The Czech Americans*, 93, Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 28-30.

⁷⁵ Duzbabová, "Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago," 31, 32, Marek, "Češi v Chicagu, " Milena Štráfěldová, "Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíška budoucnost".

⁷⁶ Jaromír Marek, "Češi v Chicagu, " *Radio Praha, Český rozhlas* 7, 2005, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/clanek/59622>, Milena Štráfěldová, "Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíška budoucnost", Wilt, "Czech Americans", 48.

4.5 Czech Chicagoans before and after WWII

There is a question to be raised concerning a state in which the Czech community finds itself at the time being. In my opinion it is not easy to provide satisfactory answer to this question, however. The thing is that certain doubt exists whether the Czech community can still be referred to as a community. It is also difficult to pin point the exact moment when the Czechs became Chicagoans. There is evidence according to which the Czech ethnicity would stick together before and also during the WWI while the more active ones took part in establishing Chicagoan training centre for those who wanted to join the Czechoslovak Foreign Legion. Here again, we can see that it was in nature of Chicagoan Czechs to take initiative and participate both in public or political life. The turning point, however, occurred during the WWII when “[...] Chicago also played a very visible role as a crossroad city” (Duis 2005). In other words, in that era, Chicago experienced huge migration that was caused mainly by the urgent need of labour force. Chicago appeared to be an industrial centre of the Midwest where almost everything the US army needed was produced.⁷⁷

Thousands of Americans who heard of many vacancies in Chicagoan factories became streaming to the city. The consequences were significant for Czech ethnicity in Chicago. When the WWII was finished very little remained from neighbourhoods where only Czech language could be heard in the 1930s. As many people of different backgrounds were moving in areas where mostly Czechs lived, the contingency of Czech community was suddenly under threat. The young generation of Czech Chicagoans had found itself in the middle of what used to be termed as ‘American melting pot’. With this I want to stress the process of Americanization through meeting various cultures, using English language as a means of communication. The clash between generations of Czech immigrants was one of many consequences that could not be avoided while the movement out of the city might be another one. The latter was also a sign of improving social status of Czechs who, having earned some money, were not that dependent on the community any more.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Dubovický, *Češi v Americe: Czechs in America*, 32, Perry R. Duis “World War II“, *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 2005, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1384.html>, Cozine, “Czechs and Bohemians“, Duzbabová, “Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago“, 31, 32, Marek, “Češi v Chicagu“, Štráfěldová, “Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíska budoucnost“.

⁷⁸ Cozine, “Czechs and Bohemians“, Duzbabová, “Czech and Polish Migration to Chicago“, 31, 32, Marek, “Češi v Chicagu“, Štráfěldová, “Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíska budoucnost“.

Today, there are approximately 150, 000 people of Czech descent living in Illinois. Not only are they the naturalized Americans, many of them also have come recently or in one of the major emigration waves from Czechoslovakia after 1948. It should also be noted that in this number, both Slovaks and Czechs are included even though the need to distinguish between these two nationalities grew bigger after the Czechoslovakia was divided into two sovereign countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in 1993.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Vera A. Wilt, *Czech Americans*, 47, Marek, “Češi v Chicagu“, Štráfěldová, “Krajanský tisk v USA má podle Petra Bíska budoucnost“.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of my bachelor thesis was to provide an overview of major emigration waves and to describe the most significant push factors that drove Czech people to leave their homeland for the USA. This was mainly achieved in the first and in the second section of my bachelor thesis.

Considering the issue of emigration from the Czech Lands to America in general, I have realized that no well-arranged work that would describe this phenomenon has been written yet. If there is someone interested in emigration he or she has to rely on memories of those Czechs who experienced emigration first hand or books written by Czech authors who deal with this issue. The thing about those sources is, however, that they typically describe only one concrete place or period of time in isolation, so that it is very difficult to get a complex picture of the entire process of Czech emigration to the USA.

My bachelor thesis intends to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that through the extensive emigration which started in the 17th century and lasted till 1989 our nation lost many people who were both skilled and educated.

In the second section of my bachelor thesis I dealt with the modern part of Czech emigration history in order for reader to become familiar with the major emigration waves that occurred in the years 1948 and 1989. I have learnt many important details including the main difference between those two emigration groups. As far as the first group is concerned, its members were far more positive about the future development in Czechoslovakia and believed in possible restoration of democracy in our country while the emigrants from August 1968 were rather sceptical which can be also seen in their minimal political involvement abroad.

In the third half of my bachelor thesis, I had a closer look at the spatial distribution and assimilation of the Czech minority and I have found out that there are Czechs to be found almost everywhere in the USA. Therefore, I have only chosen those US states that are referred to as the biggest Czech immigrant centres in the USA. The most space in this chapter I dedicated to Texas because, as I have realized, it was very popular with those Czechs who came to the USA in order to buy land and become farmers. In almost all the sources I used, the land was mentioned as the most common pull factor while the religious freedom together with economic success followed. Furthermore, I mentioned Iowa and Wisconsin in order to compare the life in American Midwest to that in American South. As far as the process of assimilation is concerned, it was long and difficult process to go

through. Minimal knowledge of English language together with the unwillingness of Czechs to socialize with other than their own ethnicity was among the most significant problems. As I have found out, it was the time and historical events such as industrial revolution or WWII that solved those problems and ensured the assimilation of the Czech minority.

Finally, the last part of my bachelor thesis which was aimed at the Czech community in Chicago city reveals that Czechs started coming to Chicago quite early in the 1850s which means that they witnessed its rapid industrial development and they took an important part in it, too. I have realized that Czechs lived as a community till the WWII and even though the members of the second generation of immigrants usually knew English language already and felt more as a part of American society than their parents, at least some of them did not forget about their Czech origin.

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APPENDICES

P I The first appendix: Czech American

P II The second appendix: Czech American 2

APPENDIX P I: THE CZECH AMERICAN



Source: Vera A. Wilt, "Czech Americans," in *The Ethnic Handbook: A Guide to the Cultures and Traditions of Chicago's Diverse Communities*, ed. Cynthia Linton (Illinois: The Illinois Ethnic Coalition, 1996), 51.

APPENDIX P 2: THE CZECH AMERICAN 2



Source: Vera A. Wilt, "Czech Americans," in *The Ethnic Handbook: A Guide to the Cultures and Traditions of Chicago's Diverse Communities*, ed. Cynthia Linton (Illinois: The Illinois Ethnic Coalition, 1996), 52.