
The covert connections of an asymmetrical alliance. Czechoslovak-French cooperation in military intelligence in the years 1932–1938

Karel Straka

The foundation of Czechoslovakia's security architecture was formed by an alliance with France from the beginning of its existence. This alliance predetermined the direction, nature and objectives of the construction of the Czechoslovak armed forces. The purpose of the alliance was to preserve the Versailles system. The presented study explores the intelligence cooperation between the armies of both countries. It reconstructs its course, dealing with the main features, trends and significant influences that shaped or constrained it. From 1919, the French military intelligence had a major influence on the formation of the intelligence apparatus of the Czechoslovak armed forces in organizational and methodical terms. Before the beginning of the 1930s, however, a distinct and conceptually independent Czechoslovak intelligence developed. In the critical years of 1932–1938, it was a valuable and beneficial partner of the French military intelligence. However, the remarkably productive cooperation was dependent on the overall nature of the Czechoslovak-French relations. Their crisis first severely limited it in the course of 1938 and, subsequently, completely destroyed it as a result of the Munich Agreement.

Key words: Czechoslovakia, France, Nazi Germany, Munich Agreement, army, military intelligence, Czechoslovak-French military cooperation

The Rutha affair and the trial against the Werner Weiss group in autumn 1937

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The study deals with the case of Heinrich Rutha (1897–1937), one of the highest-ranking politicians of the Sudeten German Party (SdP), sometimes referred to as its Foreign Minister, Konrad Henlein's personal friend and one of the main promoters of philosopher Othmar Spann's ideas in the Czech lands. Rutha worked in the Sudeten German youth movement, where he tried to create his own educational concept. In 1926, he established, more precisely made independent, the Sudetendeutsche Jugenschaft youth organization and was at the birth of an organization that became known under the abbreviated designation Kameradschaftsbund. Its aim, in the spirit of Spann's theories, was to create an elite layer of leaders who would take over the leadership of Sudeten German society. He was also involved in the sports organization Deutscher Turnverein (DTV). However, he resigned from the prestigious position of the head of the Ještěd-Jizera Division of the DTV in October 1935 as his homosexual orientation was revealed. Two years later, as a result of the denunciation

of “old Nazis” (i.e. former members and supporters of the dissolved DNSAP), his homosexuality was also reported to the Czechoslovak police. At the beginning of October 1937, Rutha was arrested for homosexual intercourse, which was criminal at that time. Having been convicted by several of his former partners, he committed suicide on 5 November 1937. Twelve young men were eventually brought to court, seven of whom were found guilty and sentenced to one to eight months’ suspended sentences.

Key words: Heinrich Rutha, Sudeten German Party (SdP), Othmar Spann’s philosophy, Nazi Germany, Sudeten German question, Czechoslovakia, homosexual affair

The Verneřice Putsch

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On 14 September 1938, a rebellion of the local German population against the Czechoslovak state power, now known as the Verneřice Putsch, broke out in the north Bohemian town of Verneřice. Around 9 p.m., Konrad Henlein’s followers sounded the church bells and a fire alarm that served as a signal to launch the attack. Within a few minutes, almost all male residents of the town gathered in the Verneřice square and, using their help, the gendarmerie station, the post office, the railway station and the German Social Democrats’ co-operative were occupied, and the Czech civil servants were imprisoned at the town hall, from where all were to be taken to Germany. This plan failed only thanks to the courage of two German Social Democrats, Josef Gaube and Oscar Schröfel, who managed to ride a bicycle for help in Těchlovice, 10 kilometres away. Despite the rapid reaction of the Czechoslovak army, the gendarmerie and the police, the main participants of the putsch managed to escape through Děčín to Germany, joining the Sudetendeutsches Freikorps. The Czechoslovak justice was not given the opportunity to punish them until after the end of the Second World War, when some of the culprits were arrested and brought before the Extraordinary People’s Court in Litoměřice.

Key words: gendarmerie, Munich Agreement, September 1938, Henlein’s followers, Ordners, Sudetendeutsches Freikorps, German Social Democrats, putsch, Verneřice, Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia and the Western Powers on the Path to Munich. A Problem of Mutual (Mis)understanding

Vít Smetana

The two major victorious powers of the Great War, France and Great Britain, still under the impression of their extraordinarily dearly paid victory and even more frightening scenarios of the future war, were forced in 1938 to respond to Hitler's growing expansionist ambitions, which were also trickily concealed behind noble slogans on peoples' right to self-determination. They pragmatically opted for pressure on Czechoslovakia, which in the second half of September meant support for large-scale territorial concessions in favour of Germany. However, when it seemed that they would not be sufficient for Hitler, on 26 September Great Britain proclaimed readiness to intervene militarily in the event of a German attack. On the contrary, Czechoslovakia had turned into a ductile object of the great powers' game on 21 September, when its leadership decided not to defend the territorial integrity of the state. It happened under pressure, but following the previous announcements by top state representatives that the Czechoslovak Republic was ready for territorial concessions. Finally, Czechoslovakia saw such a solution, because after the fundamental principle of inviolability of state borders had been abandoned, everything else was only a question of quantity and a search for "compromise" for the British and French "appeasers".

Key words: Czechoslovakia, Nazi Germany, France, Great Britain, Munich Agreement, appeasement, mobilization

"A small country, but ours". The Czechoslovak autumn of 1938

Jaroslav Rokoský

The study presents and analyses the period of the Second Czechoslovak Republic, contradictory and neglected by both Czech and European historiography. For Czech society, the Munich Agreement was a shock. What people have believed for twenty years and what they worked for self-sacrificingly was suddenly in ruins and questioned. For Masaryk's republic, it was an economic, political, social and moral catastrophe. Weakened Czecho-Slovakia was in a difficult, desperate, even tragic situation. The belief in democracy was shaken, and the trust in the West was undermined. After its territorial losses, Czecho-Slovakia was left at the mercy of Hitler's Germany. In a turbulent atmosphere, people looked for someone to blame. Attention is focused on the Sudetengau, which originated from the ceded borderlands, on the transformation of the relationship between the Czechs and the Slovaks, on the situation in Carpathian Ruthenia, as well as on considerable economic and social difficulties. At the forefront of interest is also the transformation of the political system, the operation and role of Syrový and Beran's government, the election of President Hácha

and the creation of authoritative democracy. A sad reality of that time is the awakened anti-Semitism that affected overall civil society, including elite professions. The Jews and Roma became second category citizens. The question remains to what extent Czecho-Slovakia only bowed to Berlin's pressure, which intensified and strengthened, and to what extent it introduced its antidemocratic demands by itself. At the end of the fateful year 1938, the country lived in the shadow of the Nazi threat.

Keywords: Czecho-Slovakia, Nazi Germany, Sudetengau, Munich Agreement, Second Czechoslovak Republic, cession of borderlands, authoritarian regime, President Hácha, anti-Semitism, autonomous Slovakia, autonomous Carpathian Ruthenia

The end of “divine providence.” Ukrainian nationalism in Subcarpathian Rus in the context of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938

David Svoboda

The nationality policy of the First Czechoslovak Republic governments applied in the colourful conflict region of Carpathian Ruthenia was ambiguous and volatile until the late 1930s. The Prague governments did not manage to obtain sufficiently loyal sympathizers that would defend the interests of the state in this most eastern part of the country at times critical for it. In the end, it was the Ukrainephiles, whose power upsurge marked the history of the region in the post-Munich months, that became the most promising force. Avhustyn Voloshyn, Prime Minister of the autonomous governments, promised to preserve the bearable civilized conditions in the region, but at the same time a radical irredentist stream with a base in eastern Galicia, Poland, which considered Voloshyn's regime to be a tolerated makeshift, started to emerge. This led to a certain “double government”, presented externally by prudent and cultivated Voloshyn, with the feverish efforts of the Ukrainian Nationalists Organization in the background. All this happened at a time when the Ukrainian question was in the banner headlines of the world press as a crucial ace in Hitler's fight for Eastern Europe. At the same time, the Czecho-Slovak authorities joined forces with the radical armed Ukrainians concentrated in the Carpathian Sich to reverse the Polish-Hungarian sabotage operations, although their mutual relationship was characterized by a significant lack of trust. For the population of the adjacent Ukrainian areas in Poland, however, the Munich solution to the Czechoslovak crisis in 1938 was a welcome signal of fundamental changes in Central-Eastern Europe, from which also the long-suffering oppressed Ukrainians could benefit.

Key words: Avhustyn Voloshyn, Ukrainian Nationalists Organization, Carpathian Sich, Carpathian Ruthenia, Poland, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, Munich Agreement, Nazis, Vienna arbitration

The route to Munich. Czechoslovakia in the eyes of American diplomats in 1938 (Edition of documents)

Jan Kuklík – Jan Němeček

The presented edition brings a selection of ten published documents from March to September 1938 written by American diplomats on the then Czechoslovak crisis. It aims to supplement previously published documents, especially within the official US diplomatic edition *Foreign Relations of United States*. The documents are mainly related to Czechoslovak internal development but, naturally, foreign policy aspects of the crisis and issues of the possibility of Soviet military assistance to Czechoslovakia are also addressed. The edition is introduced by a brief historical summary of developments in Czechoslovakia in the spring and summer of 1938 in relation to national issues, especially the so-called Sudeten German question and American diplomats' views of it.

Keywords: minorities, diplomacy, Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak-German relations, USA, edition of documents, Sudeten German question, Munich Agreement