

# AMERICAN CZECHS BETWEEN SYMPATHIES WITH POLISH IMMIGRANTS AND TRANSMIGRATION TO RUSSIA: CRISES OF PAN-SLAVIC IDEALS ON AMERICAN SOIL IN THE 1860s<sup>1</sup>

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The article deals with the phenomenon of Pan-Slavism in the Czech-American community, with emphasis on the 1860s. The Slavic idea played an important role in Czech nationalism throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and continued to do so even among Czech immigrants in the United States. In the 1860s, Pan-Slavic feelings led to two unsuccessful projects for transmigration of American Czechs to Russia. The article attempts to answer why these plans received so much publicity in the immigrant community, what Czech-Americans thought about them in the context of their national, religious and social structures, and what the reasons for the failure were.

**Keywords:** Czech immigration, Pan-Slavism, transmigration, Freethought, ethnicity

More than half a century ago, Frank Thistlethwaite delivered his famous “salt-water curtain” thesis. Since that time, the trans-Atlantic perspective has become rather the rule than the exception in the academic world.<sup>2</sup> However, a new paradigm seems to have been emerging in the last few decades. It reflects the fact that migrants’ experiences were not limited to the simple American-

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<sup>2</sup> F. Thistlethwaite, ‘Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,’ in *Rapports du XIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, vol. 5, *Historie Contemporaine*, Stockholm 1960, pp. 32–60.

immigrant dimension. It was also a result of various trans-ethnic interactions, framed within a complicated web of social and cultural structures spreading from the Old World to America. One of the numerous interethnic factors was the ideology of Pan-Slavism, which played a particularly important role in the ideological world of Czech immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The potential of Slavic ideals among American Czechs was expressed especially in the 1860s, when two ambitious plans for transmigration of American Czechs to Russia appeared. As much as Czech-American Pan-Slavism turned to Russians, it also related to Poles, a fact which created a situation that was paradoxical and difficult to solve because of the conflicted character of Poland-Russia relations. Thus, besides obvious practical limits, it was again the Pan-Slavic ideology that contributed to the failure of the Russian transmigration plan, at least in the case of the first project. Pan-Slavism obviously affected the cultural as well as political orientation of Czech immigrants. On the other hand, Pan-Slavism itself was influenced by other factors, including contemporary politics and religion. Such mutual influence makes a simple, casual explanation impossible and leads us to the broader structural context of the Czech-American experience.

### CZECH PAN-SLAVISM IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Modern Czech nationalism constituted during the so-called Czech National Revival was closely related to the Slavic idea.<sup>3</sup> Their weaker position towards the culturally and economically richer German-speaking population of Bohemia and Moravia led Czech patriots to search for potential allies and support. When Czechs felt weak and oppressed they could always find comfort in the thought of the great Slavic family reaching from German borders to Asia and from the Baltic Sea to the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. For obvious reasons, Czech Romantics especially admired Russia as the strongest Slavic state. Despite the notion prevailing in Western Europe, especially in the German press which

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<sup>3</sup> For an introduction to Czech Pan-Slavism see R. Vlček, 'Panslavismus či rusofilství? Pět tezí k otázce reflexe slovanství a panslavismu českou společností 19. století,' in Z. Hojda, M. Ottlová, R. Prahel, eds, *Slavme slavně slávu Slávův slavných. Slovanství a česká kultura 19. století*, Praha 2006, pp. 9–20. From further literature, especially J. Jirásek, *Rusko a my. Dějiny vztahů československo-ruských od nejstarších dob do roku 1914*, Vol. 1–4, Praha 1946; M. Bidlas, *Dějiny československo-sovětských vztahů nové a nejnovější doby*, Vol. 1, Praha 1967; V. Doubek, *Česká politika a Rusko (1848–1940)*, Praha 2004.

served as a mediator of information about Czechs,<sup>4</sup> most Czech patriots regarded Pan-Slavism rather as a lingual, cultural and sentimental concept than a political program. Some of them certainly dreamed about a Pan-Slavic federation, either in the form of a monarchy under the rule of the Russian tsar or a federation of free republics, depending on the time frame and their own individual political orientation. But, in general, Pan-Slavism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was, above all, a cultural movement. For example, Ján Herkeľ, a Slovak lawyer who coined the term “Pan-Slavism,” defined it in 1826 as “unity in literature.”<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary Czech research on Slavic linguistics and history was influenced by Romanticism; ideas such as the one of ancient Slavic democracy as a contrast to German feudalism occurred and entered the mentality of Czechs, especially through the perception of the monumental work of historian and liberal politician František Palacký. Ironically, the Godfather of Pan-Slavism was actually a Prussian German named Johann Gottfried Herder, who predicted a glorious future for the Slavic “Volk” in his four-volume work *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.<sup>6</sup> Herder and the atmosphere in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century student circles in Germany had a great impact on many leading figures of the Czech National Revival, including young Hungarian Slovak Ján Kollár, probably the greatest ideologist of Pan-Slavism.

The Czech perception of Pan-Slavism was not universal, and individual Slavic nations approached the Slavic idea in different ways. In the Russian Empire, it was sometimes used as a tool for propaganda and for spreading Russian influence with potential for territorial or hegemonic expansion. In contrast to the Pan-Slavism of small Slavic nations, the Russian version of the concept leaned towards Pan-Russism. On the opposite side stood the Polish point of view, a fact which was a result of historical experience of uneasy neighborly relations with the Russian Empire. Unlike Czechs who had no direct experience with Russia until the post-World War II era, a large portion of Poland became part of the Russian Empire as a result of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Pan-Slavism suffered heavily after the Polish November Uprising in 1830. Czech national elites became split due to differing opinions about the Polish revolution against “brotherly” Russians. On top of that, Pan-Slavism did not seem to be as important after the stabilization of the Czech National Revival around the mid-

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<sup>4</sup> See J. Kořalka, ‘Sledování příznivých a negativních zpráv o Čechách v zahraničním tisku 19. století’ in: M. Řepa (ed.), *19. století v nás. Modely, instituce a reprezentace, které přetrvaly*, Praha 2008, pp. 567–581.

<sup>5</sup> A. Maxwell, ‘Herder, Kollár, and the Origins of Slavic Ethnography,’ *Traditiones*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2011), p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Published for the first time in 1784–1791, and soon translated into several languages.

19<sup>th</sup> century and withdrawal of Romanticism. Already before 1848, an influential journalist and soon-to-be national icon, Karel Havlíček Borovský, ridiculed the idea of Slavic unity as something impractical and pointless, a position he embraced after his disappointing stay in Russia.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the Slavic idea survived and arose from time to time again with new strength, usually as a result of a dramatic political situation.

Slavic and especially pro-Russian sympathies also played a role in the years after 1945. According to many observers of modern Czech history, they continued to do so until the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. In any case, the phenomenon of Pan-Slavism was very strong in the early phase of Czech mass emigration to the United States, i.e. from the 1850s to 1870s.<sup>8</sup> It was particularly true also due to the fact that the immigrant community tended to preserve older forms of political and cultural concepts brought from the native country.

#### THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF CZECH IMMIGRATION

To understand the popularity of Pan-Slavic ideas among American Czechs, one has to consider the development of Czech nationalism, but also of politics and religion, as well as the social structure of Czech immigration in the United States. Mass emigration from Bohemia and Moravia started in the early 1850s and represented a large majority of emigration from the whole Austrian Empire for almost three decades. According to the American census, 25,062 persons of Austrian origin lived in the USA in 1860. The census of 1870 recognized Bohemia as a country of origin, and registered 40,289 people born in Bohemia.<sup>9</sup>

Official Austrian data collected in the 1850s show that emigrants came from small towns and villages. They were mostly craftsmen, laborers and small farmers. As a result of the Enlightenment reforms, the literacy rate was very high among the Czech population, and later generations of Czech-Americans

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<sup>7</sup> Havlíček's provoking article "Slovan a Čech" (Slav and Czech) was published in *Pražské noviny*, February 22, 1846.

<sup>8</sup> For periodization of Czech immigration to the United States see L. Šatava, *Migrační procesy a české vystěhovalectví 19. století do USA*, Praha 1989.

<sup>9</sup> These data are certainly not precise, but can serve as a clue. About statistics on Czech emigration see V. Mastný, 'Statistika vystěhovalectví českého proletariátu do Spojených států,' *Demografie – revue pro výzkum populačního vývoje*, No. 3 (1962), pp. 204–211.

often used this fact as an argument against the stereotype of an uneducated and backward “new immigrant.” Despite this, the Czech-American community was generally plebeian, and intellectuals were isolated cases. A unique position in the community was occupied by editors of Czech-American newspapers, the first two of which were founded in Racine and St. Louis in January 1860. The small number of pioneer journalists had a significant influence on their compatriots. Almost all of them were former Forty-Eighters or even political refugees whose articles stirred up public opinion against the Austrian Empire.<sup>10</sup> The motives of mass emigration were undoubtedly economic, but the immigrant community adopted a more noble vision – the idea of emigration from the beloved homeland as a flight from national oppression. This narrative gave American Czechs a satisfying explanation of their presence in a distant country, where gradual assimilation was awaiting.<sup>11</sup>

A closely related issue was represented by criticism of the so-called “alliance of throne and altar” in the Habsburg Empire. After the forced re-Catholization in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Bohemian and Moravian population became almost completely Catholic. This affiliation became problematic during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Bohemia. American Czechs were even more radical than their compatriots in the old country, as they massively and openly accepted Freethought (*svobodomyslnost*). The main exception to this trend was Czech Texas which remained Catholic for the most part, probably because of its mostly Moravian origin. The Freethought movement culminated around the turn of the century, but it was rooted already in the 1850s. For example, the St. John Nepomuk parish in St. Louis, the first Czech parish in the New World, was divided by the religious conflict only shortly after its foundation in 1854.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The most informative work on the early history of the Czech-American print is still T. Čapek, *Padesát let českého tisku v Americe*, New York 1911.

<sup>11</sup> In certain regard analogical process documents: M.F. Jacobson, *Special Sorrows. The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States*, Cambridge 1995. The Czech narrative was without doubt more artificial.

<sup>12</sup> M. Vlha, ‘Česká komunita ve Spojených státech a náboženský konflikt,’ in K. Kaiseřová, R.Z. Nešpor, eds, *Variety české religiozity v „dlouhém” 19. století (1780–1918)*, Ústí nad Labem 2010, pp. 402–420. See also K.D. Bicha, *Setting Accounts with an Old Adversary. The Decatholization of Czech Immigrants in America*, *Social History/Histoire Sociale*, 4/November 1972, pp. 45–60; B.M. Garver, ‘Czech–American Free Thinkers on the Great Plains, 1871–1914’, in: F.C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, Lincoln 1980, pp. 147–169.

## CONCEPTS OF MOTHERLAND AND THE SLAVIC IDEA AMONG AMERICAN CZECHS

The names of the above-mentioned American cities and states indicate that Czech settlement was very scattered in the United States. Czech pioneers settled especially in central Texas, Wisconsin and Iowa, they flourished in the city of St. Louis and in Chicago after the Civil War. This fact meant additional challenges to the already difficult perception of the homeland in the mental map of Czech immigrants. As a matter of fact, leading figures of the Czech National Revival dealt with a similar problem during the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their understanding of the homeland followed two seemingly contradictory paths. The first of these can be called geographic. It celebrated the beauties of the Czech countryside and iconic places of historical memory such as Prague, Říp Mountain and so on. The second approach originated from the fact that Czechs were culturally and socially weaker than the German-speaking population of Bohemia and Moravia. This conduced to an alternative interpretation of homeland. According to the literary historian Vladimír Macura, the Czech National Revival included illusionary and even phantomlike elements.<sup>13</sup> The following quote from a letter written by the famous writer Božena Němcová to her friend Josef Lidumil Lešikar, a settler in Texas, represents a good example of the vision of the non-geographic homeland: “Live happily in the new country and never regret you have left your native land, that you live in a foreign country – homeland is everywhere, wherever there are people of one language and same customs and one endeavor.”<sup>14</sup> Another example is offered by the great Pan-Slavic poet Ján Kollár:

Nepřipisuj svaté jméno vlasti  
kraji tomu, v kterém bydlíme.  
Pravou vlast jen v srdci nosíme.  
Tuto nelze bít ani krásti.

In a rough English translation:

Don't ascribe the holy name of homeland  
to the country we live in.  
The true one we keep in heart,  
it cannot be smitten nor stolen.

<sup>13</sup> V. Macura, *Znamení zrodu. České národní obrození jako kulturní typ*, Jinočany 1995.

<sup>14</sup> “Žijte šťastně v té nové vlasti a nikdy nelitujte toho, že opustil jste rodnou zem, že žijete v cizině – vlast je všude tam, kde jsou lidé jednoho jazyka a jedněch mravů a snah.” Božena Němcová to Josef Lidumil Lešikar, August 12 1856, published in B. Němcová, *Korespondence II. 1853–1856*, Praha 2003, p. 265.

Of course, such ideas resonated among American Czechs. I have found these verses copied in an emigrant letter from 1857.<sup>15</sup> The poem is originally part of Kollár's famous cycle *Slávy dcera* (The Daughter of Sláva), published for the first time in Buda in 1824.<sup>16</sup> This influential work was actually crucial for the establishment of Pan-Slavism and was published in many editions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The above-mentioned examples obviously originate from the old homeland. But was there anything original about Czech Pan-Slavism on American soil? It would seem perfectly logical that the Slavic idea flowered in a fragmented and not very numerous community surrounded by ethnic foreigners, and some facts indicate that this notion is true. The Czech-American cultural associations founded in many cities and towns in the 1860s were called *Slovanské lípy* (Slavic Lindens).<sup>17</sup> Some of the oldest Czech-American newspapers expressed Pan-Slavic sentiment even in their name – *Slovan americký* (American Slav),<sup>18</sup> *Slávie* (Slavia, personification of Slavic nations as introduced by Kollár).<sup>19</sup>

However, even seemingly objective proofs of Pan-Slavism can be problematic. The name *Slovanská lípa* was inspired by a well-known Bohemian organization from the revolutionary period of 1848–1849, which suggests that the term was understood at least as much national as Pan-Slavic in a later context. We must also consider that the Czech-speaking population of Moravia was not fully integrated into the Czech nation yet, and that Moravians preferred terms like “Slovan” (Slav) or “Čechoslovan” (Czechoslav) instead of “Čech” (Czech) still in the 1860s.<sup>20</sup> As a matter of fact, the founders of the *Slovan americký* newspapers, František Kořízek and Jan Bárta Letovský, both came from the Moravian village of Letovice. However, Bárta Letovský, a watchmaker by profession and a religious nonconformist, was also a strong promoter of the Slavic idea and a romantic Russophile, as will be shown later. In 1869, Bárta Letovský renewed the title of the oldest Czech American newspaper with a modernized name: *Slovan americký* (without the archaic “w”). As the publisher of this new magazine, he probably also created the motto of the *Slovan americký*,

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<sup>15</sup> Knihovna Náprstkovy muzea v Praze (NPM), Vojta Náprstek, 34, Josef Střítecký to Vojta Náprstek, September 9 1857.

<sup>16</sup> To be more precise, it is Sonnet II, 124.

<sup>17</sup> The word “linden” has specific significance; this tree was introduced as a Slavic symbol after the example of the German oak in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>18</sup> Published in Racine, Wisconsin, from 1860 to 1861.

<sup>19</sup> Published from October 1861 in Racine, Wisconsin; *Slávie* became the most important journal of American Czechs and survived to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> M. Řepa, *Moravané nebo Češi? Vývoj českého národního vědomí na Moravě v 19. století*, Brno 2001.

which was “Týdeník pro politiku, vědu, umění, zábavu a vzájemnost Slovanův amerických” (A weekly of politics, science, arts, entertainment and solidarity among American Slavs).<sup>21</sup> Despite its title, the magazine was aimed solely at the Czech-American public.

Unlike the first case, the title of the *Slávie* newspaper was certainly not a child of some Pan-Slavic program of its publishers, but rather a simple improvisation. It was accepted after long and fruitless negotiations between publishers and editors of the *Slovan americký* and entrepreneurs of the St. Louis *Národní noviny* (National Gazette) in 1861. Both pioneer newspapers were unable to survive, and incorporation seemed to be the only solution to preserve a Czech language periodical at the start of the Civil War. However, neither side was willing to accept the title of its opponent’s newspapers. Lengthy discussion was finally resolved when a Wisconsin farmer named František Trávníček-Nechuta declared: “You know what, boys? Name that magazine *Slávie*.”<sup>22</sup>

We have to consider that Czech-American Pan-Slavism was facing a serious problem. There was almost nobody on American soil to address Czech Pan-Slavic feelings. Russian and South Slavic immigration was almost nonexistent; Slovak immigration remained insignificant for the time being. At the end of the ante-bellum period, there was only one relatively strong Slavic minority in the United States besides Czechs – the Poles. These two ethnic minorities were occasionally in contact with each other, but they each lived their own lives. An attempt to cooperate with Poles in the ranks of the pioneering “Českoslovanský spolek v New Yorku” (Czechoslovak Society of New York), founded in 1849, was not very successful, and the organization dissolved after five or six years.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Czechs celebrated a high-ranking Union officer named Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski, but there was no effort to create a common Czech-Polish volunteer unit during the Civil War. Despite the anti-German undertone of the Czech national ideology, the largest group of Czech soldiers actually served in “Sigel’s” 26<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Despite the national ideology, Germans remained their culturally (and for numerous bilingual Czechs also linguistically) closest ethnic minority in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Probably the only surviving copy of *Slovan americký* (1869–1871) is preserved in the Náprstek Museum in Prague.

<sup>22</sup> “Víte co, hošata? Dejte tomu časopisu jméno Slávie.” Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 1/4, article Z dějin Caledonie, staré české osady ve státu, Wisconsin (Z paměti J.L. Peřury, zesnulého dne 13. března r. 1930), p. 209.

<sup>23</sup> Library of Congress, Thomas Čapek Papers, 1/1, Joseph Dont to Tomáš Čapek [n.d.].

<sup>24</sup> For Czech contribution to the Civil War see M. Vlha (ed.), *Dopisy z války Severu proti Jihu. Korespondence českých vojáků v americké občanské válce*, Brno 2010; for an introduction in English see M. Vlha, ‘Czech Soldiers in the American Civil War. Previous Research and

## PAN-SLAVIC ROOTS OF THE AMUR PROJECT AND PAN-SLAVIC REASONS FOR ITS FAILURE

Surprisingly, the most discussed and also potentially the most radical Pan-Slavic impulse of the 1860s came to American Czechs from distant Russia. Some Russian intellectuals and politicians attempted to use the Slavic idea as a tool on the Empire's behalf. This time the Russian administration adopted the idea of using American Czechs for colonization of the Amur and Primorsky Krai, distant and depopulated areas just recently attached to the Empire.<sup>25</sup> Russians sent their emissary Antonin Nikolayevich Malinovskiy to Prague, where his proposal gained the support of Czech political leaders. Aristocrat Malinovskiy was a pleasant and elegant man. Contemporaries claimed that he behaved like a democrat, and he also started learning Czech. Soon after his arrival to the United States, Malinovskiy successfully ingratiated himself with Czech immigrants.<sup>26</sup> He found support in editors' offices of Czech-American newspapers too, and the idea of transmigration to Amur became a hot topic. In July 1861, Malinovskiy claimed that 5,000 American Czechs planned to move.<sup>27</sup>

To Malinovskiy's most devoted supporters belonged Jan Bárta Letovský, the co-founder of *Slowan amerikánský* (American Slav) newspaper and a devout Russophile, as was mentioned above. František Mráček, editor of *Slávie*

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New Perspectives,' *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2010), pp. 43–57.

<sup>25</sup> The issue of transmigration to Russia has already received attention from researchers in the Czech Republic and Russia. However, previous studies approached the topic mostly from the view of the Russian administration. My task is to show the issue as reflected in the Czech-American community. See R. Šuffner, 'O stěhování amerických Čechů na Amur,' *Slovanský přehled*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (1958), pp. 165–166; A. Robek, 'K problematice vystěhovalectví do Ruska v druhé polovině 19. století (první část),' *Češi v cizině*, Vol. 2 (1987), pp. 64–97; A. Robek, 'K problematice vystěhovalectví do Ruska v druhé polovině 19. století (dokončení),' *Češi v cizině*, Vol. 3 (1988), pp. 4–20; N. Valášková, 'Z Čech do Ameriky, z Ameriky do Ruska. Nerealizovaný projekt druhotné migrace' in: S. Brouček, K. Hrubý, ed. *Češi za hranicemi na přelomu 20. a 21. století*, Praha 2000, s. 67–73; Z.S. Nenasheva, 'American Czechs and Russia: Unrealized Projects,' *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2004), pp. 20–32; Z.S. Nenasheva, 'Američtí Češi a Rusko. Nerealizované projekty,' *Slovanský přehled*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2003), pp. 87–96.

<sup>26</sup> For Malinovskij's character and his image in the Czech-American community see: Literární památník národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Josef Václav Frič, Vojtěch Mašek to Josef Václav Frič, February 26 1878; Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 2/2, Jan Borecký to Jan Vratislav Čapek, June 6 1907.

<sup>27</sup> NPM, Vojta Náprstek, 53/50, Antonín Malinowskij [sic] to Vojta Náprstek, August 8 (June 26) 1861.

newspaper and a former political prisoner, represented another key figure. Mráček was involved in the May conspiracy of 1849, a naive attempt to overthrow the Austrian government initiated by Mikhail Bakunin. It was Bárta and Mráček who were selected as Czech-American deputies to Amur. After their arrival to Russia, everything seemed to be promising. State officials were keen on Czech-American provisos, and both delegates travelled from Petersburg to Amur to select the most convenient location for the first wave of transmigrants.

When Bárta and Mráček returned to the capital of Russia in the early months of 1863, things changed because of the January Uprising in the Russian part of Poland. When the tsarist administration and influential Russian Pan-Slavists such as Aleksandr Fedorovich Gilferding realized that the majority of Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia sympathize with the Polish cause, the transmigration project was abandoned. Simply put, Russians did not want to create a second Poland within their borders.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the only Czech transmigrants from America to Russia became František Mráček and his wife. On top of that, they remained only under the pressure of hard economic situation which made their return to the United States impossible.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the Amur plan would have failed even if Russians had not decided to abandon it themselves. Why? The January Uprising meant another blow to Czech Pan-Slavic ideals. Once again, Czech political leaders at home became divided in this matter. Doyen of Czech liberalism František Palacký and his right-hand man, František Ladislav Rieger, considered the January Uprising a tragic mistake, but the younger generation and majority of Czech society admired the Poles as freedom fighters. Insight into the Czech-American press of 1863 indicates that American Czechs supported Polish revolutionaries unanimously. The January Uprising even provoked a closer cooperation between the two minorities on American soil. For example, St. Louis Radical Republicans founded the Česko-polský Frémont klub (Czech-Polish Frémont Club) in August 1864 in an attempt to join forces on behalf of the presidential candidate John Frémont, who was widely popular among European immigrants. An especially devoted friend of both Radical Republicanism and the Polish cause was St. Louis resident Karel Alis. This interesting figure of the pioneer period of Czech-American history was also editor of St. Louis newspapers *Pozor* (The Watch), published since October 1863.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A. Robek, 'K problematice vystěholectví do Ruska v druhé polovině 19. století (první část),' p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 6/4, untitled biography of František Mráček written by Marie Mráčková.

<sup>30</sup> The magazine was published as *Pozor americký* (The American Watch) from 1865 to 1866.

At a meeting of New York Czechs and Poles in September 1864, the editor of the Polish magazine *Echo z Polski* (Echo from Poland), Roman Jaworowski, made a proposal to establish a Slavic confederation in America. Soon, *Pozor* announced this idea as its main goal.<sup>31</sup> Karel Alis was also selected as a member of the St. Louis Polish committee and sent as its agitator to other cities.

*Slávie* dedicated sympathetic articles to the situation of Poles too, and the magazine even called for financial help on behalf of the revolutionaries.<sup>32</sup> But unlike *Pozor*, its editor's office did not want to oppose the Amur project. During 1863, the editorship of *Slávie* was given to Karel Jonáš, a young political refugee with a great future in the Wisconsin legislature and administration as 16<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin and an American consul in several European states.<sup>33</sup> Before his arrival to the United States, Jonáš spent two years in London, where he became acquainted with local Polish emigrants as well as with representatives of Russian political exiles including Alexander Herzen. Jonáš felt strong pro-Russian sympathies and unsuccessfully tried to persuade his compatriots about the positives of the transmigration plan. Soon, it became impossible to defend such an opinion. Jonáš even received several ironic and mocking letters from the readers of *Slávie*, one of them making jokes about the willingness to follow Jonáš and enter the "Siberian purgatory".<sup>34</sup> The January Uprising revived sharp criticism of the Tsarist regime as the world's worst despotism, and the general opinion in the Czech-American community condemned Russia. One St. Louis citizen proclaimed that Czechs will never enjoy such liberties in Russia as they do in the United States, while the title of one article simply claimed: "Whoever wants to be a slave, let him go to Russian Amur."<sup>35</sup>

## FRUITLESS RESSURECTION OF THE TRANSMIGRATION PLAN

Admiration of Russia and the Amur transmigration plan seemed to be doomed under such circumstances. However, it did not take long before another twist occurred. Once again, it came from the Old World. After the

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<sup>31</sup> See the program article in 'Pozor', October 22 1864.

<sup>32</sup> 'Slávie', September 3 1863.

<sup>33</sup> W.C. Chrislock, *Charles Jonas 1840–1896. Czech National Liberal, Wisconsin Bourbon Democrat*, Philadelphia 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society, Charles Jonas Papers, Not Dated, Franta Smrček to Karel Jonáš, July 20 1863.

<sup>35</sup> "Kdo chce být otrokem, ať jde na ruský Amur." *Slávie*, August 11 1865.

lost war with Prussia, Emperor Franz Joseph I accepted the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Czechs expected recognition of their state rights as a reward for their loyalty during the Austro-Prussian War and the subsequent Prussian occupation, but their hopes were disappointed. Frustration inspired Czech leaders to a demonstrative visit of Moscow. Although they did not expect any real accomplishments besides the naive idea of initiating reconciliation between Russians and Poles, the so-called “Pilgrimage to Moscow” set off Russophile mania in the old country.<sup>36</sup> Czech emigrants, whose acculturation to American society was still limited, followed such feelings in extenso. The seemingly strong bond with Poles was suddenly forgotten in favor of the “Russian brothers,” a fact which was supported by the acceptance of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise by Polish deputies from Galicia.

Tsarist authorities realized that such a situation brings another opportunity to utilize Czechs for colonization. During the “Pilgrimage to Moscow”, they proposed the idea of settling Czechs in the Russian Empire once again, this time in the Caucasus. Czech politicians favored such an intention. When asked about his opinion on Czech emigration, the leader of the Old-Czech Party, František Ladislav Rieger, gave the following answer: “Go to Russia. You will live among Slavic people and your children will not alienate from their nation, like they do in America. If not Czechs, they will at least remain Slavs.”<sup>37</sup> His Young-Czech opponent Julius Grégr expressed the same opinion in this matter.<sup>38</sup>

Russians intended to attract emigrants from Bohemia and Moravia, but some Czechs, such as Alois Kareš, a shipping agent in Bremen, or František Mráček, the former emissary to Amur, revitalized the old transmigration plan. The Czech-American public once again vividly discussed this issue and the majority of compatriot newspapers supported it. Karel Jonáš, still the editor of *Slávie*, promoted it vigorously. According to his personal correspondence, Jonáš believed that under fair conditions, the majority of the 200,000 (!) American “Čechoslavs” would transmigrate.<sup>39</sup> Jonáš was also the leader of the Czech-American delegation to the Russian embassy in Washington. He represented Národní jednota (National

<sup>36</sup> K. Kazbunda, *Pout' Čechů do Moskvy 1867 a rakouská diplomacie*, Praha 1924; M. Prelog, *Pout' Slovanů do Moskvy roku 1867*, Praha 1931.

<sup>37</sup> “Stěhujte se do Ruska. Budete žít uprostřed slovanského národa a vaše děti se národu neodcizí, jako by se stalo v Americe, když ne Čechy, tedy zůstanou aspoň Slované.” S. Klíma, *Čechové a Slováci za hranicemi*, Praha 1925, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society, Charles Jonas Papers, Correspondence 1864–1869, Dr. Grégr to Karel Jonáš, April 30 1869.

<sup>39</sup> Archiv Národního muzea, Julius Grégr, 4/2, Karel Jonáš to Julius Grégr, August 19 1868.

unity), an organization founded several years before with the intention to unite American Czechs and Poles, as well. Another example of Russophilia is the welcoming address of New York Czechs to Tsarevitch Alexei who visited America in 1869. The initiator of this idea claimed that Russia is the only salvation with respect to the rise of Germany, and desired to demonstrate to the Tsarevitch Czech-American belonging to the “great Slavic family, which of he will be an exponent and head.”<sup>40</sup> Such actions of course bitterly disappointed and even angered the Poles.

Yet not all Czechs succumbed to the Russian illusion. For example, not everyone agreed with the address to Tsarevitch Alexei nor with the notion of its initiator that Pan-Slavism represents something more than a spiritual and cultural connection.<sup>41</sup> In the background, a Czech-American journalist named Josef Pastor started a bitter fight against Jonáš, Kareš and other promoters of transmigration to Russia. Pastor even suggested his enemies figure on the Russian payroll.<sup>42</sup> Although silenced when deprived of the editorship of the Chicago anticlerical newspaper *Pokrok* (Progress), Pastor soon continued with the criticism of Russia on the pages of the St. Louis *Národní noviny* (National Gazette).<sup>43</sup> In Europe represented a similar solitary case Josef Václav Frič, a radical democrat, Polophile, friend of a number of Czech-American personalities, and leading political émigré, who unsuccessfully opposed the Czech political mainstream.

## LIMITS OF THE PAN-SLAVIC ENTHUSIASM

Despite all effort and successes of propaganda, the dream of moving American Czechs to Russia never came true. Why? Unlike in 1863, no political obstructions occurred after 1867. The reasons were actually much deeper. First of all, the image of Russian despotism remained strong. František Korbek, a Forty-Eighter and founder of the Korbek Winery in California, favored the transmigration plan.

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<sup>40</sup> “[...] by bylo dobré uvítati ruského prince zde v Spojených státech, abychom ukázali, že i vzdáleni z vlasti hlásíme se k té velké rodině slovanské, jejížto zástupcem a hlavou on býti má.” Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 5/9, protocols entitled “Konference,” record from September 2 1869, pp. 4–5.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 2/10, Josef Pastor to Jaroslav Vostrovský, May 6 1868.

<sup>43</sup> See for example ‘*Národní noviny*’, June 5 1869.

Despite this, he also claimed: “I am a Slav, I wish for Slavia united, including Russia, but free and without a Tsar.”<sup>44</sup> A Czech from La Crosse, Wisconsin, declared in a letter sent to Karel Jonáš: “Nobody wants to hear about the Caucasus, everyone is happy we got rid of those crowned birds [meaning the Habsburg and Romanov eagles] and escaped from that slavery.”<sup>45</sup> Many immigrants celebrated American freedom as a value which would be lost under the Russian rule.

In addition, opponents of transmigration also criticized the new Russian transmigration agent Vasil Ivanovich Gubin, a person much less suited to such a task than his predecessor Malinovskiyi. While Malinovskiyi seemed to be pleasant and congenial, Gubin impersonated many aspects of the negative stereotype of a Russian official as portrayed in the works of Gogol or Dostoyevsky. The Czech poet Josef Václav Sládek, who lived in the United States in that period, described Gubin as an “arrogant idiot” and believed he was even more comical a figure than Don Quixote.<sup>46</sup> Of course, Czech Freethinkers ridiculed Gubin’s ostentatious Orthodoxy too. The religious question was undoubtedly an important factor for Czech-American imagination of Russia. Vojtěch Mašek, who was employed as Malinovskiyi’s assistant, became one of the strongest opponents of the Amur plan. According to his harsh opinion, transmigration tempted especially his Catholic compatriots: “A wise Freethinker will not go, and devil may take the stupid, may they rot wherever they please.”<sup>47</sup> One can only ask how Freethinkers would adapt to the Russian environment. It seems that American Czechs were unable to realize how strong the position of Orthodoxy was in Russian society, as they forgot to specify any religious rights and freedoms in the otherwise very detailed proviso of conditions for Czech settlers in Amur. There was one exception, though not very significant: transmigrants should enjoy freedom of the press that is not disrespectful to the Romanov dynasty or the Orthodox Church.<sup>48</sup> From

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<sup>44</sup> “Sem Slovan, přejú sobě Slávii celou spojenou i Rusko v ní – ale svobodnou a bez Cara (...)” LA PNP, Josef Václav Frič, František Korbek to Josef Václav Frič, March 28 1869.

<sup>45</sup> “[...] o Kavkazu žádný nechce ani slyšet, [proto]že jest každý rád, že se jednou těch korunovaných ptáků zbavil a z toho otroctva jednou vyváznu.” Wisconsin Historical Society, Charles Jonas Papers, W. F. Kocanda to Karel Jonáš, January 11 1869.

<sup>46</sup> LA PNP, Josef Václav Frič, Václav Šnajdr to Josef Václav Frič, August 13 1869; September 29 1869.

<sup>47</sup> “Moudrý svobodomyslný nepůjde a hloupého vem čert, má shnit tady, nebo tam.” LA PNP, Josef Václav Frič, Vojtěch Mašek to Josef Václav Frič, March 24 1862.

<sup>48</sup> The preliminary draft of the proviso is preserved in the Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 6/4, manuscript entitled “Milostivému gosudaru Alesandrovi Nikolajeviču.” The

the 1880s, Czech settlers living in Russia were forced to accept Orthodoxy and abandon Catholicism and other Confessions. We can assume that the presence of numerous Freethinkers accustomed to the American environment would probably have led to a much worse collision with the Russian authorities.

## CONCLUSION

One can only guess how deeply American Czechs believed in the ideas of Pan-Slavic propaganda, and how important the role was that it played in their everyday lives. It seems that the plans to leave America and settle in the Russian wilderness were actually not very appealing to them. Jan Borecký, yet another Freethinker and pioneer journalist, wrote these words many years later: "Just between us Czechs, nobody was really interested in moving to Amur. It was discussed only because of Mr. Malinovskyi; nobody believed it would happen; it was regarded rather as a joke when we spoke about that matter in Malinovskyi's absence."<sup>49</sup> Was it really so simple? And yet another question is: could American Czechs afford the long and expensive trip to Amur or the Caucasus without the denied financial help from the Russian government? The majority of them probably could not.

In any case, Pan-Slavic ideals survived both in the old country and in America. Another strong upheaval came in 1904, when the Czech-American community initiated the founding of the Slavic Alliance of New York. Its main goal was to promote Russia during the Russian-Japanese War. The organization associated Slavic intelligentsia from the American East, but once again with the exception of Poles. Despite similar activities, the dramatic twists and far-reaching dimension of the Pan-Slavic concepts of the 1860s were never surpassed on American soil. Today, we can consider them fruitless and naive, but we cannot deny that many contemporaries devoted a considerable effort in their interest; neither can we deny the fact that Pan-Slavic ideals left their mark on the history of American immigration.

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<sup>49</sup> Library of Congress, Thomas Capek Papers, 2/2, Jan Borecký to Jan Vratislav Čapek, June 6 1907.