

## SUMMARY

Since the end of the war, after eight years, the Versailles system did undergo significant changes. Czechoslovakia and Germany were neighbours in turbulent Europe. These two countries negotiated on different levels. Czechoslovakia had an immense desire for stable and „fair“ relationships with its greatest neighbour. However, positions of both countries were completely different. Czechoslovakia was one of the winners of the war. Germany was a defeated country that balanced at the edges of poverty in the first years after war. It was a country that was threatened by economical instability on one hand and by attacks of radicals from right and left parties on the other hand. The attitudes of both countries towards changes on the international scene were different. A determining point was the attitude to the condition that regulated the embedded peace treaties. As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, there were series of documents that integrated the republic into post-war world. „Status quo“ was a prerequisite for a quiet and stable development. Germany, though, was the biggest revisionist power that was waiting for the right moment to deconstruct the foundation of post-war order. Changes that existed in German policy during 1924-1926 promised to strengthen fragile democracy in the Weimar Republic. It was a promise that Germany would become a stable country with transparent policy where unpredictable errors would be eliminated. By reincorporation into international structures German policy was becoming more courageous. The issue of German minorities started to be little by little subject of discussions. Also, the vision of eastern borders during negotiations in Locarno has clearly shown the Berlin's opinion on this problem.

What was the security system like in 1926? It was marked out by compromises, compromises and compromises. After Germany's accession to the League of Nations everybody was satisfied with the achieved state. However, the process of negotiations showed a lot of complications that came with the changes in the system. Not all the players involved were completely satisfied. Germany had a good capacity for a recovery in the following years and it might have become not only a strong competitor, but also a potential threat of the existing order. Beneš expected and calculated with reincorporation of Germany into international policy. Even though, character of the process could not have been anticipated. Six years after the conference of Versailles there was a clear consensus that guaranties offered by the Peace treaty of Versailles were not adequate and so it was necessary to confirm and supplement them by other guaranties. Already in the preparation process of negotiations Germany was not only an object of international policy in the hands of superpowers, but it was also an active subject. The change of its position became more visible. The German result of negotiations in Locarno was that fight against the Versailles order could have been more active and could have had more chances for success. Locarno symbolised a raised forefinger for Versailles and for those countries that have tied basic directives of their policy with the Versailles system. Locarno showed that anti-revisionist course of France does not have

to last forever and that Paris can retreat from their initial tough conception. The French space of a superpower started to be looser and so there were suddenly new applicants for the succession.

Although the Czechoslovak foreign minister tried to act as an active participant of negotiations, his part in the preparation of Locarno treaty or Germany's accession to the League of Nations was minimal. In his statements Beneš openly declared that from the Prague perspective he considered Locarno for a temporary solution. It was evident that he wished to supplement the Western Locarno with the so called Eastern Locarno. He tried to proceed in accord with the allies. He wanted to prevent the case when his standpoint would have been in a discrepancy to the attitudes of France or Great Britain. The steps of Czechoslovak minister confirmed the fears of uncontrolled processes in Germany. The reaction to completion of the Berlin treaty, eventually to the comeback of crown prince shows that he did not trust the German representatives totally. In the presence of German representatives Beneš did not act from a position of an excessive respect. In some cases, when necessary, he did not hesitate to use even tougher words. During negotiations with German diplomats he tried to have an image of a potential intermediary. His relation to Weimar Republic was very alert. However, there was mistrust not only on his side, but also on the German side. Steps of the Czechoslovak minister and his statements were often analysed in the internal materials of Auswärtiges Amt in detail. From the point of view of German ministry the Czechoslovak foreign policy was in principle personalized in Beneš. Others perceived him with scepticism and so they often mocked him in internal records of the ministry. In the German press there were very often seditious campaigns and alarming news about Czechoslovakia's intentions, such as militarization and plans to attack Germany. Treaties that signed Czechoslovakia were automatically considered as suspicious. The words like anti-German, enemy, detection were often in use. Doubts about honest manners were on both sides. These doubts, though, were always expressed in the presence of a third party and as if by the way. A straight confrontation did not occur. Mutual relations were marked by mistrust, but none of the parties considered that situation as a problem. Czechoslovakia strived in their bilateral relations more for „correct“ relations, whereas Germany could profit from its position of a power.

Beneš had an immense desire to incorporate Germany into political structures. We can say that it happened much earlier than he had expected and also, under different circumstances than he had preferred before. Countries like Czechoslovakia had often no other choice than to do with unofficial assurances and statements. This fact brought certain hidden risks. That is why Beneš could not be satisfied with the results in 1926. Initially Beneš was convinced that western countries would be more interested in destiny of Central Europe. However, since security overlapped with the Rhine, that did not happen. In spite of that, on the assumption that institutions and institutes of international guaranties had been functioning according to agreements – without complications and obscurities – Czechoslovakia might have felt secure. In a complicated

system of treaties, legal formulations and political ambiguities it was always possible to find another meaning, eventually another argument about a particular decision. When two or more countries were signing one treaty, their objectives and also their interpretations on its content were different. Each of the parties believed that later they would get a general interpretation on their side. Compromise and agreement were cloudy, for someone it was the furthest borderline to retreat, for another one it was a space for taking next steps.

The international system was considerably modified in the years 1922-1926. Even though, a more complicated phase began, when the single elements of system was about to come into effect. Negotiations without cameras were more difficult, and so the solutions and applications of concrete agreements were postponed for later. Treaties of Locarno were signed up after one year of negotiations. However, in 1936 short before their application, no one wanted to support them. The Czechoslovak-German arbitration treaty was coming into existence with difficulty and it was never used in practise. Negotiations about Germany's accession to the Genevan organisation were very difficult. In a few years, after a lot of compromises Berlin left the organisation. Supplementations of security system in the middle of the 20th corresponded with this period. After several years they turned out to be inadequate. The system did not trust good intentions of its signatories. Initiators of changes in international system became friends who trusted each other and who rather preferred to discuss about various matters face to face. This principle of verbal promises and personal contacts proved to be insufficient at the moment when some persons were replaced in their important positions by new representatives. New representatives did not feel to be bound by oral agreements made by their predecessors. Spirit of Locarno that was meant to have a greater value than the treaties themselves was neither strong, nor stable enough. Formally, the problem did not arise at the time of regulation of post-war order. Yet it was a result of plenty of compromises that finally no one wanted to stand up for. When it came to fulfilment of obligations, no one wished to be reminded of them.

In 1926 there was not a relevant reason to feel menace or threat. A space for discussion and solutions of conflicts were set up. Created mechanisms, though, never entered into force and were never used. Czechoslovakia succeeded in laying foundations of state security. It happened due to a fact that international situation was favourable. However, a course of negotiations showed that the conditions were not ideal and final results differed from their primary intentions. In a few years Czechoslovakia's security pillars started to collapse. Weakening of strategic defensive alliances, continuing conflicts with neighbouring countries, building of the fifth column in the form of German minority, failure of the collective security system. These were signals that could not remain without notice and consequences. The year 1926 gave optimistic hopes for the future. A seemingly optimistic perspective did not result in a permanent appeasement and stabilisation of the old continent. A few years later Europe and actu-

278 • ally the whole world faced an economic crisis that brought a political crisis, too. These circumstances turned out to be fatal because their consequences were immense. The system that was being modified for several years attributed to Germany a more active role in the international relations that matched its capacity much better. Owing to that fact we can better understand belief that Germany will feel tied to post-war world and its order because Locarno, alike accession to the League of Nations, offered Germany an option to become its active co-creator. Thus, Europe and the world had been allowed to take a short breath before they started to fall into a doom.