

IMMIGRATION FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO BRAZIL IN THE 1920s AND 1930s: A PROBE INTO THE SOURCES FOR THE SÃO PAULO REGION¹

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate some sources relevant to a study of migratory flows between former Czechoslovakia and Brazil, with focus on the region of São Paulo, and to explore and present some aspects of the daily life of the Czechoslovak community in that region in the 1920s and 1930s. The research is based on two sets of data: the on-line archives of the *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite* journals and on-line archives of the Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo.

Keywords: Czech/Czechoslovak immigration; Brazil; Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo; *Folha da Manhã*; *Folha da Noite*; 1920s and 1930s.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es hacer un estudio de caso de algunas fuentes para los flujos migratorios entre la antigua Checoslovaquia y Brasil, con especial enfoque en la región de São Paulo, así como aspectos de la vida cotidiana de la comunidad checoslovaca en esta región durante el período de los 1920s y 1930s. La investigación se hizo a través de dos bases de datos: los archivos en línea de las revistas *Folha da Manhã* y *Folha da Noite* y los archivos en línea del Museo de la Inmigración del Estado de São Paulo.

Palabras clave: inmigración checa/checoslovaca; Brasil; Museo de la Inmigración del Estado de São Paulo; *Folha da Manhã*; *Folha da Noite*; 1920s-1930s.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore some so far little-used Brazilian sources which open new avenues for the study of the migratory flows between the former Czechoslovakia and Brazil during the interwar period, with special respect to the region of São Paulo. These sources capture aspects of the daily life of Czechoslovak community in the region during the period under study. A more general objective of our joint investigation was to enrich the existing source base for the study of the

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trans-Atlantic migration from Central Europe. Emigration from Central Europe (here specifically the Czech Lands/Czechoslovakia) to South America (in this case to Brazil, which was after Argentina second most popular destination for Czech/Czechoslovak migrants) is less well documented and not as frequently studied as the mass resettlement to the United States. Yet it can form a good case study that has a lot to contribute to the study of migration in the broadest context. It had various specific features stemming from the political and economic conditions in both the land of origin and the place of destination but also many features found in other migrations. All this can stimulate thinking about the causes, course, and results of migration processes during the Modern Era.

Existing research on this subject is based mostly on archival sources available in the Czech Republic, such as statistics, correspondence, memoirs, and articles in newspapers and journals.² Our aim was to explore the potential of other sources, located in Brazil and recently made accessible to researchers worldwide thanks to digitalisation. At the same time, our present study demonstrates that these newly accessible sources present certain problems regarding their use and processing, which is why cooperation with Brazilian scholars was crucial.

The research focused on the region of São Paulo, which was since the late 19th century a preferred destination for numerous groups of migrants from Europe, including the Czech Lands. São Paulo state was the centre of Brazilian economy thanks to both industry and intensive agriculture. Existing information on migrants from the Czech Lands, such as their numbers, names, place of origin, employment in the new country etc., was sketchy and limited to start with. To supplement it, we needed to use a combination of sources. For the purpose of this text, we used two databases: the on-line archives of the journals *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite*³ and the on-line archives of the Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo.⁴

The period we focused on was determined by practical circumstances: both *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite* came into existence in the 1920s, and the results found in the archives of the Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo were

² For the older period, see Monika BAĎUROVÁ – Bohumil BAĎURA, “A Emigração dos Países Tchecos ao Brasil antes de Originarse a República Tchecoslovaca”, *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* 31, 1997, pp. 41–68; Ivo BARTEČEK, “Československá kolonizace v Brazílii” [Czechoslovak Colonisation in Brazil], *Češi v cizině* 3, 1988, pp. 237–251; Simona BINKOVÁ, “El interés por el Brasil en la literatura checa y eslovaca entre las dos guerras mundiales”, in: Josef Opatrný (ed.), *Emigración centroeuropea a la América Latina IV*, Prague 2006, pp. 123–141 (which contains some additional bibliography); Natália KOVÁČOVÁ, “História e presença da imigração tcheca e eslovaca para o Brasil”, (M.A. thesis), Palacký University in Olomouc, 2017. Some source material, mostly memoirs and personal documentation, are also located in the Museum of Emigration to Brazil, a private institution established in 2010 in the town of Ralsko-Náhlov in Central Bohemia, see: *Emigrationmuseum.cz*, *Krajanské muzeum vystěhovalectví do Brazílie a muzeum Horních vsí v Brazílii* [on-line], 2025, [consulted 10 December 2024], accessible from: <https://www.emigrationmuseum.cz>.

³ The *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite* archives can be accessed through *Folha de S.Paulo: Acervo Folha* [on-line], [consulted 15 October 2024], accessible from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/index.do>.

⁴ The archives of the Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo can be accessed through *Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo: acervo digital* [on-line], [consulted 15 October 2024], accessible from: <http://www.inci.org.br/acervodigital>.

also most numerous for this decade. This period is also significant from the perspective of studying migration from Central Europe in more general terms. Immediately after the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918, emigration from the country has ceased for a short time and some people who had settled overseas before World War I even returned to the newly established republic. But various economic and social pressures led to a renewal of emigration in the early 1920s. At this time, Latin America became more attractive than previously, because a number of states that earlier welcomed migrants (such as USA) adopted various quotas and restrictions (the Immigration Act of 1924). Brazil, too, started to tighten its immigration policy in response to the growing immigration pressure. In 1921, Epiácio Pessoa's government made a proof of adequate finances an obligatory condition of immigration but, even so, Brazil remained one of a few large American states without immigration quotas.⁵

Sources of the Immigration Museum of São Paulo

The Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo (Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo) was established in 1993 in the former Hospedaria de Imigrantes, an accommodation facility for the newly arrived migrants in Brás, in the Mooca neighbourhood of São Paulo. The building was erected in 1887 to support the large-scale immigration that was taking place in the state of São Paulo in response to immigration incentives that were implemented throughout Brazil. Massive immigration naturally also led to high numbers of immigrants in need of lodging and medical assistance. The Brazilian government therefore first provided temporary accommodation to these persons in various buildings belonging to the military, such as the Arsenal of the Navy in Santos, a city with the largest port through which immigrants were arriving, and in the Military Hospital in São Paulo, which welcomed those arriving in the state capital. But these facilities soon proved insufficient and various immigrant hostels were established to house and concentrate foreigners immediately upon their arrival.⁶

Founded in 1887, the Hospedaria de Imigrantes hostel underwent renovations in 1908, 1936, and 1950. The building was massive, occupying nearly a city block, and had its own railway platform for the arriving immigrants. Accommodations, which were on the upper floor, consisted of simple rooms with limited privacy, where immigrants slept in bunk beds. On the ground floor were offices, bureaus de change, a medical area, kitchens, dining halls, and storage areas.⁷ The hostel also had its own small hospital and a post office. After arrival, immigrants had their luggage collected and inspected, and underwent a medical screening to check

⁵ Jeffrey LESSER, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1995, p. 24.

⁶ Rosa UDAETA, “Nem Brás, nem Flores: Hospedaria de Imigrantes da cidade de São Paulo (1875–1886)”, Ph.D. thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2013, pp. 79–82.

⁷ Maria Izilda Santos DE MATOS – Sênia BASTOS, “Portugueses em São Paulo. Registros e ingressos (1912): Hospedaria do Imigrante – listas de bordo e livros de registro”, in: Fernando de Sousa, Ismênia Martins – Izilda Matos (eds.), *Nas duas margens. Os portugueses no Brasil*, Porto 2009, pp. 277–278.

for contagious diseases or health problems. Once formally registered, they could stay in the *hospedaria* until they found a more permanent place to settle.⁸ To facilitate immigrant employment, the government had opened an office of the Official Agency for Colonisation and Employment in the *hospedaria* in 1905. After 1911, this agency was assisted by the Official Placement Agency, affiliated with the State Department of Labor. Its aim was to assist newcomers in finding employment: in the city, these were mainly positions for craftsmen, while rural areas provided employment to farmers.⁹

In terms of organisation, the immigrants were divided into categories: subsidised and non-subsidised newcomers, foreigners, and nationals coming from other Brazilian states. The main entry points for immigrants into Brazil were the ports of Santos and Rio de Janeiro, which is why the *hospedaria* was located between the railway lines connecting São Paulo with these two cities. Data indicate that between 1888 and 1978, the hostel accommodated 1.9 million foreigners of over 70 nationalities and 1.6 million national workers. The usual length of stay was one week: then the immigrants moved on to their new place of employment. The hostel could house up to 8,000 people, although it was designed for just 4,000 persons. Between 1930 and 1945, it faced restrictions both due to Getúlio Vargas' 'nationalisation' policies for the labour force and due to the persecution of certain ethnic groups related to the Axis during World War II (e.g., the Japanese, Italians, and Germans). Such measures led to a relative increase in the number of national migrants housed there, which were coming from the interior or northeast of Brazil.¹⁰

After World War II, the hostel received a new wave of European immigrants who had been displaced by the war. Seeing that the main hostel in Brás could not accommodate so many refugees, the government was forced to use a number of granaries to meet the demand. In the 1950s and 1960s, Brazil had undergone significant industrialisation, which went hand in hand with efforts to develop the interior. This modernisation drive included the construction of highways, industrial centres, as well as the establishment of the capital, Brasília, during the mandate of President Juscelino Kubitschek. An important turning point came in 1968, when the reception, screening, and placement of immigrants and migrants previously handled by the Secretariat of Agriculture came under the auspices of a newly created Secretariat of Social Promotion. The policymakers realised that by now, majority of migration took place within the country (i.e., internal migration had exceeded immigration), leading to the formation of the slums and growing social inequality in peripheral areas and states of the country. Henceforth, the purpose of the hostel was

⁸ The bureaucratic mechanisms upon the arrival of the immigrants were described in detail during the epoch, see C. R. CAMERON, "Colonization of Immigrants in Brazil", *Monthly Labor Review* 33/4, 1931, pp. 36–46.

⁹ Paulo Cesar GONÇALVES, "A Hospedaria de Imigrantes de São Paulo: um novo espaço para o recrutamento de braços europeus pela economia cafeeira", in: Lená Medeiros de Menezes – Fernando de Sousa (eds.), *Brasil-Portugal: Pontes sobre o Atlântico. Múltiplos Olhares sobre a E/Imigração*, Rio de Janeiro 2017, p. 255.

¹⁰ Odair PAIVA, "Hospedaria de Imigrantes de São Paulo", *Navegar: Revista de Estudos de E/Imigração* 2/3, 2016, pp. 59–76.

to accommodate and assist these marginalised individuals: this led to the conclusion of its original activities in the 1970s.¹¹

Although the *hospedaria* concluded its original activities in the 1970s, it was only in 1986 that it became the Immigrant Historical Centre under the auspices of the State Secretariat for Social Promotion. The Immigration Museum was established here in 1993 by the State Secretariat for Culture. One of its tasks is to administer the entire preserved historical collection. In 2014, the museum reopened after a massive reconstruction with a new permanent exhibition entitled ‘Migration: Experiences, Memories, and Identities’. The museum now regularly hosts various events and temporary exhibitions in order to engage with local communities and to showcase the diverse ethnic groups that passed through the *hospedaria* and contributed to the cultural formation of Brazil. It promotes various educational and school programmes in partnership with public educational institutions in the country, contributes to the integration of various immigrant communities that have settled in Brazil, and collaborates on further cultural activities.¹²

The collection of the Immigration Museum is rich and diverse, containing a variety of objects, documents, photographs, and records pertaining to the lives of immigrants who arrived in São Paulo in the 19th and 20th century. It includes items acquired from the organisations that operated in the building of the former *hospedaria*, but also various things donated by migrants and their descendants, such as luggage, furniture, household items, work tools, personal records, and clothing. Aside from these, one also finds immigration documents such as disembarkation records and passenger lists from the ships that brought immigrants to Brazil. The museum’s digital collection includes enrolment records, boarding lists, applications, letters of invitation, iconography, cartography, and newspapers, all belonging to the public archive of the State of São Paulo. Since 1993, this archive has been growing, adding not only various accounts and life stories from the time newcomers arrived in Brazil but also materials related to their later experiences. The archive even includes a collection of oral history documents: interviews with migrants and their descendants. To assist researchers, the museum offers an on-line course on conducting research using the migration documents which are on-line.¹³ Still, it seems that these collections are not exploited to the maximum of their potential. Nelly Freitas in her review of the permanent exhibition noted that ‘the particular characteristics are not really captured [...] because no distinction is made between the different groups. It is not shown how everyone has contributed, and still contributes, to the identity of

¹¹ PAIVA, “Hospedaria de Imigrantes de São Paulo”.

¹² For a review of the museum (in English and Portuguese) with an outline of its history, see Nelly de FREITAS, “Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo”, *The American Historical Review* 124/5, 2019, pp. 1800–1805. A summary of challenges currently facing the museum is found in Thiago HARUO SANTOS, “Escrita em tempos de pandemia: participação em museum a partir da experiência do Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo”, *Simbiótica* 8/2, 2021, pp. 92–113 (again with a summary of the museum’s history).

¹³ See also the handbook by Henrique TRINIDADE ABREU, *Acervo digital do Museu da Imigração* [on-line], São Paulo 2018, [consulted 10 May 2023], accessible from: https://museudaimigracao.org.br/assets/download/ebook/MUSEU-DA-IMIGRACaO_EBOOK_Acervo-Digital-compressed.pdf.

São Paulo or what conflicts took place when these immigrants were inserted into the host society of today and yesterday'.¹⁴ This is why focus on one particular immigrant group is so important.

Our research had shown that the digital search tools one can use to remotely access the digitalised collections lack precision and include errors found in the original documents. For instance, files containing the name records were originally filled by hand by the officers, some include typos and, even more importantly, sometimes different terms are used to refer to the same nationality. Thus, when searching for keyword 'Tchecoslováquia', we ended up having to search for 'Slovaquia' in various formats, because there were so many variants of spelling Czechoslovakia, including 'T. eslovaquia' (in the case of Anna Schilder and her family records),¹⁵ 'T. slowaquia' (in the case of Francisco Bendl records),¹⁶ and 'T. slovaquia' in various other instances. There were, of course, also various occasions of misspelling family and personal names, which complicated the pairing of the records with other available sources.

All in all, we found in 76 files a total of 122 name records of either families and couples travelling together or persons accompanied by others who were registered under the same file (in case of families and couples, the files always have the husband/father, or in his absence mother, as main person).¹⁷ We also found two reimbursement requests (the official term was 'Requerimentos SACOP') addressed by the immigrants to the Secretariat of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works (Secretaria de Agricultura, Comércio e Obras Públicas, acronym SACOP) in order to be refunded for the money spent on tickets. This provision was instituted to make the immigration to Brazil more attractive and to draw into the country some much-needed manpower. They are a rich source of information, because many contain information such as images of passports, signatures, and employment records. (The two requests made by Czechoslovak migrants are discussed in more detail below.)

Other records found in the archives of the Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo in general show that migration from the former Czechoslovakia to Brazil involved mostly male workers of various trades and skills. From the 122 records found, only two of the persons named had achieved higher education: Francisco Bendl, an agronomist (arrived in Itararé in December 1922)¹⁸ and Walter Namsnam, a construction engineer (arrived in the *hospedaria* in October 1923 from the Brazilian state of Alagoas. (In this case, the family name was most probably corrupted by the clerk who did the recording, and it was not possible to ascertain the real surname).¹⁹ Other immigrants were metalworkers, farmers, carpenters, and the like.

¹⁴ FREITAS, "Museu da Imigração", p. 1802.

¹⁵ Archive of the Museu da Imigração, São Paulo (hereafter AMI), Livros de registros, book 94, família 74170, p. 268.

¹⁶ AMI, Livros de registros, book 94, família 78780, p. 301.

¹⁷ As an example, see Maria Satzke family's files, in AMI, Livros de registros, book 94, família 52430, p. 130.

¹⁸ AMI, Livros de registros, book 94, família 78780, p. 301.

¹⁹ AMI, Livros de registros, book 96, família 31060, p. 9.

The records listed a total of 101 males and 33 females, with only 19 of the 76 files listing families or couples traveling together or someone accompanied by another person.

This finding confirms existing knowledge of trans-Atlantic migration patterns. Contrary to the popular image of families huddled at railroad stations and in ports around piles of baggage containing all their worldly possessions, most migrants were young, unmarried men (and to a lesser degree women). This general profile could become more pronounced in times of economic crisis (as were the 1920s and 1930s), when money simply would not suffice for the fare of the entire family. But it is clear that many of those who set off to São Paulo did not envisage a permanent emigration: their plan was to work overseas for some time to acquire capital to use in their home country or to supplement the family income. Of course, plans could change. Some of those who wished to stay permanently returned within a few years to their country of origin because the promises of the agents and authorities of the host country failed to correspond to the reality of everyday life. Others who wanted to return soon realised that their savings would barely suffice for a return ticket and they had to stay. But even in cases when whole families planned to emigrate, the younger members were often sent ahead and only after they found work and a place to stay, the rest of the family followed. Moreover, the occupational profile indicates that overseas migration was usually undertaken by people who were qualified in a particular craft, not by the poorest classes who only could find employment only in the least qualified jobs.²⁰

Two cases among the files of the Museum demonstrate the difficulties faced by researchers who investigate immigration from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Czechoslovakia or the Balkans. Wenceslau Hradec, a 38-years-old mechanic, arrived in the *hospedaria* in April 1923 from the Paraná state with his family. While he declared a Czechoslovak citizenship, his wife Anna, their two children Rodolpho and Anna, his sister Joanna, and his brother-in-law Frantz were all registered as Austrian nationals.²¹ Sebastião Stern, a 47-years-old man, arrived in the *hospedaria* in May 1921 from Gaibodar (sic!), Serbia, yet while he registered as Yugoslavian, his entire family (a wife and five sons) is listed as Czechoslovak citizens.²² It can be presumed that at least for registration in the *hospedaria*, nationality of the arrivals was not determined by self-declaration but by a passport. The same applied to reimbursement requests: for instance, the reimbursement request of Josef Langer and his family shows he came via Trieste, Italy, to the port of Santos in 1920, and digitised documents in the archives include the family's passports, which were all issued by the Republic of Czechoslovakia.²³

²⁰ See in this respect the article by Markéta KRÍŽOVÁ, "Between 'here' and 'over there': Short-term and circular mobility from the Czech Lands to Latin America (1880s–1930s)", *Hungarian Historical Review* 7/2, 2018, pp. 191–218.

²¹ AMI, Livro de registros, book 95, family 45450, p. 93.

²² AMI, Livro de registros, book 93, family 76570, p. 249.

²³ AMI, Requerimentos SACOP, Pedido de restituição de passagem de Trieste a Santos, Langer Josef, June 19, p. 1920.

Josef Langer and his family's passports are also important in showing that the main port of departure for Czechoslovaks from Europe to Brazil was the port of Trieste. Although it now belonged to Italy, the region was part of the former Austro-Hungarian empire. Langers' passports also feature authorisations issued by the Italian and Brazilian diplomacy in Vienna, which can help clarify how the family got to Trieste. In fact, Vlastimil Kybal, a Czech diplomat who worked in Brazil, mentioned in a speech given to students at Pedro II School (Rio de Janeiro) in November 1925 that one can travel from Trieste to Prague via Vienna.²⁵

In these migration movements, *Hospedaria de Imigrantes* functioned as a kind of triage centre of the potential workforce. As noted above, between the early years of the 20th century and the 1940s, Brazil had undergone a period of rapid industrialisation. This led to an increased demand for workforce and subsequent growth of immigration. It was a time of a rapid expansion of the railway network, development of ports and industries, and growing coffee production (São Paulo was the main producer of the commodity in Brazil). Not surprisingly, São Paulo was thus an attractive destination for European immigrants. Initially, in the 1880s and 1890s, they were brought to replace the slaves and work in the plantations; later, from the 1920s onwards, they were increasingly employed in the industry.²⁶ The data about Czech immigration in the archives of the Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo reflect this. One of the items in the records kept by the museum is 'farmer', which reflects who was the farmer employing or receiving these immigrants, individuals, families, or group of immigrants in Brazil. This field is not filled in all the files, but withing those where it is, two farmers' names stand out. In 1923, Tolpho Leite Barros from Pirajebú was responsible for employing eight immigrants or groups/families of immigrants. In 1921, the company of 'S. Vidal & irmão' from 'M. Prado' was responsible for receiving five immigrants, or rather a group/family of immigrants, although it is unclear from the documents whether they were employed by the company or just received on a temporary basis.

Interestingly, both of the reimbursement requests, from Josef Langer and João Konstansky, also have covers of the Secretary of Agriculture, in particular its Directorate of Lands, Colonisation, and Immigration. The Langer's request explains that he and his family left the *hospedaria* for employment at the farm of Orozimbo Augusto de Almeida Loureiro,²⁷ while Konstansky's request shows that he and his family were settlers in the 'Veado' farm.²⁸ These documents clearly document chain migration as a basic pattern of the transatlantic networks.²⁹ More importantly, they

²⁵ Vlastimil KYBAL, *Um anno no Brasil: Artigos, conferencias e discursos sobre a Tchecoslovaquia e suas relações com o Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1926, p. 79.

²⁶ Milton SANTOS – Maria Laura SILVEIRA, *Brasil – território e sociedade no início do século XXI*, Rio de Janeiro 2012, pp. 212–214.

²⁷ AMI, Requerimentos SACOP, Pedido de restituição de passagem de Trieste a Santos, Langer Josef, June 19, 1920.

²⁸ AMI, Requerimentos SACOP, Pedido de restituição de passagens do porto de Buenos Aires ao porto de Santos, João Konstansky, December 30, 1925.

²⁹ On the importance of chain networks in the making of permanent and temporary expat communities in the New World see Jochen KREBBER, "Creed, Class, and Skills: Three Structural Limitations

could serve as a starting point for mapping the specific life stories of migrants before and after their coming to Brazil.

The Czech community in São Paulo as reflected on the pages of *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite*

The Czechoslovak community in São Paulo was relatively large and compact. As such, it was capable of sustaining its own means of communication in the form of journals and newspapers in Czech. Similar to other places where Czechoslovak emigrants had settled, these journals served helped to reinforce a sense of collective identity and provided useful information on everyday matters, advertisements etc.³⁰ At the same time, leaders of the community tried to communicate with the majority society via local newspapers in Portuguese. On top of that, the references to Czechoslovakia and the Czech community in São Paulo that appeared in the two journals we investigated as part of our project also reflect something more, namely the efforts of Vlastimil Kybal, the Czechoslovak envoy to Brazil in 1925–1927).³¹

Historian by profession and originally employed at Charles University (Prague), Kybal belonged to the circle of academics linked to the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk who after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic entered the state service. His first posting as ambassador was to Rome (1920–1925). It was followed by a post in Brazil with accreditation for Argentina (1925–1927), a post in Spain with accreditation for Portugal (1927–1933). Finally, he was posted to Mexico with accreditation for Central America (1935–1939). When he took up his post in Brazil, Kybal was determined to promote especially the commercial exchange between the two countries. Nevertheless, upon his arrival in the country, after the diplomatic post had been vacant for almost a year, Kybal realised that Czechoslovakia, although enjoying prestige, was very little known among the general population in Brazil. As Kybal later explained in his autobiography, written in the 1950s when he was in exile in the United States and published only in 2020, he tried to achieve his goal by active and intensive promotion of Czechoslovakia in the Brazilian press.

The Czechoslovak embassy under his direction flooded the leading Brazilian newspapers with articles. ‘This campaign was very successful. Just in Rio [de Janeiro], the political newspapers have published between mid-April and late December 1925 a total of 364 articles in 17 different newspapers.’³² Aside from short reports on current happenings, Kybal also supplied the papers with longer and more detailed articles on Czech politics, culture, and economy. To some extent, he also engaged in

of Chain Migration”, in: Annemarie Steidl – Josef Ehmer et al. (eds.), *European Mobility: Internal, International and Transatlantic Moves in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, Göttingen 2009, pp. 69–77.

³⁰ See Anežka BAĎUROVÁ, “Comienzos de la historia de las revistas de compatriotas checoslovacos en América Latina, 1920–1923”, *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* 16, 1983, pp. 279–289.

³¹ For Kybal, see Jaroslav HRDLIČKA, *Historik a diplomat Vlastimil Kybal* [Historian and diplomat Vlastimil Kybal], Prague 2020.

³² Vlastimil KYBAL, *Paměti* [Memoirs], ed. Jaroslav Hrdlička – Jan Blahoslav Lášek, Prague 2020, vol. 2, pp. 170–171.

polemics with German newspapers in Brazil, which in Kybal's view 'vilified' the new republic. On one occasion, he even entered in a heated argument with a German senator from Hamburg, a certain Mr. Burchard.³³ Kybal later republished over twenty of his longer articles in two volumes.³⁴

For example, Kybal recalls: 'for the 7th of March 1925, I wrote [...] and published on 14 March in a popular opposition newspaper *O Jornal* a brief article entitled "O presidente Masaryk", in which I tried to sketch with several brief strokes of my pen the moral portrait of the president and his fight for independence in collaboration with world democracies.'³⁵ It is apparent that various local papers in the São Paulo region republished those promotional texts, especially in the context of Kybal's official visit to São Paulo in October 1925. The official reason for the visit was to make contact with 'the oldest Czech colony in Brazil' and to join the celebrations the 30th anniversary of Slavia, the oldest Czech social association in the whole of Latin America. Kybal also used this opportunity to promote a closer cooperation among the Czechs themselves and to advocate the establishment of a Czech-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce that would further facilitate the increased economic cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Brazil.³⁶ This demonstrates the importance of immigrant groups for the political representation of their mother countries. The migrant communities were viewed as envoys and representatives of their country of origin. Sometimes, this even had an impact on their daily lives: in the case of the Czechs, it took the form of competition with the German settlers, whose role in São Paulo region and the whole of Brazil was considerable.³⁷

The presence of Czechs in São Paulo was also reflected on the pages of *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite*, two journals that started to appear in the 1920s. They were founded by Olival Costa and Pedro Cunha, two journalists who had previously worked for *O Estado de São Paulo*, another important Brazilian newspaper. *Folha da Noite* was first published on the 19th of February 1921. Four years later, in July 1925, was launched its morning edition, *Folha da Manhã*.³⁸

In the 1920s, immigration to the São Paulo state was growing fast. This increasing presence is also reflected in the pages of *Folha da Manhã*. On 14 June 1929, the newspaper published what seems to have been the pilot article of a new

³³ KYBAL, *Um anno*, p. 4.

³⁴ KYBAL, *Um anno*; also Vlastimil KYBAL, *Segundo anno no Brasil: Artigos, conferencias e discursos sobre a Tchecoslovaquia e suas relações com o Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1927.

³⁵ Kybal, *Paměti*, vol. 2, p. 171.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

³⁷ For the German settlers in Brazil in this period, see for instance Nancy MITCHELL, "Protective Imperialism versus Weltpolitik in Brazil. Part 1: Pan-German Vision and Mahanian Response", *The International History Review* 18/2, 1996, pp. 253–278.

³⁸ On January 1, 1960, *Folha da Manhã*, *Folha da Tarde*, and *Folha da Noite* have merged and formed a daily paper called *Folha de São Paulo*. The website of the last-named journal includes the archives of the oldest issues. For the history of these journals, see Fabiane Barbosa MOREIRA, "Os valores-notícia no jornalismo impresso: análise das 'características substantivas' das notícias nos jornais *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Estado de São Paulo* e *O Globo*", M.A. thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2006, pp. 85–86.

section called ‘Typos de S. Paulo’ (The types of São Paulo). Its author signed himself as ‘Belmonte’, which was a pseudonym of Benedito Carneiro Bastos Barreto (1896–1947), a caricaturist, illustrator, painter, and journalist, who was deeply involved in the public life of São Paulo during that time.³⁹ The article, entitled ‘Começando’ (Beginning), includes the following observation:

Thirty years ago, São Paulo knew only the Italian and the Portuguese. It knew only its own race. Nowadays, the city knows the universe. The Japanese and Chinese, Latvians and Germans, Lithuanians and Hungarians, Czechs and Croats, Kalmyks, Greeks, Russians, Poles, Syrians... It all came down to this, after the war, with them bringing their religions and pieces of their climate. [...] And the climate of São Paulo became multimode and disordered [...].⁴⁰

Belmonte then went on to define the city of São Paulo as ‘the popular edition of the League of the Nations’ and ‘a cocktail of races furiously shaken by the century’.⁴¹

It is interesting to note that the article differentiates so clearly between the Italian and Portuguese immigrants, who are described as São Paulo’s ‘own race’, and all the other immigrants. It is also curious how Belmonte associates the new waves of immigrants with the idea of disorder. The expression loosely translated as ‘it all came down to this’ (in Portuguese ‘se despençou pra cá’) can be in this context interpreted as a highly pejorative way of referencing the arrival of the new immigrants in the city.

The notion of otherness that surrounded the new migratory flows arriving in São Paulo was present also in Juca Pato’s column. ‘Pato’ was a famous cartoon character that appeared in the *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite*. Created by the abovementioned Belmonte, this fictional character had a humorous column in the newspapers where ‘the criticism and aspirations of the São Paulo middle class’ were presented in a sarcastic way.⁴² On 5 February 1928, Juca Pato’s text targeted the situation of some Brazilian women married to Syrian men.⁴³ According to Pato, they had to endure slavery and live with other ‘wonders’ incompatible with present-day Brazil: one can see this as a criticism of Brazil’s past. Making a clear reference to stereotypes, Pato targets the notion of marriage between Brazilians and Syrians, wondering how women born in Brazil can unite with such strange people. He includes in this list of ‘strange people’ the Syrians, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, but also the Czechs.

The image of the newcomers was thus not always positive. While the Brazilian government continued its efforts to attract European immigrants throughout the 1920s, one can also see a mounting dissatisfaction within the Brazilian society with

³⁹ Zelia Lopes da SILVA, “O traço de Belmonte desvendando São Paulo e o Brasil (1922–1924)”, *Art-Cultura* 9/15, 2007, pp. 163–179.

⁴⁰ BELMONTE, “Começando”, *Folha da Manhã*, June 14, 1929, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴² Marissa GORBERG, “Um olhar sobre as caricaturas de Belmonte (1923–1927)”, (Ph.D. thesis), Escola de Ciências Sociais da Fundação Getúlio Vargas 2018, pp. 147–166.

⁴³ Juca Pato, *Folha da Manhã*, February 5, 1928, p. 5.

the increased competition of migrants, who were culturally and linguistically distinct and willing to accept lower wages. This attitude was then reflected in the press. For example, on 3 January 1927, two work colleagues of certain Olavo Tarxo – allegedly a Czechoslovak citizen although the name does not sound Slavic – stabbed him with a knife on the Wilson Avenue.⁴⁴ All three men were the employees of the Companhia Antártica Paulista, a famous Brazilian beverage producer and, as the headline of the article (‘Por questão de serviço’) notes, the crime was motivated by work-related issues.

On 15 September 1927, *Folha da Noite* reported an incident that took place in the Lapa neighbourhood of São Paulo. In the house number 18 of Água Branca Avenue, there was a cabaret attended ‘almost exclusively’ by Germans, Hungarians, and Czechoslovaks.⁴⁵ According to the article, the place was noisy and its customers rowdy, which annoyed the people who lived nearby. Otto Gruber, who lived next door, reported the situation to the police, and the authorities called Adão Burger, the cabaret’s owner, to the police station for an explanation. Angry with Otto Gruber, Adão Burger and two other Czechoslovak citizens named in the text as André Mingassi and Alexandre Dage (which are certainly corruptions of their original names) went to Gruber’s home. Here two police officers, forewarned about Burger’s plans, were waiting for them. Adão Burger and his accomplices then engaged in a fight with the police officers. The article has a xenophobic tone: aside from highlighting that the cabaret was attended ‘almost exclusively’ by Germans, Hungarians and Czechoslovaks, it also remarks that while the police are proactive and strict in downtown São Paulo with the Brazilians, they turn a blind eye to cabarets owned by ‘internationals’ and to the disorder they create in the suburbs.

It should be mentioned in this context that between the 1920s and 1930s, policing and maintenance of public order in Brazil had undergone a significant transformation driven by pressure from the general public. The military police established what was known as the ‘policia de costumes’ (‘behaviour police’), which focused suppressing prostitution, idleness, and gambling. São Paulo was the first city to establish a moral police force; it played a crucial role in the fighting prostitution and patrolling designated areas in order to keep undesirable behaviours out of sight of the upper class and bourgeoisie. The ‘success’ in controlling prostitution by removing it from public view quickly led to the adoption of the same policy by the police in Minas Gerais.⁴⁶

On 10 December 1926, *Folha da Manhã* printed an article called ‘The Mysterious Murder (‘Mysterioso assassinio’), which informed about a dead male body found in the São Caetano avenue close to Silva Bueno Street. The police estimated that despite the bad smell and general business of the avenue, the corpse had been there for six days before someone noticed it and informed the authorities. Once the

⁴⁴ [anon.], “Por questão de serviço”, *Folha da Manhã*, January 3, 1927, p. 3.

⁴⁵ [anon.], “‘Tempo quente’ na Lapa”, *Folha da Noite*, September 15, 1927, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Lucas Carvalho Soares de Aguiar PEREIRA, “Prostituição e polícia: mulheres e homens na mira do policiamento moral em Belo Horizonte, MG, Brasil (c. 1920/1930)”, *História* 38, 2019, pp. 1–24; Maria Lourdes SILVA, “Policia de costumes, drogas e educação na capital federal nos anos 1920-30”, *Revista Teias* 23, 2010, pp. 3–22.

police found in one of the murdered man's pockets a letter in Czech, they suspected the victim was of Czechoslovak origin. Further inquiries in houses around the crime scene established that a man called Antonio Slobado (most likely a corruption of the common Czech surname 'Svoboda') hosted in the weeks before his murder four 'Hungarian or Czech' men. Slobado lived one kilometre from the crime scene, which, as the article noted, was information of relative value but one that 'could not be omitted'. This was perfectly in line with stereotypes already present in this paper regarding the Hungarians and Czechs.⁴⁷

On the other hand, there were articles specifically dedicated to Czechoslovakia on the pages of *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite* which attest to the above-mentioned efforts of Czech representatives, chiefly the envoy Vlastimil Kybal, to promote the Czechoslovak cause in Brazil. These texts often mentioned prominent political figures, such as the President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Masaryk's successor in 1935. In 1926,⁴⁸ and again a year later, *Folha da Manhã* reported on the celebration of Masaryk's birthday (on 8 March), organised by Sociedade Brasileira Tcheco-Slovaca in Rio de Janeiro. In 1927, the celebration was held at the Radio Society and the list of attendees included had the well-known Brazilian professor Roquette Pinto.⁴⁹ Similar articles published in subsequent years⁵⁰ presented Masaryk as an important academic, the father of the Czechoslovak Republic, and 'the most popular character in Central European political and diplomatic circles'. Especially praised was 'his great work in the cause of national resurgence'.⁵¹

On 1 November 1927, *Folha da Manhã* brought an article on a music festival organised by the Czech Union (União Tcheca) to commemorate the independence day of Czechoslovakia.⁵² On 28 October 1933, Sociedade Slavia held in its headquarters located in the Pedro Lessa Street a musical soirée and a ball to celebrate the independence of Czechoslovakia. These celebrations also featured a performance of Antonín Dvořák's Slavonic Dances.⁵³ Slavia also used to organise annual commemorations of the 'martyrdom' of Jan Hus, a Bohemian religious reformer who was burned at stake in 1415; in 1929, *Folha da Manhã* published a brief article about this on its front page. These commemorative events included a choir performance, recitation of Hussite poetry, a lecture on Hus' life by Václav Kresta, then the Czechoslovak consul in São Paulo, the singing of national anthem of Czechoslovakia, and

⁴⁷ [anon.], "Mysterioso assassinio", *Folha da Manhã*, December 10, 1926, p. 4.

⁴⁸ [anon.], "Uma festa para solenizar o aniversario do presidente da Republica da Tcheco-Slovaquia", *Folha da Manhã*, March 8, 1926, p. 5.

⁴⁹ [anon.], "O aniversario do presidente da Tcheco-slovaquia", *Folha da Manhã*, March 8, 1927, p. 5.

⁵⁰ [anon.], "O aniversario do presidente Masaryk e a gratidão nacional", *Folha da Manhã*, March 8, 1929, p. 5; [anon.], "Republica Tchecoslovaquia", *Folha da Manhã*, March 8, 1930, p. 6.

⁵¹ [anon.], "O presidente Masaryk – A nação tcheco-slovena festeja hoje o seu aniversario natalicio", *Folha da Manhã*, March 8, 1928, p. 5.

⁵² [anon.], "União Tcheca", *Folha da Manhã*, November 1, 1927, p. 5.

⁵³ [anon.], "O aniversario da independencia da Tchecoslovaquia", *Folha da Manhã*, October 19, 1933, p. 5.

similar things.⁵⁴ On 16 June 1929, *Folha da Manhã* featured an article on gymnastics ('O esporte gymnastico') which aimed at explaining to readers the goals of the Sokol (literally 'falcon'), a voluntary sports organisation very popular among the Czech migrants. The article presented it as 'school of strengthening and improving the body through physical culture' that developed the 'vigour of a race' to all its fullest potential. According to the article, the Sokol sporting programmes were recognised across Europe and many countries were following the Czechoslovakia's footsteps.⁵⁵ This text may have been published at the initiative of the local União de Gymnastica Sokol in an effort to present a positive image of its activities and, more generally, of the Czechoslovak community.

All in all, various articles tried to create not just a positive image of the Czechoslovak community in Brazil but also of Czechoslovakia. On 19 September 1926, *Folha da Manhã* published an article entitled 'In the empire of iron and coal' ('No império do ferro e do carvão'), which sang praises of the region of Moravia, presenting it as an industrial colossus. The article concludes by boasting that, in Moravia, chimneys have been spewing smoke without interruption for a century.⁵⁶

All this fits into the efforts of Czechoslovak diplomats in Brazil, who tried to create a positive image of their nation, culture, and Czechoslovaks in general to oppose the current stereotypes regarding immigrants. During the abovementioned celebration of Czechoslovak independence organised by the Czech Union in 1927, the Czechoslovak consul Václav Kresta was greeted enthusiastically, and the participants emphasised his efforts aimed at increasing the prestige of Czechoslovak community in São Paulo.⁵⁷ According to the Czechoslovak ambassador Vlastimil Kybal, immediately after his coming to Brazil he launched a campaign of promotion of Czechoslovakia in the press and at conferences. Kybal was convinced that his efforts brought positive results and he was able to actually improve the relations between both nations. One of the tangible measures of success was the foundation of the Czechoslovak-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in 1925.⁵⁸ In 1925, some articles published in *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite* covered preparations for its establishment. For instance, on 27 July 1925 *Folha da Manhã* reported about a meeting that took place the previous day in the Kiew Hotel in São Paulo. At this meeting, Carlos V. Srna, heading the session, asked for the moral support of the Czechoslovak community in the state of São Paulo, in the southern Brazilian

⁵⁴ [anon.], "Uma grande data da Tcheco-Slovaquia", *Folha da Manhã*, July 6, 1929, p. 1.

⁵⁵ [anon.], "O esporte gymnastico", *Folha da Manhã*, June 16, 1929, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Otto NOVAK, "No império do ferro e do carvão", *Folha da Manhã*, September 19, 1926, p. 5.

⁵⁷ [anon.], "União Tcheca", *Folha da Manhã*, 1 November 1927, p. 5. Kresta was rather active in promoting the Czechoslovak immigration to Brazil. He wrote a guide for the new arrivals, see Václav KRESTA, *Brazílie: Poučení pro československé vystěhovalce* [Brazil: Information for Czechoslovak emigrants], Prague: Masarykova akademie práce, 1928; and an information brochure specifically on São Paulo, see Václav KRESTA, *Stát São Paulo: Informace československým exportérům a vystěhovalcům* [The state São Paulo: Information for Czechoslovak exporters and emigrants], Praha 1931.

⁵⁸ Vlastimil KYBAL, *Um anno*, pp. 10–11.

states, and elsewhere in the country, in the process of creating and establishing the chamber.⁵⁹

Aside from the promotional articles, one also finds in the press various announcements that shed light on the everyday life of Czech migrants. For example, marriages involving Czech citizens in many neighbourhoods of São Paulo were reported by both *Folha da Manhã* and *Folha da Noite*. We thus find announcements of marriage between Miguel Ferher, a 27-years-old Czech, and Olga, a Russian citizen, in the Bella Vista neighbourhood (January 1931),⁶⁰ the marriage between Anna Kopecky from Czechoslovakia and José Wagner, a Brazilian from Brusque (Santa Catarina state) in the Mooca neighbourhood (June 1932),⁶¹ or the marriage of Leo Tiltscher from Czechoslovakia and Maria Willsch, born in Chropaczow, Poland, in the Vila Mariana neighbourhood (December 1932).⁶² One should note that oftentimes these were marriages that went across 'national' lines but were still concluded between persons who had been classified as 'not our own race' in the pilot text of the 'Typos de S. Paulo' series quoted in the first part of this text. (The marriage of Anna Kopecky and José Wagner seems to be an exception but the surname Wagner may indicate a German nationality.) The fact that many of the marriages were across national groups challenges the accepted image of compactness of expatriate communities: if that were the case, one should see a predominance of marriages within a national community. But it may have been the result of the enforced coexistence of immigrant groups which were all to some extent segregated from the majority Brazilian society.

Conclusion

The quotations from contemporary sources presented above enable us only brief and sketchy glimpses into the lives of Czechoslovak migrants to the São Paulo region in the short period of 1920s and 1930s. Our aim here, however, was not to present an exhaustive portrayal of their lives. In the present text, we merely outline some preliminary results of what is planned to be a longer and sustained cooperation in migration studies between Czech and Brazilian scholars. Although limited, the sources we worked with have contributed to our knowledge of the migration patterns, mechanisms of integration of the new arrivals into the host society, but also the efforts of expatriate communities to introduce themselves in a positive way to the host society.

(Written in English by the authors)

⁵⁹ [anon.], "Camara de Commercio Tcheco-Brasileira", *Folha da Manhã*, July 17, 1925, p. 2.

⁶⁰ [anon.], "Edital de proclamas – Juízo do Paz do districto de Bella Vista", *Folha da Noite*, January 29, 1931, p. 7.

⁶¹ [anon.], "Edital de proclamas – districto da Moóca", *Folha da Manhã*, June 9, 1932, p. 15.

⁶² [anon.], "Edital de proclamas – districto de Villa Marianna", *Folha da Manhã*, December 12, 1932, p. 10.

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