

Voices of Vision:

Wilson, Masaryk, and the Formation of Czechoslovakia



Just as World War I came to an end, the remarkable partnership of a Czechoslovak patriot and a visionary American president set the stage for the first western-style democracy in Central Europe. In 1918, following the War, the nation of Czechoslovakia was formed from the war-torn lands of Austria-Hungary, giving Czechs and Slovaks the chance to control their own destiny as a free nation. While the First Czechoslovak Republic was suppressed by Hitler after only 20 years, the beliefs of these two leaders – Woodrow Wilson and Tomáš G. Masaryk – remain no less compelling nearly a century after World War I.

First Panel

The life and times of Woodrow Wilson from college to graduate school, professorship to university president, and then to governorship and political acclaim.

Second Panel

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a man whose prosperous career included scientific work, literary success, political activity, and the Czechoslovak presidency.

Third Panel

Woodrow Wilson was elected President of the United States in 1912. His presidency was exemplary and full of accomplishment. He created the first federal income tax and the Federal Reserve Act. He was also president when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917. The 14-point program for world peace he proposed during the War formed the basis of what later became the League of Nations. Wilson's belief in democracy lead him to work in tandem with Masaryk to establish Czechoslovakia as an independent nation in 1918.

Fourth Panel

Tomáš G. Masaryk was more insightful than most following World War I and what he saw of Europe's political situation concerned him. He saw a great power vacuum spring up between the defeated Germany and newly formed Soviet Union. He understood the magnitude of the struggle that might ensue and tried to unite Europe as a course of prevention, and preparation.

Fifth Panel

Tomáš G. Masaryk became the first president of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. He established the Republic as a democratic nation in Europe. Within twenty years, Czechoslovakia became a legitimate member of international, political, and economic communities.

Sixth Panel

For his work in the formation of the First Czechoslovak Republic, Woodrow Wilson was honored with the construction of a monument in his image. Albin Polasek, a master sculptor, was commissioned to create this memorial statue that would stand in Vrchlického Sady opposite the Main Railway Station.

Seventh Panel

In spite of how it seemed, the Wilson Monument was not created to merely honor President Wilson. It meant much more than that to Masaryk and the Czechoslovak people. It also served as a symbol of the shared values between Czechoslovakia and the U.S. It also represented the love that Americans of Czech and Slovak descent held for their old country. Sadly, these feelings did not escape the eyes of Adolf Hitler and he had the monument destroyed when the U.S. entered World War II.

Eighth Panel

The American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR), founded in 1995 to enhance and fortify the ties between the U.S. and the Czech Republic, completed the Tomáš G. Masaryk Memorial in Washington, D.C. in 2002. Wanting to pay tribute to both great leaders, the AFoCR began working with the City of Prague in 2007 to rebuild the monument to Woodrow Wilson that once stood at Prague's main train station.

Ninth Panel

This is the title panel and lists all contributors to the exhibit.

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Exhibit Rental Information

Voices of Vision is comprised of nine retractable panels that use dozens of original photographs to tell the rich story of how United States president, Woodrow Wilson and future first president, Tomas G. Masaryk worked together to form the new and democratic nation of Czechoslovakia. Each panel is in both English and Czech.

Exhibit Contains:

- 9 panels that retract into a metal base (opened like a roller shade), each housed in a black zippered bag. The opened panels are each 36 x 72 inches in size.
- 3 short poles for each panel (in bag with panel)
- All panels fit into one box (16 inches long, 16 inches wide, 48 inches tall)
- Box weighs approximately 114 lbs.

Space Requirements:

- 31 linear feet (allowing for 6 inches between each panel). This figure is based upon all six panels being set up in a row, but they can be in any configuration within a space.

Time:

- Duration of exhibit is negotiable

Security:

- Periodic checks of exhibit area
- Open to the public only while there is an attendant in the building

The NCSML traveling exhibition program is generously supported by American Czech Association, Los Angeles and American Sokol Los Angeles.

Procedures for Booking:

Shipping costs to and from the venue must be paid for by the borrower. The NCSML Traveling Exhibit Coordinator will ship via FedEx and include return shipping labels. The borrower will be billed by the NCSML Finance Director after the exhibit's return to the NCSML.

Setting up the exhibition:

- Remove panel (rolled up in metal case) and three poles from bag
- Place metal case on floor and turn small metal piece on bottom so it is perpendicular to metal case
- Put together three poles to create one long pole with a screw at one end and a tapered opposite end
- Screw bottom of pole into perpendicular metal piece on case bottom
- Pull up on panel to unroll it
- Attach the hole at the center top of panel beam to the top of the pole (tapered end)

Questions about this exhibit?

Contact:

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