

The Pittsburgh Agreement

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L&A TREASURES

By David Grinnell, Chief Archivist

The Pittsburgh Agreement

On May 31, 1918, Tomas G. Masaryk and Vojta Benes, leaders of the Czecho-Slovak independence movement, met in Pittsburgh with representatives from several U.S.-based fraternal organizations to gain the support of their former countrymen and women who had immigrated to North America. Representatives came from Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, as well as Pennsylvania, to meet at the Loyal Order of Moose Building on Penn Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh. The document they drafted helped formalize relations between

Czech and Slovak leaders and influenced President Woodrow Wilson to champion the cause of an independent and democratic Czechoslovak state.

At the time, the Pittsburgh area was home to a large population of Slovak immigrants who had created the many fraternal organizations that took part in the May 31st deliberations. Some of the national fraternal organizations that gathered here that day included the National Slovak Society, Slovak League of America, and First Slovak Evangelical League. Twenty-nine men signed the document. Albert Mamatay and Milan Getting were among the signers known to be

from Western Pennsylvania.

The Pittsburgh Agreement (at right) was presented as a gift to the Heinz History Center on September 9, 2007, by Mr. Daniel F. Tanzone on behalf of the Slovak League of America. The presentation ceremony sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Slovak Cultural Association was attended by hundreds of people—several of whom were descendants of the signers. The organization acquired the document over a decade ago from a monastery in the Cleveland area. Earlier this year, it was decided by directors of the organization that the document should come home to Pittsburgh, where it was created. ❁

Czecho-Slovak Agreement

Entered into on the 30th day of May 1918 between the representatives of the Slovak and Czech Organizations of the United States.

Slovak League, Czech National Federation and Alliance of Czech Catholics.

The representatives of Slovak and Czech organizations of the United States: The Slovak League, the Czech National Federation and the Association of Czech Catholics debated in presence of the President of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, Prof. Masaryk, in regard to the Czecho-Slovak question and regarding our expressions of programme and determined as follows:

1. We approve (sanction) the political program, which endeavors to bring about a Union of the Czechs and Slovaks in an independent state comprising of the Czech Lands (the lands of the Bohemian Crown) and Slovakia.
2. Slovakia will have its own administration, its Diet and its courts.
3. The Slovak language will be the official language in schools and in public life in general (in Slovakia).

4. The Czecho-Slovak state will be a republic, its Constitution will be democratic.
5. The organization of the collaboration of the Czechs and Slovaks in the United States will be amplified and adjusted according to the needs and according to the changing situation, by mutual agreement.
6. Detailed rules concerning the organization of the Czecho-Slovak State are left to the liberated Czechs and Slovaks and their legal representatives (to establish).

Signatures:

Albert Mamatay, T. G. Masaryk, Ivan Bielek, Jan Jancek ml., Matus Gazdik, Karel Pergler, Hynek Dostal, Milan Getting, Jan Pankuch, Dr. Fischer, Rev. Oldrich Zlamal, G.H. Mika, Michael Bosak, B. Simek, Vojta Benes, Ignas Gessay, Rev. Josef Murgas, J. J. Zmrhal, Rev. Innocent Kestel, Josef Husek, Rev. Jan Kubasek, Jan Straka, Jos. Martinek, Dr. J.O. Pecival, Andrej Schustek, Rev. L.J. Karlovsky, Rev. Pavel J. Siska, J.A. Feriencik, Ivan Daxner

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