

Abstract

The Fourth Republic fell sort of expectations of French nation. The institutional system based on predominance of political parties could guarantee neither inner stability nor the return of France to the world political power. Weaknesses of French governments and their inability to cope with the serious political and economic issues resulted in collapse of the Fourth Republic in spring 1958. Some months later a new political system was established. It enabled to give France back its *grandeur* and independence.

The first decade of the Fifth Republic, closely connected with the personality of President Charles de Gaulle, was greatly affected by the Algerian War of Independence in consequence of which all social and political spheres of the country were impacted. The *Evian Agreements* of March 1962 established an independent Algeria and enabled Charles de Gaulle to carry out his own political conception, including greater openness to the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Czechoslovak-French diplomatic and cultural relations in the years 1948-1968 correspond to large extent extent to the evolution of international policy with its alternation of easing and tightening of the geopolitical tension and they also reflect the changes in domestic political situation in both countries. Since 1948 the Czechoslovak foreign policy had been completely subordinated to the interests of the Soviet Union which naturally had an impact on relationship between France and the communist Czechoslovakia.

The first conceptions of the Czechoslovak relations with capitalistic countries were established in the second half of 1950's in connection with temporary easing of international tension. At that time Czechoslovakia and France started to reestablish mutual contacts interrupted in 1951 after the French Consulate of Bratislava and the French Institute of Prague had been forced to stop their activities.

The promising improvement of mutual relations was interrupted in spring 1959 when "The Lidice", the Czechoslovak marchant vessel, was held up by French Navy and the weapons on board which Czechoslovak government had formally sold to its Maroccan partner were confiscated. That incident caused a serious diplomatic conflict and complicated financial and business negotiations between Czechoslovakia and France. The *Evian Agreements* of 1962 opened the path to the Czechoslovak-French reconciliation and led to the standardization of mutual relationship, reaching its peak after 1964 and progressing in regular state visits.

There was a connection between political relations and cultural diplomacy in both countries. Both Czechoslovakia and France were interested in spreading their national culture and ideas. Therefore this issue was among the principal standpoints within guidelines and plans of relations development of Czechoslovakia and capitalist countries.

The cultural relations were also closely related to the ge-political situation and mutual collaboratio. They reached their top point in the second half of 1960's. At that time the official cultural contacts based on cultural protocol and a new cultural agreement were renewed after more than 15 years of nonexistent official relations.

Czechoslovak-French diplomatic and cultural relations were accompanied by above-standard cooperation between the communist parties of both countries. That cooperation allowed unofficial dimension of mutual contacts in all pursued spheres until Soviet invasion to Czechoslovakia in August 1968 violently interrupted this advancement.