
YUGOSLAV TOURISTS IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPAS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD (1918-1939)*

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the overlooked phenomenon of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas during the interwar period, employing archival research, travelogues, and contemporary periodicals. The tourist exchange, driven by rich economic relations, reveals a dynamic interplay of socio-cultural interactions. Focused on spas like Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, Poděbrady, and others, the research uncovers the experiences of Yugoslav elites in these transnational spaces, contributing to a broader understanding of interwar tourism and diplomatic ties in Central Europe.*

KEYWORDS: Interwar tourism, Yugoslav tourists, Czechoslovak spas, Economic relations, History and sociology of tourism

Introduction

The present study investigates the hitherto rarely explored phenomenon of Yugoslav tourists' engagement with Czechoslovak spas during the interwar period. During the interwar period, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia¹ were close allies within the French security system in Eastern Europe and Little Entente and significantly developed economic and cultural relations. The economic exchange between the

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¹ Authors used the name Yugoslavia for the entire interwar period, even when the official name was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, before the name change in 1929.

two countries was rich and developed, and Czechoslovakia was, for a large part of this period, one of the most essential partners in export and import for Yugoslavia.² Tourism was not excluded, and tourist relations and exchange were among the most flourishing areas of mutual exchange. The overall Czechoslovak investments into Yugoslav tourism were significant, and Czech entrepreneurs were among the pioneers in investing in opening hotels and guest houses on the Adriatic coast.³ Czechoslovak tourists were also the second most numerous among the South Slavic state visitors, reaching more than 60 thousand on average during the 1930s.⁴ The topic of the Czechoslovak tourist's visit to Yugoslavia in the interwar period was in the scholarly focus during the last decade.⁵ However, the travel of the tourists to opposite directions and their experience was, to the best of our knowledge, almost not analyzed at all. To address this "gap" in knowledge, our research aims to explore the experiences of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period.

The intensive tourist exchange between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia during the interwar period is a testament to their close diplomatic alliance and reflects the rich and developed economic relations between the two countries. This economic entwining significantly influenced the patterns of tourist flows, with Czechoslovak spas becoming attractive destinations for thousands of Yugoslav tourists, especially the elite who could afford such visits in a comparatively less affluent Balkan country. The spas, including renowned ones like Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, Františkové Lázně, among others, held a distinctive position as transnational spaces where the Yugoslav elite could engage with their European counterparts. Through our research, we aim to illuminate this multifaceted historical narrative, exploring the experiences of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and economic exchanges between these two nations during the interwar period. The history of tourism serves as a crucial lens through which we can gain a deeper understanding of the twentieth century's

² See more on economic relations between two countries in Milan Balaban, "Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Economic Relations between 1918 and 1938 year" (Ph.D. thesis, Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity, Brno, 2016); Milan Balaban, "General Overview of Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Economic and Trade Relations in the Period Between 1918 and 1938", *Slovanský přehled*, 3, (2016), 503–612.

³ On the issue of nationalization of the general Czechoslovak property, as well as accommodation facilities on the Adriatic, in Yugoslavia, after the Second World War, see more in Milan Balaban i Dalibor Savić, "Nacionalizacija čehoslovačke imovine u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji na primjeru firme Bata", *Humanističke studije*, 7, (2020), 41–59.

⁴ Milan Balaban, "Czechoslovak Tourists in the Yugoslav Adriatic in the Interwar Period (1918–1939)", *Acta Histriae*, 3, (2017), 761.

⁵ See more in Igor Tchoukarine, „The sea connects; it does not divide’: Czech tourism on the interwar Adriatic“, *Journal of Tourism History*, Volume 6, Issue 2–3 (2014): 139–157; Igor Tchoukarine, „Climate Therapy and the Making of a Slavic Riviera on the Yugoslav Coast“, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 54 (2023): 31–46; Felix Jeschke, „A Shakespearean Prophecy Fulfilled? Slav Solidarity and the Colonial Gaze in Czech Tourism on the Eastern Adriatic (1890s–1930s)“, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 54 (2023): 1–14; Jiří Šoukal, Silvie Vančurová, „Cestování Čechů na jihoslovanské pobřeží ve dvacátých letech 20. století“, *Historická sociologie*, 2 (2014): 63–78; Borut Klajban, *Češi a Slováci na Jadranu: vztahy s Terstem a severním Jadranem v letech 1848–1948* (Praha, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2014); Jasenka Kranjčević i Mirjana Kos, *Češki arhitekti i počeci turizma na hrvatskom Jadranu* (Zagreb, Rijeka: Institut za turizam, 2015).

cultural and economic dynamics.⁶ Simultaneously, the history of tourism is a subject of sociological interest, as it provides direct insight into the context of the interdependence between individual and structural, as well as national and transnational (f)actors.⁷ In that context, examining the evolution of travel trends and destinations provides valuable insights into the changing global landscape and the interconnectedness of societies. Tourism acts as a mirror reflecting societal shifts, technological advancements, and evolving geopolitical relationships, making it an indispensable tool for gaining a more comprehensive historical and sociological understanding of Yugoslav-Czechoslovak relations. Unraveling the dynamics of this cross-cultural interaction provides a nuanced understanding of socio-historical tourism patterns and inter-regional exchanges in the early 20th century. Employing a methodology grounded in meticulous archival research, the research draws on a wealth of primary sources from archives in both the Czech Republic and the former Yugoslavia.

The research draws upon comparative-historical analysis using archival sources from various locations in the former Yugoslavia and the Czech Republic. While published literature on this topic has been relatively limited and fragmented, the research team extensively utilizes contemporary periodicals from the interwar period. These journals aimed to promote better relations between the two countries based on their shared Slavic identity. The research also relies on spa journals and other periodicals published in individual spas, often containing guest lists, including information about their professions and accommodations. Through indirect analysis, it is possible to gather insights into the material status of the Yugoslav tourists, such as whether they stayed in more or less luxurious accommodations. Additionally, other contemporary journals focused on tourism issues and a limited number of travelogues by Yugoslav travelers to Czechoslovakia are used as valuable sources of information.

Spa tourism in Czechoslovakia

Spa tourism played a significant role in Czechoslovakia, particularly in the early years of the newly founded state after 1918.⁸ The country inherited a rich spa

⁶ See more on the history of tourism in: Eric Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London: Palgrave, 2016); Eric Zuelow (ed.), *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*. (New York: Routledge, 2016); Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Peter Shackelford, *A History of the World Tourism Organization* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2020).

⁷ See more on the sociology of tourism in: Marie-Francoise Lanfant, John Allcock and Edward Bruner (eds.), *International Tourism: Identity and Change*. (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995); Yiorgos Apostolopoulos, Andrew Yiannakis and Stella Leivadi (eds.), *The Sociology of Tourism: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. (New York: Routledge, 2001); Graham Dann and Giulio Liebman Parrinello (eds.), *The Sociology of Tourism: European Origins and Developments*. (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2009).

⁸ See more on the topic of Czechoslovak spas in: Jitka Budinská i Petra Zerjatke, *Kapitoly z dějin lázeňství* (Teplice: Regionální muzeum, 2006); Pavel Zatloukal, Lubomír Zeman, *Great Spas of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia* (Praha: Foibos 2014); See also contemporary publications and periodicals: Československé lázně: týdeník lázeňského světa, průmyslu a obchodu, 1927; Lázeňský obzor : časopis věnovaný propagaci, povznesení návštěvy československých lázní, minerálních zřídél, letovisek a povzbuzení turistického a cizineckého ruchu v Československé republice, 1937-

tradition and was home to some of the most renowned spas in Central Europe.⁹ The famous spas in Western Bohemia, namely Mariánské Lázně, Karlovy Vary, and Františkovské Lázně, enjoyed a long history and were widely recognized. It is important to note that these spa localities had a clear German majority, and during this period, they were cautious about overtly associating themselves with the Czechoslovak state.¹⁰ In their promotional materials, they often avoided mentioning their location within Czechoslovakia or provided such information only in a marginal manner.¹¹ During the 1920s and 1930s, those German-majority spa towns needed to adapt to the new realities, in which they lost many guests from the upper stratum of societies of the former Austrian and Russian empires.¹²

The Czechoslovak state also began by promoting more spas in the interior of the newly founded Czechoslovakia, as they were "more Czechoslovak." The state was not just supporting the spas but also owned a significant number of them, as the new state took over the spas owned by the previous Austrian or Hungarian governments. Most of those state-owned spas were in the territory of Slovakia, but also in Bohemia, state-owned important hotels such as Radium Palace Hotel and Dependence in Jachymov, as well hotels in Mariánské Lázně: Praha, and Casino.¹³ According to Jan Štemberk, the Czechoslovak spas did not invest significantly during the 1920s into modernization, which became critical during the 1930s, especially in the Western Bohemian spas, with a decreasing number of guests demanding higher quality. Also, those spas were oriented more toward German clientele,¹⁴ while the state invested

1938; Edvard Cmunt, *Almanach lázní Československé republiky* (Praha: Čsl. fysiatrická společnost, 1937); Antonín Pohorecký, *Lázeňská a klimatická místa Republiky československé* (Praha: 1920); Antonín Weisner, *Studené a teplé lázně v Československu jejich dějiny a zdravotní význam* (Praha: J. Otto, 1926); Max Wassermann, *Československé lázně i letoviska : almanach čsl. lázní a letovisek 1929* (Praha: Šolc a Šimáček, 1929).

⁹ See more on the history of Central European spas in David Clay Large, *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History of Intrigue. Politics, Art, and Healing*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015).

¹⁰ On the issue of the Czech-German national conflict and tourism, see more in Stanislav Holubec, „Between the Czech Krkonoše and the German Riesengebirge: Nationalism and Tourism in the Giant Mountains, the 1880s–1930s“, *Nationalities Papers*, 52, 2, (2024), 337–359.

¹¹ Jan Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu: možnosti a limity cestovního ruchu v meziválečném Československu* (Praha, Pelhřimov, Nová tiskárna ve spolupráci s Vysokou školou obchodní v Praze, 2009), 63. According to the author, even in some situations where travelers find just on the border, those spas are actually in Czechoslovakia, not Germany or Austria. For example, in some other recorded cases, the restaurants in the spas did not offer any Czech menus, as in Janských lázních, in the late 1920s.

¹² D. C. Large, *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History*, 315. According to David Clay Large, the number of guests fell one-third in the Interwar period compared to before the First World War in Mariánské Lázně and Karlovy Vary. The number of guests was still lagging even after the Orient Express included the Karlovy Vary as a stop during the summer season, which, however, did not bring many British and French to replace missing Austrians and Russians. They were only partially replaced by the increasing number of Jewish spa visitors; however, this period was also characterized by the growing anti-Semitism in those spa destinations by the local German population. Karlovy Vary was even used as a place for the 12th Zionist Congress in 1921 and the 13th in 1923. Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad. The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 185, 195.

¹³ J. Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 44.

¹⁴ Jan Štemberk, „Německo-československý cestovní ruch v meziválečném období“, *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, 18, 1, (2010), 71. Between 1924 and 1930, German tourists were always more than 50 % of Czechoslovakia's overall number of spa visitors. For example, in 1924, of 99.600 tourists, 48.200

much more into spas in localities with the Czech majority, the average stay in the Czechoslovak spas was 6.5 days. Among them dominated the German clientele, which was mainly attracted to Western Bohemia and accounted for about 50-60% of the overall number of foreign guests in the Czechoslovak spas.¹⁵ Except for those mentioned above, the most renowned spas in western Czechoslovakia, the other most important ones were in Bohemia (Poděbrady, Janské Lázně, Jáchymov), Moravia (Luhačovice), Slovakia (Piešťany, Trenčianské Teplice). The crisis after the Great Depression hit hard those Western Bohemian spas, which depended on German clientele and did not return to pre-Depression guests' numbers before the Second World War. The spas in more Czechoslovak areas, such as Luhačovice, Poděbrady, and Piešťany, adapted better to economic crises. There were 87 spas in Czechoslovakia, contributing to more than 2/3 of the financial income from tourism.¹⁶ On average, the guest in the spa spent between 80 and 250 crowns per day during the 1920s.

Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas

In the future territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, there were numerous spas that attracted primarily domestic and subsequently also a foreign clientele. As Dubravka Stojanović observed, in the second half of the 19th century, the spas in Serbia became sites not just for health and recovery reasons but also for fashionable and social reasons, i.e., as places where the elite would be seen.¹⁷ Some parts of the population, namely politicians, lawyers, judges, professors, senior clerks, high-ranking officers, wealthy merchants, industrialists, and doctors, accepted certain fundamentals of behavior within belonging to the elite. Among them, the popularity of the spas was increasing. The different aspects of the spa visits were becoming increasingly popular, as entertainment, balls, concerts, and evening walks on the promenade all showed the material and cultural aspects of belonging to elite.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the fashion of visiting domestic and spas abroad spread in Serbia.¹⁸ The number of travels abroad was increasing. Some of the natural options, due to their tradition, prestigious status and the fact that they now belonged to the territory of one of the closest allies and economic partners, were the Czechoslovak spas.¹⁹

came from Germany; in 1927, from 118.000 overall number, 61.000 were Germans; in 1930, 74.800 Germans visited the Czechoslovak spas, while the overall number reached that year 141.000.

¹⁵ The national issues in Czechoslovakia and the rivalry between Czechs and Germans could also be seen in the organizations that promote travel and tourism. Se except for the existence of the Czech organizations: Český cizinecký svaz and Moravský cizinecký svaz, the prominent role in attracting the German clientele had had the organizations such as Deutscher Landesverband für Fremdenverkehr in Böhmen and Deutscher Landesverband für Fremdenverkehr in Mähren und Schlesien.

¹⁶ J. Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 205.

¹⁷ Dubravka Stojanović, "Turizam i konstrukcija nacionalnog i socijalnog identiteta u Srbiji krajem 19. i početkom 20. veka", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, 1-3 (2006), 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Such was the attractivity and renown of the Czechoslovak spas that, for example, they called in contemporary journals the Ilidja next to Sarajevo the Yugoslav "Karlov Vary." *Československo – jugoslavská revue*, 1930, 269.

An essential role in organizing the travel was played by two official travel agencies, ČEDOK in Czechoslovakia and Putnik in Yugoslavia.²⁰ Both ČEDOK and Putnik were founded at the beginning of the 1920s (ČEDOK in 1920,²¹ Putnik three years later),²² and both dominated their respective domestic markets. According to Putnik's annual report for 1934, an overall majority of the Yugoslav travels abroad, and among them to Czechoslovak spas, were organized by this agency in cooperation with ČEDOK, which secured buying tickets for the transport, mainly by train, but also for some smaller number of the guest, by plane.²³ Putnik also secured the hotel arrangements and provided other services.²⁴ Those tourist offices aimed to ensure and increase the number of visitors to Czechoslovakia.²⁵

Tourism had a vital place within Little Entente and its Economic Council activities. The need to enhance tourist relations was included in the final resolution of the Little Entente Economic Council conference in Prague in 1934.²⁶ The need to enhance relations, ease travel, and lift unnecessary obstacles was stated in this resolution. However, there was no significant improvement in the tourist exchange between the two countries in the final years of existence of the Little Entente and its Economic Council. The structure continued with its patterns, as the number of tourists from Czechoslovakia far exceeded the number of Yugoslavs visiting the Central European ally.²⁷

Permanent guests of Czechoslovak spas by country of origin (1925-1934)²⁸

Year	Overall number	Yugoslavs
1925	127 153	1 724
1926	179 787	1 882
1927	264 416	2 045

²⁰ Arhiv Jugoslavije, fond 65, fascikla 13, arhivska jedinica 91 (further AJ, 65-13-91), Izveštaj Oseka za turizam o turističkoj organizaciji u Jugoslaviji, 22. 07. 1935. The role of Putnik was supposed to be the promotion of tourism in Yugoslavia, selling tickets and arrangements, and handling trade, banking, and other financial affairs related to tourism. However, while Putnik was selling arrangements for traveling abroad, its central policy was to direct the Yugoslav tourists toward visiting domestic destinations, including spas, and not foreign ones. AJ, 65-13-96, Zapisnik konferencije predstavnika zastupništava Putnika zajedno sa Izvršnim odborom, 27-28. 10. 1929.

²¹ Josef Hais, „Vývoj firmy ČEDOK v meziválečném období“, (Master thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2008), 15.

²² Živana Krejić i Jelena Palić, “Travel Culture in Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Tourism Propaganda”, *Facta Universitatis Series Philosophy Sociology Psychology and History*, 19, 2, (2020), 167. The first travel agency from abroad with which Putnik signed an agreement about cooperation was ČEDOK in 1924; Живана Крејић и Снежана Милићевић, „Настанак путничко-агенцијске делатности у Југославији као покретач развоја културе путовања“, in *Култура, часопис за теорију и социологију културе и културну политику*, 161, (2018), 42.

²³ Sportsko-turistički Lloyd, 1935, II, 10, pp. 28-29.

²⁴ Putnik and ČEDOK cooperated closely, and even co-financed together from the 1933 with the Czechoslovak state, the branch offices in Berlin and Paris. J. Hais, “Vývoj firme Čedok v meziválečném období“, 33.

²⁵ J. Štemberk, „Německo-československý cestovní ruch v meziválečném období“, 69.

²⁶ Turistički Lloyd, 1934, I, 3, 3-4.

²⁷ Compared with the number of Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia, M. Balaban, „Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia“, 758.

²⁸ Statistická ročenka Republiky Československé, 1936,

1928	262 264	1 952
1929	283 590	1 852
1930	264 643	1 708
1931	197 626	1 414
1932	137 135	723
1934	110 954 (Jan-Nov)	963 (Jan-Nov)

The situation changed during the 1930s when the number of people going abroad decreased due to worsened economic situation after the Great Depression. As can be seen from the table above, the number decreased significantly after the economic crises hit hard the economies in Southeast Europe after the collapse of the Austrian banks in 1931. The overall number of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovakia increased in 1934 to more than 13 thousand, who spent an average of 5.5 days in the country,²⁹ however, as most came to the Sokolský slet in Prague, the number of tourists in spas increased slightly. In the years after the Great Depression, the states tried to limit and make it more challenging to travel abroad to reduce the outflow of foreign currencies from the state. So, as the Czechoslovak government introduced the measure that only 1000 crowns could be taken outside of the country,³⁰ the Yugoslav government responded with similar restrictions. In dinar equivalent value, the amount was first quite large, ten thousand dinars, then was reduced to five thousand, and later to three thousand (except for the countries which were further away, where it remained at the level of up to 5 thousand).³¹ Yugoslavia had a dynamic balance in tourist exchange with Czechoslovakia, so it did not implement this policy strictly. It was possible to take out more money in traveler's checks. Tourism was seen, at least propagated on the Yugoslav side, as not just luxurious spending money abroad but as a "special cultural and even hygienic need, to which no artificial restrictions need to be introduced."³² In order to facilitate better travel, agreements were signed between the two states in 1933. The coming of tourists from both countries was financed through unpaid Czechoslovak and Yugoslav claims through clearing regimes.³³ To ease the travels, this arrangement introduced tourist checks and vouchers which could be used for unpaid clearing claims.³⁴ There was also an agreement within the Little Entente, which regulated tourist payments through the postal savings banks.³⁵ In 1934, there was a devaluation of the Czechoslovak crown of about 16%, from which economic planners in the state expected to make Czechoslovak exports cheaper and more attractive. Another side effect was supposedly cheaper travel packages for the incoming tourists.³⁶ During this period, the overall price of the

²⁹ *Ibid.*,

³⁰ M. Balaban, „Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia“, 758.

³¹ Turistički Lloyd, 1934, 4, 11.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Národní Archiv (further NA), UOZK, f. 374, k. 265, č.j. 13153. Úprava platů z dovozu a vývozu zboží a cest. ruchu. 20. 06. 1932.

³⁴ Turistički Lloyd, 1934, I, 4, p. 11.

³⁵ AJ, 65-13-96, Dopis AD Putnik: Ministru trgovine i industrije, dr. Milanu Vrbaniću, 12. 07. 1935.

³⁶ M. Balaban, „Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia“, 763.

stay in the spas was about 1/3 lower than before the Great Depression.³⁷ At the fifth conference of the Economic Council in Belgrade in July 1935, the Little Entente adopted the Tourist Agreement, which was supposed to help mutual travel and coordination. A Permanent Committee of the Little Entente for Tourism was founded at this conference.³⁸ In the following years, that Committee met annually and adopted several strategies for enhancing cooperation. However, those strategies and measures were mainly not successful or introduced. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the decline in the number of incoming tourists from abroad was not inverted. The number of Yugoslav visitors never again reached the highest levels from the end of the 1920s.³⁹

Costs of travel and stay in Czechoslovakia

Before 1928, travel to Czechoslovakia was burdened with visa issues, which complicated travel between the two countries. An essential step toward easing the travel between Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of SHS was abolishing the visa regime.⁴⁰ After the First World War, the Kingdom of SHS introduced a stringent visa regime. Until 1925, tourists were allowed to be just in one particular place, and special permission from local authorities was needed even for short excursions.⁴¹ The Czechoslovak side tried to resolve this issue several times before the Agreement. However, the Yugoslav side refused this because the abolition of visas could be reached by adopting a new trade agreement.⁴² Gradually, this regime was relaxed, and visas were first abolished in the summer after the New Trade Agreement had been signed between Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in May 1928.⁴³ This was extended to the rest of the year and was a significant step towards facilitating mutual traffic of passengers and goods.⁴⁴

The other significant problem was travel itself. Because automotive travel between the two states was in its infancy, most travelers from Yugoslavia to Czechoslovakia traveled by passenger trains and riverboats through the Danube, and a small minority traveled by plane or by car. Railway traffic was most developed and predominant during the 1920s, and the situation diversified only during the 1930s. If the passengers took the standard train, the travel was long and exhausting, and in the best case, from Belgrade to Karlovy Vary (via Budapešt Keleti), it lasted more than 30 hours.⁴⁵ Travelling from Zagreb to Prague via Vienna or Bratislava was shorter and lasted around 20 hours. The shortest possible trip was by plane from Zagreb to Prague, which lasted (with stops in either Vienna or Bratislava) around 4.5 hours.⁴⁶ However,

³⁷ J. Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 205.

³⁸ M. Balaban, „Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Economic Relations between 1918 and 1938”, 110.

³⁹ Štemberk, J. *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 296.

⁴⁰ M. Balaban, „Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia”, 753.

⁴¹ J. Štemberk, „Německo-československý cestovní ruch v meziválečném období”, 103

⁴² Archiv ministerstva zahraničních věcí (further AMZV), PZ Bělehrad, 1928, 150.

⁴³ AMZV, PZ Bělehrad, 1928, 162.

⁴⁴ AMZV, PZ Bělehrad, 1928, 265.

⁴⁵ Jugoslavija, jugoslovenski turizam, oficijalni organ društva Putnik A. D., 1937, VIII, 7, 215.

⁴⁶ M. Balaban, „Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia”, 757. Interestingly, before the First World War, travel from Belgrade to Prague was significantly shorter and lasted around 23.5 hours. Československo-Jugoslavská revue, 1931, 267.

the airfare was almost twice as expensive as train ticket. Also, for the trains, a 50% discount was introduced by both Yugoslav and Czechoslovak round-trip if the trip to Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia lasted more than ten days.⁴⁷ There was also an option of special summer trains organized by Czechoslovak and Yugoslav railways for different organizations or tours. For example, one organized for the Adriatic Guard in the summer of 1934, from Zagreb to Prague, the cost of return ticket was 600 dinars, which was almost 30% cheaper than the regular trains. The other elements of the trip, such as hotel, spa reservation, and food, could be reserved through any Putnik branch office, as they propagated.⁴⁸ During the summer season, "spa express trains" traveled every day from Vienna to Western Bohemian spas. There was also another 'spa express' from Prague to Luhačovice and Poděbrady.⁴⁹ The Czechoslovak railways also offered Yugoslav railways the possibility of organizing special spa trains from Yugoslavia to Karlovy Vary, Piešťany, Jáchymov, and elsewhere as a reciprocity measure, as the Yugoslav side organized special trains from Czechoslovakia to the Adriatic during the summer.⁵⁰ However, those trains were not organized, and Yugoslav tourists needed to travel to Vienna and from there with those mentioned spa express trains. For foreigners who traveled by train to Czechoslovakia, there was a 50% discount on the return ticket, which was valid for 60 days.⁵¹ The last possibility for travel was using riverboats, which had a direct line once a week from Belgrade to Vienna (with a stop in Bratislava), and then by train to the spa destinations in Czechoslovakia.⁵² Tourists visiting the spas enjoyed a 50% discount on the return ticket on those boats. The discount was granted upon showing the hotel/spa reservations.⁵³ As in Czech statistical yearbooks there is no data on separate categories of individual crossings of the Yugoslav automobilists during the analyzed period 1934-1938. Presumably, only a few Yugoslav tourists to Czechoslovakia came with their cars.⁵⁴ While the bus services developed significantly in the period after the First World War, and buses transported already around 75 million people in 1933 within Czechoslovakia,⁵⁵ there are no traces

⁴⁷ Slovanský Jadran, 20. 04. 1932, 34. This measure was later shortened to 7 days. Československo-jugoslávská league 1935, 80.

⁴⁸ Turistički Lloyd, 1934, I, 9, 28.

⁴⁹ There was a 50% discount on those trains for a return ticket if the stay in the spa was at least six days and a 66% discount for a stay longer than ten days.

⁵⁰ AJ, 65-1021, Dopis Českoslovačků železnice, 17. 1. 1934.

⁵¹ Cestovní zpravodaj ČSD, 1936, I, p. 4.

⁵² Travel from Bratislava to Prague from 1936, and the introduction of the fast train *Slovanská střela*, lasted around 5 hours.

⁵³ Turistički Lloyd, 1934, I, 8, p. 18. The price for one day for a room without board was between 80 and 140 dinars. The meals ranged between 31 and 43 dinars for the entire board per day per person. The trip lasted 2.5 days from Belgrade to Bratislava.

⁵⁴ See Statistická ročenka Republiky Československé 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938. Among tourists who came by car, the most numerous were Germans with 60%, Austrians with 20%, Hungarians with 10%, Poland with 2%, France with 2%, Great Britain with 1%, Italy with 1%, and other states. The absence of separate statistics for Yugoslav tourists is easily understandable because their overall number in Czechoslovakia generally and in spas was below 1000 during the majority of the decade.

⁵⁵ Jan Štemberk, Ivan Jakubec i Bohuslav Šalanda, *Automobilismus a česká společnost* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2020), 186-187.

in the literature⁵⁶ and sources regarding the organized bus transport used by Yugoslav tourists to visit Czechoslovakia.⁵⁷ The private cars traveling to Czechoslovakia in the 1920s were also burdened by the difficulties that the Hungarian authorities put in front of passengers when using the shortest car route from Yugoslavia to Czechoslovakia.⁵⁸

The cost of the stay in Czechoslovak spas was relatively high. In the 1920s, the average price for one night in the Czech spas per person was between 25 and 70 crowns during the summer. The board was between 30 to 60 crowns per person.⁵⁹ In the Slovak spas, the prices were lower. Prices in hotels were regulated until 1927 when discretionary pricing was introduced in the government's decision.⁶⁰ However, even after 1927, the hotels needed to seek approval from the regional authorities for every increase of the prices with justification for this measure.⁶¹ According to Jan Štemberk, the leading Czech expert on the history of tourism, the average cost per day in Czechoslovak spas during the 1930s was above 50 crowns per day in a double room without board. However, it is tough to find data in the literature to compare hotel prices during the more extended periods, i.e., the entire interwar period.

Considering those facts about the price and conditions for travel, and also that at its peak, the number of Yugoslavs in Czechoslovak spas was barely above 2000, we can argue that only the elite could afford travel and treatment. They include politicians, such as Nikola Pašić, the most renowned Serb politician in the Kingdom of SHS, and multiple time prime minister who frequently came to Mariánské Lázně.⁶² Another influential member of the Serbian Radical Party, Minister of Justice and Minister of Social Policy in several governments, Marko Đuričić, died in Karlovy Vary in 1926. In the earlier period, at the end of the 19th century, the Governor of the National Bank of Serbia, Đorđe Vajfert, was on treatment in Karlovy Vary in 1895, and during his stay in this spa town, concluded an arrangement on the conversion of Serbian debts.⁶³ Svetozar Pribičević also, while in exile in Czechoslovakia during the dictatorship of King Alexander, spent one month in Karlovy Vary.⁶⁴ The growing number of industrialists

⁵⁶ For the cultural aspects of the automobilism in the Czechoslovak society in the Interwar period see: Bohuslav Šalanda et. al, *České století motorismu. I, Kulturní roviny českého motorismu* (Praha: Karolinum, 2019). See also on a development of the bus services in Czechoslovakia and their role in mass transport during the Interwar period in Jan Štemberk, *Podnikání v automobilové dopravě v českých zemích v první polovině 20. století* (Praha: Karolinum, 2010), 73-85.

⁵⁷ However, during the summer, there were also tourist buses from Prague to spa destinations, such as Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně, so most likely, some of the Yugoslav tourists used those services during the summer. Jan Štemberk, Ivan Jakubec i Bohuslav Šalanda, *Automobilismus a česká společnost*, 186.

⁵⁸ AJ, 65-700-231, Uporaba ceste Keremet-Šopronj-Požun, 08. 10. 1926.

⁵⁹ J. Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 98-99.

⁶⁰ Jan Štemberk i Ivan Jakubec, *Hotel Alcron: k dějinám symbolu českého a československého hotelnictví* (Praha: Karolinum, 2022), 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁶² Милан Ристовић, "Никола Пашић, слике са летовања", *Годишњак за друштвену историју*, 19, 3, (2012), 126.

⁶³ Бошко Мијатовић, „Конверзија српских дугова: Карлсбадски аранжман 1895. године“, *Годишњак за друштвену историју*, 19, 3, (2012), 51.

⁶⁴ Ладислав Хладки, Томаш Храбак, Јан Пеликан, „Светозар Прибићевић у Чехословачкој (1929-1936)“, *Годишњак за друштвену историју* II, 2, (1995), 168-169. During his stay in

and higher civil clerks were the other people who could afford it. In our research, we analyzed lists of the guests of the Poděbrady spa in 1926 and 1928. Among the people from the Kingdom of SHS were the most notable professors, some politicians, lawyers, doctors, and members of the higher civil administration. They were coming mainly from Croatia and Serbia.⁶⁵ On the other hand, there were almost no industrialists and business people. They were probably attracted to more fashionable, luxurious, and internationalist Western Bohemian spas, which were, unlike Poděbrady, considered to be “national, Czech.”⁶⁶ One of the travelogues we analyzed stated that he had met several known businessmen with their families in Karlovy Vary.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the author did not mention the names.

Czechoslovak spas as a site of intercultural exchange for Yugoslav tourists

The difference from the Czech travelogues to Yugoslavia, which were numerous and informative⁶⁸, was that the publications about travel to Czechoslovakia were minimal in comparison. The authors analyzed three of them, which could be found in the National Library in Serbia. Unfortunately, they were not as informative and rich as the Czech ones in Yugoslavia. Those travelers included in their travel itinerary not just Prague but also the Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně.⁶⁹ They usually stayed for a few days, and except for the overall luxuriousness of those western Czechoslovak spas (which they found were on a much higher level of development than those in Serbia), those travelers were surprised by how Germans dominated those cities and spas.⁷⁰ As they observed, the Czech language was spoken only by the state civil servants. Among German majority, other foreigners in smaller numbers were also present, and the writers of those travelogues also met some Yugoslavs. According to them, it was always a

Karlovy Vary, according to Hladky et al., he spent the majority of that time on vacation and recovery and only on the margins tried to re-establish connections with the Czechoslovak political elite.

⁶⁵ Lázně Poděbrady: lázeňský zpravodaj. Seznam lázeňských hostů, 1928, 26, 37, 45, 65.

⁶⁶ As Mirjam Zadoff describes, from the 19th century, for example, Marienbad's colonnades, modern bathhouses, and New Spa Hall, where social events, dancing, reading rooms, libraries, and sports facilities, became synonyms for a luxurious spa experience. M. Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad*, 20-22.

⁶⁷ Алексије Јелачић, *Са наливпером кроз Европу. 1, Савремена Чехословачка* (Скопље : Славија, 1938), 128.

⁶⁸ In the first half of the 20th century numerous travel writers from Czechoslovakia wrote travelogues and first touristic guides on their experience on travel to South Slav lands, and especially to the Eastern Adriatic. Among them see: Roko Joković, *Crikvenica. Mořské lázně a klimatické léčebné místo* (Vinohrady: Novotný a Příhoda, 1909); Josef Sedlaček, *Jadran. Turistická příručka pro cestující k moři jaderskému* (Praha: Turistický spolek Adria, 1923); Čagaš Dřevotický, *Z cesty na Jadran. Vzpomínky průměrného člověka z roku 1925* (Praha: Všečeka a spol. 1925); Josef Simon, *Dvojitá cesta na Jadran a slovansky jih. Cestovní zápisky y let 1928-1929* (Prostějov: E. Kmenta, 1931); Meda Koudela, *Z cest po Jugoslávii* (Brno: Československo-jihoslovanská liga, 1933); *Cestovní příručka pro návštěvníky Jugoslávie* (Praha: Statní tiskárna, 1936).

⁶⁹ А. Јелачић. *Са наливпером кроз Европу*, 128. This was not surprising as the national structure in Karlovy Vary Czechs consisted of only 6% of the overall population in the city. A similar situation was also in much smaller Mariánské Lázně and Františkově Lázně.

⁷⁰ Милорад Н. Ђерић, *Екскурзиони путописи: Француска, Белгија, Аустрија, Чехословачка и Пољска*, (Београд : Екскурзиони фонд Школе Београд, 1928), 57.

pleasant surprise, and their compatriots were always eager to talk and share their spa experiences.⁷¹ A different situation, which was much more Czech-looking, was in Poděbrady, situated 50 kilometers from Prague. During the interwar period, the Czechoslovak state invested much more in that spa city because of its “more acceptable” national structure.⁷² As one of those travelers described, he felt much more comfortable and accepted in Poděbrady, which specialized in treating heart disease, arteriosclerosis, chronic eczema, and anemia, than in those Western Bohemian “German” spa towns. Unlike Karlovy Vary, where the music played on the promenade was German, in Poděbrady, they, as they observed, played Czech music and even some Yugoslav songs in honor of the South Slavic visitors, as the larger group of them came with the writer.⁷³ As we can observe, some of those more national or Slavic-conscious travelers and spa-goers felt much more comfortable in the “real” Czech spa as Poděbrady than in German-dominated Karlovy Vary or Mariánské Lázně. Spa treatments in Poděbrady were recommended by the journal Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League, aiming to develop and deepen the overall relations between the two nations.⁷⁴ As they promoted spending a vacation in Yugoslavia with the slogan: “*to the sea, only to Adriatic*”, they also promoted vice-versa: “*If to the spa, then only to Czechoslovakia and Poděbrady*”.⁷⁵ However, from such fragmented materials, journal articles, and a few travelogues, it is not easy to reconstruct those travelers’ motives for Czechoslovak spas. We can observe that at least those people who described their experiences were motivated not only by their health needs but also by the desire to experience something new and different, see things through their own eyes, and know more about other people in their countries and cultures. It is a possible problem of sources we used, written by the Pan-Slavic oriented authors, which claim that they wanted to see the brotherly Slavic Czechoslovakia and instead came to German-dominated Western Bohemian spas, to their disappointment. The other motives lay in the wish to have a pleasant vacation that was not too expensive. As Jan Štemberk observed, doctors recommended stays in spas to prevent disease, and the spa season also served as an opportunity for the elite to meet and socialize. It was not just for the Czechoslovak, but also for a Yugoslav elite part of their social obligations.⁷⁶ In order to make the stay in the spas more attractive, the Czechoslovak spas invested more in making a better quality and more diverse offer. Concerts at promenades and various shows were organized, which were supposed to make the stay in the spas more enjoyable.

Conclusion

The economic and cultural relations between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia during the interwar period were intricate and multifaceted. As close allies within the French security system in Eastern Europe and the Little Entente, the two nations

⁷¹ А. Јелачић, *Са наливпером кроз Европу*, 129.

⁷² J. Štemberk, *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, 59.

⁷³ А. Јелачић, *Са наливпером кроз Европу*, 138.

⁷⁴ Kateřina Kolářová, „Československo-jihoslovanská revue: bibliografie a komentovaná analýza“, (BA thesis Masaryk University in Brno, 2011), 21.

⁷⁵ Československo – Jugoslavská league, 1931–1932, 442.

⁷⁶ Štemberk, J. *Fenomén cestovního ruchu*, p. 56.

shared a partnership that extended across various domains, including tourism. The bilateral ties were further enriched by substantial Czechoslovak investments in Yugoslav tourism, with Czech entrepreneurs pioneering the development of hotels and boarding houses along the Adriatic coast. While scholarly attention has predominantly focused on Czechoslovak tourists in Yugoslavia, this research sought to fill a critical gap by exploring the experiences of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas during the interwar period. The study delved into the cultural and economic exchanges that unfolded within the spa milieu through a comparative-historical analysis utilizing archival sources and contemporary publications.

The role of spa tourism in Czechoslovakia, with its rich tradition and diverse offerings, played a significant part in shaping the experiences of Yugoslav tourists. With their German majority, the Western Bohemian spas faced unique challenges in aligning with the Czechoslovak state, while other spa destinations in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia flourished. The economic crisis following the Great Depression posed distinct challenges to the spa industry, affecting the Western Bohemian spas more severely than Czechoslovak-majority areas.

Yugoslav tourists' interactions with Czechoslovak spas were influenced by factors such as the evolving economic situation, government policies, and the overall attractiveness of spa destinations. The decline in the number of tourists from both countries during the 1930s, amidst economic hardships, prompted governments to implement measures to restrict foreign currency outflows. Despite such challenges, agreements between the states facilitated travel, introducing tourist checks and vouchers to ease the financial aspects of tourism.

The Yugoslav tourists' experiences in Czechoslovak spas reflected a pursuit of health and leisure and an intercultural exchange. Travelogues and contemporary accounts highlighted the diversity of experiences, with some visitors expressing comfort in spas aligned with (Pan)Slavic identity, such as Poděbrady. These travels were not solely motivated by health needs but also by a desire to explore new cultures and foster connections between the Slavic nations. In essence, the exploration of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas adds an additional dimension to the broader narrative of Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations during the interwar period. Our paper underscores the resilience of cultural ties and the intricate interplay between economic partnerships and individual travel experiences in shaping the dynamics of two nations navigating the challenges of the time. We can conclude that traveling from Yugoslavia to Czechoslovakia during the interwar period was much more elitist than vice-versa travel to the south. While the number of Czechoslovak tourists in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia reached an annual average of more than 60 thousand, Czechoslovakia attracted a much smaller number of tourists from the South Slavic state. The place of our research, the Czechoslovak spas, even in most prosperous years, before the Great Depression, Economic Crisis, and pre-Second World War crisis, was visited by fewer than two thousand tourists. They belonged to the political and economic elite of the South Slavic kingdom that included politicians, lawyers, doctors, university professors, industrialists, wealthy merchants, and the like.

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YUGOSLAV TOURISTS IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPAS DURING THE
INTERWAR PERIOD (1918-1939)

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Summary

This study explores the overlooked phenomenon of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovak spas during the interwar period, employing archival research, travelogues, and contemporary periodicals. Based on the mentioned sources and through the lens of the history and sociology of tourism, the paper presents the research results related to the development of spa tourism in Czechoslovakia, the broader cultural, political, and economic context of the circumstances influencing the interest of Yugoslav tourists in Czechoslovakian spas, the accessibility of travel and stay in Czech spas for Yugoslav tourists, as well as the intercultural dimension of reasons for tourist travel between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Based on these results, it can be concluded that, despite favorable political and cultural circumstances, the economic factor represented the greatest obstacle to a more significant influx of Yugoslav tourists to Czechoslovakian spas. In this sense, it is noticeable that only members of the elite classes of Yugoslav society could afford visits to Czechoslovakian spas. However, even among this population, it is possible to observe that after an increase in interest during the 1920s, there was a decline in interest during the 1930s due to the Great Depression. Furthermore, the paper points out that a certain number of Yugoslav tourists visited Czechoslovakian spas due to a desire to better understand other Slavic cultures, with such trends actively encouraged by proponents of Pan-Slavism.

KEYWORDS: Interwar tourism, Yugoslav tourists, Czechoslovak spas, Economic relations, History and sociology of tourism

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