
Chapter 13

Great Britain in the Czech Foreign Policy

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GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Mutual relations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Great Britain) and the Czech Republic were at a very good level in 2015. An important context of the bilateral relations was the question of the European Union direction and particularly the role of Great Britain in the European Union, which resonated mainly in relation to the general elections in the House of Commons of the British Parliament from the beginning of May 2015. Another question which gained the attention of all EU countries, including the Czech Republic, was the referendum on Great Britain remaining in the Union, which had been promised by the Chairman of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, in 2013 in case his party won the elections and formed the government. Despite the pre-election survey, the Conservatives managed to receive the majority of votes and built a unified government. Mr. Cameron then commenced the debate on possible reforms in the European Union in the context of the promised referendum. The accurate date of the referendum was not defined during 2015; however, the supporters and the opponents of the British membership in the EU commenced their campaigns.

The significance of Great Britain in the Czech foreign policy was reflected in the new *Concept of the Czech Foreign Policy*, which was approved in July 2015. Analogically to the last Concept of the Foreign Policy from 2011, Great Britain was highlighted as one of the priority territories of the Czech foreign policy. It highlighted mostly the cooperation in the areas of Joint EU foreign and security policy.¹ It includes the areas highlighted in the new *Concept of the Czech foreign policy in the EU*.² In the context of the events on the European and international level, the Czech Government emphasised the necessity to maintain unified EU. The Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group in the first half of 2015 played its role in the relations between Great Britain and the Czech Republic.

Like in the previous years, the foreign policy of the Czech Republic concerning Great Britain could be defined as *reactive*. Depending on the area where relations of

both countries took place, the Czech Republic became a cooperating player and acted as the supporter of the British policy; or refused the British policy and took the rather offensive approach.

With respect to the approach of the Czech foreign policy, Great Britain continued its role of the debate accelerator on suitable rules for the European Union function and the *finalité* of the European integration as such. This discussion included polarised opinions and approaches amongst individual political players. Even though the role of mutual relations between the Czech Republic and Great Britain never became the main topic, it highlighted the questions which ranked amongst the main aspects of the Czech-British relationships.

GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: EVENTS AND AGENDA

The intensity of mutual relations considering the prospects of official visits in 2015 never reached the level of the previous year. The situation was not caused by deteriorated mutual relations but the above-mentioned preparation of Great Britain for the general elections in May. Most activities took place after the elections, in the second half of 2015.

The exception was the visit of the State Secretary, Tomáš Prouza, in Great Britain at the beginning of February and the work visit of the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Philip Hammond, in Prague when he met his counterpart Lubomír Zaorálek to discuss the direction of the European Union in the context of British elections, economic development of the EU, the matter of the Western Balkans, and the actual situation in Ukraine.³

The series of meetings after the elections to the House of Commons of the British Parliament was notionally started by President Miloš Zeman, who met Her Majesty Sophie, Countess of Wessex, at the British Embassy in Prague during the second half of May.⁴

D. Cameron commenced a series of negotiations with the European leaders within the aim to reform the relationships between Great Britain and the EU. He met Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka twice. The first meeting, which can be indicated as bilateral, took place on the occasion of the security conference Globsec on 19 June in Bratislava, and it included the discussion on the relations between Great Britain and the EU, and also on the migration crisis and the economic cooperation of both countries. The second meeting took place on the multilateral level within the meeting of the Visegrad countries in Brussels on 17 December.⁵ The meeting took place shortly before the meeting of the European Council which negotiated Cameron's proposals for the EU reform as specified in the letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, at the beginning of November 2015 (see below).

The British Minister of State for Trade and Investment, Lord Maude, visited Prague in September. He met the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Jan Mládek, Minister of Transport, Dan Ťok, and Minister of Finance, Andrej Babiš. The subject of the meet-

ing was the actual state of the negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the USA, which was considered a priority by both countries. The discussion further included the issue of concluding the agreements on free trade, power engineering, and the issue of traffic infrastructure.⁶ Almost two months later (13 November), P. Hammnod visited the Czech Republic for the second time. British Minister of Foreign Affairs negotiated with his Czech counterpart on the British reform proposals for the EU function, and also the situation in the Balkan countries, the expansion process, and the migration crisis. Hammond also met the Prime Minister to discuss the British requirements for the Union reform, including the referendum on the remaining of Great Britain in the EU, and the migration crisis.⁷

At the beginning of October, Deputy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jakub Kulháněk, visited the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cabinet Office to discuss the actual issues within the security policy and defence. During his visit, he participated in the discussions on economic reforms in Ukraine organised by the Royal Institute of International Affairs.⁸ During the second half of November, the State Secretary for European Affairs met the Minister of State for Europe, David Lidington, and close associates of D. Cameron in London. Jakub Kulháněk and the delegation of the Committee on the European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies with the Chairman Ondřej Benešík met the Minister for Power Engineering and Copyright, and the members of European committees of both chambers of the British Parliament and the foreign committee of the Lower House. The subject of individual negotiations included the migration crisis and particularly the British proposals for the EU reform with the emphasis on strengthening the internal market in the area of services, digital economics, and power engineering, and the role of national parliaments in the EU decision-making process.⁹ The visit of the European Commission of the Chamber of Deputies was followed by the four-member delegation from the Committee for Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sports of the Chamber of Deputies managed by Chairman Jiří Zlatuška. At the end of November, the committee met the members of the Committee for Economics, Innovations, and Education of the House of Commons and the representatives from the respective ministries to discuss the financing of science, university education, and secondary education, and the inclusion issues of disadvantaged children.¹⁰ The Senate Committee on the European Union matters also visited London (7–9 September) to discuss the actual challenges of the European integration with their counterparts in the British Parliament. At the same time, the members of the Permanent Delegation of the Czech Parliament participated in the OSCE on the monitoring of the elections in the British Parliament.¹¹ Unlike the year before, we can state that the relations at the level of parliament diplomacy basically maintained the same dynamics.

Like in 2014, in 2015 the meetings took place at the level of Ministers and Prime Minister with Jan Thompson, British Ambassador in Prague. The meetings had a character of bilateral negotiations of the actual issues (for example the meetings with the Minister of Finance Babiš on the EU investment plan, the reduction of bureaucracy, and the improvement of conditions for trading) or traditional meetings with the representatives of diplomatic staff in the Czech Republic (for example the Minister of

Industry and Trade, Mládek, on the priorities of the Czech industry and foreign business from the beginning of May).¹² J. Thompson continued visiting the regions of the Czech Republic. Her meeting with the Ambassadors from Ireland and Germany with the Mayor of Brno in the second half of June 2015 can serve as an example.

Mutual relations were strengthened at the sub-national level. In March 2015, the Ústí nad Labem Region concluded a memorandum in London on the cooperation with London city district Ealing.

The signature of the memorandum was a result of a three-year project titled EM-PAC, which was focused on a greater involvement of parents and children of the migrants in the children's centres and schools. The Italian city of Bologna also participated in the project. The declared cooperation should further continue in the social area with the impact on the integration of the immigrants and persons from socially excluded areas or threatened by social exclusion and their education level.¹³

For the Czech expatriates living in Great Britain, the important event was the establishment of the Honorary Consulate in Manchester. It started its official operation under the management of Eva Ross at the beginning of August 2015. By taking this step, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected the size of the expat community in Central and North England and its requirements.¹⁴

Bilateral relations with respect to the EU

In 2015, the European Union still represented a significant dimension of the Czech-British relations. Mutual relations were strongly affected by the internal political development in Great Britain, and also by the crises, particularly by the migration crisis, and the efforts to find the solution at the level of the European decision-making. With a certain level of generalisation, we can state that it was Great Britain which strongly defined the Union agenda. This thesis applies particularly to the period from the general elections in the House of Commons until the end of 2015. The establishment of the majority conservative government solidified the question of the EU membership referendum and the related British pressure on the EU reform. In order to fulfil the promise from the beginning of 2013, the cabinet of David Cameron submitted the draft of Act on the referendum. After the six-month negotiations, the draft received the royal approval in December 2015, and the Act became legally effective. The exact date of the referendum was not defined by the Act. The general formulation for the referendum date by the end of 2017, at the latest, was repeated, provided it is based on the definition of the specific date after the discussions with the representatives of the EU member states considering the British reform proposals. D. Cameron, shortly after assuming his office, commenced diplomatic negotiations; however, he presented the specific reforms in the letter addressed to President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, at the beginning of November 2015.¹⁵ He also defined his requirements in the speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and repeatedly highlighted the support of the GB membership in the EU provided that the proposed changes are accepted.¹⁶ The British Prime Minister defined four main areas of reforms. The first issue was related to the management of economic affairs. Great Britain required that all EU member countries observe all accepted principles. It included mostly the ac-

knowledge of the fact that there was not just one currency in the EU but several currencies. Within this matter, Great Britain expressed the requirement to protect the interest of the countries outside the Eurozone and ensure the integrity of the internal market. It also highlighted the principle of a voluntary acceptance of changes implemented in the Eurozone by the non-member states. The second area was related to the competitiveness and Great Britain appreciated the steps taken at the European level. At the same time, they highlighted the necessity to continue with the reduction of the administrative burden and in the removal of all business obstacles in the free movement of capital, services, and goods. The third area was related to sovereignty where Great Britain demanded the option to withdraw from the principle of the ever-closer union defined in the international treaties.

It also defined the requirement to strengthen the role of interstate parliaments by implementing the mechanism which would enable a certain number of the interstate parliaments to block the Union legislation. At the same time, it highlighted the necessity to observe the subsidiarity principle. The last area included immigration. Great Britain proposed measures to prevent the abuse of the free movement of persons and to restrict the entitlements to the British social security benefits. According to these measures, only the employees from other EU member states who have contributed to the British social system for four years should be entitled to the social security benefits.

The British proposals for the EU reform triggered a debate amongst the Czech politicians, both governmental and opposition ones, not only in Prague but also in the European Parliament. It related to the long-lasting priorities of the Czech Republic which were perceived similarly to those in Great Britain. They included particularly the improvement of the internal market, a more active business policy, increased competitiveness of the Union, and the reduction of the administrative burden. The Czech Government also supported the role of interstate parliaments in the EU legislation process. Unlike the British proposal, it highlighted more the proactive than the blocking role. With respect to the withdrawal from the ever closer union principle, the Czech Republic did not support the change of the primary right within this context but it never doubted the right of Great Britain to withdraw from the participation in strengthening the European integration. In this context, it pointed out the conclusions of the European Council from June 2014 which reflected the right of the EU member states to become involved in the further integration process according to their consideration. In regard to the matters of the Eurozone, the Czech side expressed its consent with the position of Great Britain that the decisions on strengthening the economic and currency union were inclusive, i.e. with the participation of all EU member states. It also emphasized that the new measures do not prevent further integration of the Eurozone. The critical point of the proposal was the issue of the restricted free movement of the EU citizens which was perceived by the Czech Republic as one of the basic EU freedoms and the crucial part of the function of the internal market. The highlighted requirement included the differentiation between the free movement of the EU citizens and the immigration from third world countries because Great Britain perceives the movement of all citizens from other states as immigration and makes

no difference between these two groups. The Czech Republic also indicated the proposal of four-year entitlement to social security as discrimination. However, it agreed with the necessity to prevent the abuse of free movement particularly at the national level or the European level whilst using the secondary right tools. From July 2015, the Czech Republic presided the V4 countries and before the December meeting of the European Council, the V4 countries processed their point of view upon an external incentive concerning the British proposal for the EU reform; the report strongly reflected the opinions of the Czech Republic.¹⁷

In addition to the British package of the reform proposals, individual areas of the European integration were solved at the European level. It included particularly the agenda of the internal market, the competitiveness, and the business policy. Therefore, the areas where Great Britain and the Czech Republic maintain close cooperation and which are considered a priority by both countries. Within the context of the prepared strategy for the internal market, a like-minded group of countries (LMG), including the Czech Republic and Great Britain, prepared a joint document in September 2015 highlighting five areas which should be the focus of the EU to achieve stronger competitiveness and economic growth. It included the issue of services on the internal market, ensuring the competitiveness of the industry, enforcement of legislation, digitalisation, and ensuring a suitable environment for business.¹⁸

The European commission approved the strategy for the internal market with goods and services at the end of October and accepted many of the group measures. The strategy was also supported by the Council for Competitiveness during the meeting at the end of November 2015.

In relation to the meeting of the Council for Competitiveness, Great Britain initiated the letter to the Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, concerning a better legal modification in order to ensure higher quality conditions for business in the EU. The issues of increased transparency of the legislation process were highlighted in connection with the reduction of the administrative burden. The LMG countries including the Czech Republic supported the British initiative. The Czech Republic also cooperated with Great Britain and other seven countries during the processing of the so-called non-paper for the prepared strategy for the business policy and investment in July 2015. The document highlighted the necessity to strengthen the cooperation in this area, the transparency, and speed of the whole process of business policy. The EU should aim for the liberalisation of trade at the global level, particularly within the World Trade Organisation, and focus on the matters of the digital market, investment, and copyright. Multilateral cooperation should complement the bilateral cooperation. The union should promote the conclusion of business contracts with the USA, Japan, and other economic powers in the area of South-East Asia, India, and Brazil, or the conclusion of the agreement on investment with China. The EU should also focus on the investment protection and on the agreements on economic partnerships with poor countries (particularly in Africa) within the development of global value chains.¹⁹ Similarly to the strategy for the internal market, the European Commission reflected most proposals in the non-paper in its new strategy for the business policy accepted in October 2015 and titled the Trade for all.²⁰

The very high intensity of the relations in the above-mentioned agenda was reflected in the partial issue of the digital market, which was considered by both countries a significant area of the EU internal market. This is documented by the meetings at the ministerial level and the level of the trade union directors, and also by the exchange of officials between the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and the British Ministry for Trade and Investment, which is responsible for the digital agenda. An active role in this area was played by the British Embassy, which participated in the organisation of several events related to the digital market in the Czech Republic.²¹ The representatives of the British Ministry for Trade and the cabinet of the British Prime Minister also participated at the national convention on the EU at the end of April, which was focused on the digital agenda.²²

The two countries also closely cooperated within the issue of the energy-climate framework. The negotiations were convened at the bilateral level and within the EU in the context of the preparations for the conference on the climate changes convened at the end of 2015 in Paris.²³ In regard to the energy sector, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, and other LMG countries accepted the non-paper commenting on the system of the energy policy where the European Commission should monitor the fulfilment of the goals and required further authorities; this was not perceived positively by this group of countries. Both countries have made similar statements against the interventions of the state in the market with electricity.²⁴

An important topic of mutual relations was the issue of the migration crisis. Great Britain has many exceptions and, therefore, does not have to be involved in the crisis solution at the European level; however, it has made some points in the areas it considered important. Especially with respect to ensuring security, it supported the cooperation among the Schengen states and non-member states highlighting the interoperability of the information systems. Both Great Britain and the Czech Republic have further agreed on the support of the proposal to strengthen the protection of external borders by means of the European coastal and border security guard, and the effective function of hot spots. The problematic point was the above-mentioned issue of the free movement of persons and the related abuse of the British social security system,²⁵ which represented the main topic of the campaign in the referendum on the membership of Great Britain in the EU, which started in the second half of 2015.

Security relations

The cooperation of the Czech Republic and Great Britain within the security area was at a very good level in 2015. The focal point of mutual relations was based on multi-lateral initiatives and projects. Unlike the year before, two projects were implemented in 2015 which could be described as bilateral cooperation. The first one related to the training of the support provision for the NATO alliance aircraft, so-called *cross-servicing*, which was completed at the end of May in the headquarters in Náměšť nad Oslavou. The Czech pilots could test the basic practical measures on the British combat aircraft such as the aircraft acceptance, preparation for further flights, fuel filling, and also the navigation to destroy the defined target.²⁶ The second project included the involvement of two Czech army musicians in the British project of foreign training

missions with the aim to help the army musicians in the NATO partner armies. The army trumpet and French horn players operated in the six-member team of the British army in Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia. It was the result of the long-lasting cooperation of the Brits with the Czech Army Central Band and the reputation of Czech soldiers in the West Balkans.²⁷

The main pillar of cooperation still represents the program BMATT (*British Military Advisory and Training Team for Central and Eastern Europe*), where the Czech and British specialists train the leaders for peace operations. The program is implemented based on special courses in BMATT headquarters in Vyškov and in *In-Country Training Teams*, which provide training of soldiers for the peace operations in selected countries. The cooperation within BMATT is concluded for five years. Based on the agreement between the Czech and British parties from 2014 on the extension of this program, the relevant documents were approved by the decree of the Czech Government in April and by the Parliament of the Czech Republic in summer 2015.

An important cooperation line within the security area was the military drill within NATO in 2015. In general, the number of the alliance drills increased in comparison with the previous years; however, not all of them included the Czech-British cooperation. For example, both countries cooperated during *The Crisis Management Exercise*,²⁸ *Allied Spirit II*, which took place in August in the German town of Hohenfels,²⁹ or within one of the largest alliance drills in 2015 *The Trident Juncture*, in autumn on the Pyrenees peninsula, in Italy and other parts of Europe.³⁰ Mutual cooperation in the territory of the Czech Republic took place within *The Vigorous Warrior 2015* focused on the cooperation of the field hospitals which took place in June in Hradec Králové. The chief-staff exercise *The Yellow Cross 2015* was convened at the beginning of June in Liberec in the Czech-British headquarters of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence (*CBRN Defence*), which forms a part of High Readiness Force (ARRC).

The exercise included the participation of the Czech and British soldiers and also soldiers from Canada, Norway, and the USA. During the exercise, Brigadier General Richard Nixon-Eckersall visited Liberec and became acquainted with individual activities of the headquarters, including the service in the operation for ARCC support, access to the protection against weapons of mass destruction and the cooperation of individual brigade units.³² Unlike in 2014 and in the follow-up to the previous years, in 2015 Great Britain participated in the NATO Days in Ostrava on 19–20 September.³³

An important meeting took place at the beginning of June at the Defence University in Brno with the meeting of the NATO operating group (MCDC/CUAXS) which was focused on the defence against pilotless autonomous systems. The representatives from thirteen member and partner states of NATO were present, including Great Britain, the USA, France, and the Netherlands.³⁴

Economic relations

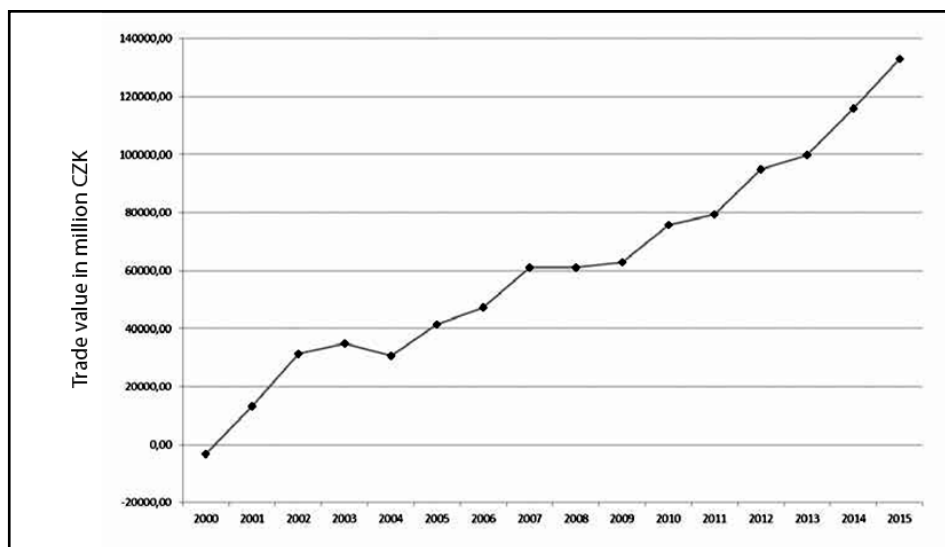
Great Britain traditionally ranks amongst significant partners of the Czech Republic. Its role in the Czech economy grew in 2015 too. Great Britain became the fourth strongest export market with 5.3% total share of the Czech export and the twelfth strongest

import market with 2.1% share of the total Czech import.³⁵ The annual comparison shows 12.2% growth of the Czech export to Great Britain and 7.8% growth of the Czech import to the Czech Republic.³⁶ After Germany and Slovakia,

Great Britain remains the third most efficient relation of our foreign trade.³⁷ On the other hand, the activity of the Czech market remains the same for Great Britain. In 2015, the Czech Republic became the 29th largest export market and the 19th largest import market. The Czech Republic participated with 0.7% in total British export and 1.2% in total import.³⁸

In 2015, the positive trade balance continued and reached the surplus over 133 billion CZK for the Czech Republic; it means growth by 17 billion CZK compared to 2014 (see graph). The greatest share in the export to Great Britain comprises of motor vehicles and machines in general.³⁹ Similarly, the British export to the Czech Republic in 2015 included mostly the industrial consumption goods.⁴⁰

**Graph: Trading balance Czech Republic – Great Britain
between 2000–2015**



Source: Czech Statistical Office, 2016: Foreign trade database.

On-line: apl.czso.cz/pll/stazo/STAZO.STAZO.

The perspective Czech export branches and investment to Great Britain include the vehicle and aviation industry, power engineering, food industry, IT, engineering, and glass/design.⁴¹ The recommendations of the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) for the business activities of the British companies in the Czech Republic have not changed. The Czech market provides opportunities for the British exporters in the area of research and development, food industry, consumption products, education,

engineering, and retail.⁴² In order to support mutual trade, particularly at the level of small and medium companies, BCC continued in the cooperation with the representatives of the regions and towns to organise so-called British Days. In 2015, British Days took place in Liberec, Olomouc, Brno, Ostrava and Pilsen.⁴³ The BCC activity was awarded by *The Council of British Chambers of Commerce in Continental Europe*, COBCOE, with a golden medal as the best small Business Chamber of 2015.⁴⁴

The British Embassy in Prague played an active role in developing the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Great Britain by participating in the organisation of many events. They included, for example, the webinar on the opportunities for British entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic and April, an anticorruption course in Prague, and the conference on cyber security in Brno in October 2015. The meeting with the entrepreneurs from Northern Ireland took place at the British Embassy in Prague in October with the presence of the Czech representatives from the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The event called *Invest Northern Ireland* focused on the investment opportunities in the Czech Republic and in Northern Ireland.⁴⁵ In cooperation with the Czech Ministry of Transport, a conference was convened in March on the possibilities to use the partnership projects for the public and private sector (PPP) during the modernising of the Czech railway infrastructure. In this area, Great Britain is perceived as successful and the utilisation of its experience is beneficial for the construction of the railway infrastructure in the Czech Republic.⁴⁶ Similarly, the British Embassy in Prague cooperated with the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic during the organisation of the March conference on modern slavery, which was considered by Great Britain and the Czech Republic an important problem within the social-economic development. It is reflected particularly by work exploitations, sexual exploitation, and bogus marriages. In 2014, Great Britain accepted a strategy to fight modern slavery which included the cooperation with the countries suffering from this trend. The Czech Republic together with Poland, Romania, Nigeria, and Albania rank amongst the first ten countries in terms of the origin of the victims of modern slavery.⁴⁷ The significance of this topic for both countries was highlighted by the Czech-British police conference which took place at the beginning of June 2015 at the Czech Embassy in London, and which primarily was focused on the issue of modern slavery and drug related issues. In addition to the Czech representatives of police departments, the representatives of British police and the Ministry of Interior were present.⁴⁸

Like in the previous years, in 2015 the focus was placed on the support of projects within the economic diplomacy. The Czech companies (for example Česká zbrojovka, Gumárny Zubří or Zbrojovka Brno) participated in the defence and security trade fair DSEI, which took place in the middle of September in London.⁴⁹ Seven Czech companies (Benekov, Hotjet CZ, and První brněnská strojírna) focusing on the technologies for renewable energy sources, were represented at the British trade fair in Nextgen 2015 in October 2015. The exhibition of the Czech manufacturers was accompanied by a professional seminar of CzechTrade.⁵⁰ We can also note the project support in the area of innovations. In the middle of October, the presentation of five Czech ICT start-ups took place in London within the meeting of technological companies of the V4 countries with British investors. The goal was to introduce the Czech companies

in the area of IT and also to increase the awareness of the Czech market options for potential investors from Great Britain.⁵¹ With the aim to bring Great Britain closer to the Czech companies, CzechTrade published an article on the business options in Great Britain for small and medium companies.⁵²

A significant event considering foreign trade was the London trade fair Focus, which took place in 2015. This trade fair was first convened in Europe; it focuses on the locations for foreign film makers and represents an important platform for cooperation. The Czech Republic was represented at the trade fair by the Czech Film Commission together with the representatives from other production companies.⁵³

Cultural relationships

Mutual cooperation of both countries in the area of cultural diplomacy in 2015 did not significantly differ from former years and it was convened at the very high level. The traditional topics of mutual relations include the commemoration of WWII events. The year 2015 was not different. The 70th anniversary of the end of the WWII was commemorated in Great Britain and in the Czech Republic which included many events in the St. Vitus Cathedral, Congress Centre in Prague, and in Terezín in May in the presence of the British Ambassador. Colonel Bernard Lebovič Peters, who served as the Wireless Operator/Air Gunner within the 311th squadron of the Royal Air Force, received the Honorary Commemorative Medal from the Czech Minister of Defence. The award was handed over to his son in memoriam at the Czech Embassy in London at the end of November 2015.⁵⁴ At the same time, the 70th anniversary of the return of the RAF pilots to Czechoslovakia was commemorated by several memorial meetings. For example, we have to mention the unveiling of the model Spitfire Mk. IX on the Hradčanské Square, the memorial for RAF pilots on terminal 4 in the Václav Havel Airport, which was provided by President Miloš Zeman, President of the Senate Milan Štěch, Minister of Finance Andrej Babiš, Minister of Defence Martin Stropnický, and Fund Vize 97.⁵⁵

The memorial acts included the 75th anniversary of the Battle for Great Britain where the Czechoslovak RAF pilots participated. The events took place in the whole of Great Britain, including the Czechoslovak memorial in the army cemetery in Brookwood with the participation of Antonín Hradílek, Czech Ambassador, Lubomír Rehák, Slovak Ambassador, Brigadier general, Jaromír Šebesta, and WWII veterans. The battle was also commemorated in the Czech Republic, for example by the concert at the beginning of October 2015 in Prague.⁵⁶

A sad event was the decease of Sir Nicholas Winton on 1. 7. 2015. The leading personalities of the British and Czech political scene, including Prime Minister D. Cameron, paid tribute to this man who was closely linked to the events of WWII. In reaction to his death, a new Czech postal stamp was issued in 2015 with his portrait, and one month later the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs together with the British Ambassador in Prague and the Prague Mayoress opened the exhibition Winton's Trains in Wenceslas Square.⁵⁷

In compliance with the new foreign policy concept focusing on promoting the good reputation of the Czech Republic abroad by means of cultural diplomacy, the fo-

cus was placed on many topics and areas. One of them included a presentation of the Czech architecture. It consisted of an exhibition of drawings from Jan Kaplický with the designs of buildings and also clothing and other work; the exhibition was organised by the Czech Centre in London and the gallery Architectural Association School of Architecture. The book *Jan Kaplický – Drawings* was then released with the debate of recognised architects Eva Jiřičná and Deyana Studjice in the RIBA bookshop. The London audience was presented with a selection of family houses built in the Czech Republic after 1989. The exhibition “Czech Houses” then moved from London to Bristol as a part of the project CZECH 15, which was created in cooperation with the CC in London and the School of Modern Languages at the Bristol University on the occasion of the celebration of the fifteen years of Czech language instructions. The Czech scientist Otto Wichterle was commemorated during this project, too.⁵⁸

A recognized event was the representation of the Czech artist, Běla Kolářová, at the exhibition in the Whitechapel Gallery focused on abstract art in the last hundred years. One of the most distinct Czech painters, Jakub Špaňhel, was also presented in London. The exhibition of his works was convened in the first half of October in the Frameless Gallery. After two years, the conceptual artist, Eva Kořátková, returned to London with the project “Collection of Suppressed Voices”, which was introduced at the Frieze Art Fair in the cooperation with the CC in London. The cultural cooperation took place in the area of music, film, design, and literature. Various events include, for example, the retrospective mobile exhibition of movies by Věra Chytilová in Great Britain, the retrospective exhibition of work of the director Vojtěch Jasný for his 90th birthday, and the weekly stay of poet Tomáš Míka in Welsh Aberystwyth, which took place at the invitation of the Wales Literature Exchange during which T. Míka received an offer to translate Welsh author R. S. Thomas into the Czech language.

In October 2015, the ceremonial revelation of T. G. Masaryk’s bust was convened on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES). It was the Masaryk’s lecture in October 1915 which commenced the activity of this school which has been a part of the University College London since 1999.⁵⁹

The cooperation of the Czech and British universities was the subject of debates in the Czech Republic with the participation of the British Ambassador in Prague, Jan Thompson. The British Embassy hosted the debate on the cooperation between the Charles University in Prague and the University of Hull, and the new cooperation commenced between the International Business School in Brno and the Staffordshire University.

The British culture was also presented in the Czech Republic. In March, the 13th year of the traditional meeting of fans of British humour Trpaslicon took place in Prague; the British Fashion Days took place in the first half of April. At the beginning of October, the British Weekend was convened in Pilsen as a part of events related to the European City of Culture, and at the end of November, the first year of the British Film and Culture Days took place in Uherské Hradiště.⁶⁰

Like in the previous years (except for 2014), in 2015 one of the laureates of the Gratias Agit Award was a person living in Great Britain. The award went to Joseph

Czernin in memoriam, because he died in April 2015. Czernin was a recognised personality of the Czech and Slavonic community in London, where he operated from 1947.⁶¹

Within the cultural cooperation, we shall mention the involvement, which is quite uncommon, of the British Ambassador in the Prague Shakespeare Company, where she appeared in the role of Olivia in Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night*.

GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING THE KEY ACTORS

In comparison with the previous years, no significant changes occurred with respect to the involvement of key players in the process of the foreign policy. The key role is still played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic – the Department for North and East European States, the Department for Joint Foreign and Security Policy, the departments focusing on the issues of European integration, and the Department for Public Diplomacy. The creation of foreign policy concerning Great Britain also included the participation of organisation departments of the Ministry. It included the Representation Office in London, the Permanent Representation in Brussels, and the Czech Centre in London, the allowance organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. An important role within the debate and the formulation of approaches towards the European Union was played by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

The sector ministries participated in the development of mutual relations. The Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic and the Czech Army were involved in the area of security relations, the economic cooperation was handled by the Czech Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the allowance organisations CzechTrade and CzechInvest, the area of migration was handled by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, the environmental issues, climate change, and power engineering was handled by the ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The Parliament of the Czech Republic played its traditional limited role in the creation of the foreign policy. At the same time, both Chambers of the Parliament of the Czech Republic were involved in the debate on the conceptual documents discussed at the government level, particularly the formulation of the Czech policy concerning the European Union. Many sub-state players (regions, towns) were actively involved in the development of the Czech-British relations, non-state players (for example the British Chamber of Commerce) and private subjects.

The complexity of mutual cooperation and the involvement of a wide range of players at various levels of decision-making placed great demands on the coordination which depended on the area being discussed. The Union topics are traditionally coordinated by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. In relation to the discussed British proposals for the EU reform and for the purpose of the coordinated position of the Czech Republic, a work group was formed in 2015 under the management of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic with the participation of

the representatives from the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.⁶²

CZECH FOREIGN POLICY WITH GREAT BRITAIN IN THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC AREA

Like in the previous year, in 2015 the issue of mutual relations of the Czech Republic and Great Britain was subjected to a debate in media and public area of the Czech Republic, although within a limited scope. A significant role was played by the British Ambassador in Prague, who provided the Czech media with interviews in relation to the development in Great Britain and also in relation to the Czech-British cooperation, for example, in the area of railway transport. Mutual relations of both countries were also mentioned in media statements of the British Minister of Foreign Affairs during his visit to Prague. The main topics which attracted media and politicians and the general public were individual aspects of the British policy, particularly the focus on the British general elections and the formation of the majority government of D. Cameron.

During the second half of the year, the media and professional attention was paid to the issue of the British proposal for the European Union reform and the related issues of the referendum on the Britain membership in the EU. Individual campaigns supporting Brexit or the British membership in the EU were frequently broadcasted. Within this context, the focus was placed on the migration crisis including the issue of the free movement of the EU citizens in Britain.

Czech and British media also focused on the royal family. The media reported on the birth of another child of the Duchess and Duke of Cambridge in spring 2005, and also on the duration of the reign of the British Queen Elisabeth II, whose reign exceeded, on 9 September, the reign of Queen Victoria, until then the longest reigning British Queen.

The topics enjoying media coverage included the presence of the British Ambassador in the Prague Shakespeare Company.

CONCLUSION

The key framework of the mutual relationships of Great Britain and the Czech Republic still remains the European level of cooperation. The key topics were the British proposals for the European Union reforms and the issue of the referendum on the British membership in the European Union. The issue of the free movement of persons in the EU, particularly in G. Britain, and the inflow of migrants into the Union from third world countries were solved in close relation to the position of Great Britain in the EU.

In regard to the foreign political negotiations, the Czech Republic acted reactively towards Great Britain and the approach varied from offensive to cooperative, depend-

ing on the negotiated agenda. The offensive position was related to the area of the free movement of persons when the Czech Republic opposed the British proposals for restrictions on it.

On the other hand, the cooperative approach includes the Czech position within the area of the internal market, strengthening competitiveness, the European Business Policy, and the digital agenda.

In the area of security, the focal point of mutual relations represents multilateral cooperation (despite two new bilateral projects). The mutual business exchange and the cultural diplomacy grew and were further developed. We can generally state that the trend of fulfilling the multilateral diplomacy continued within the EU and NATO, including the required bilateral relationships.

The dynamics of mutual relations at the political level was very intense, particularly in the second half of 2015 after the formation of the majority Conservative Government. Contrary to the previous years, the increase of the dynamics was partially reflected in the Czech public area.

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