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Kateřina Korábková
University of Pardubice, Czech Republic
katerina.korabkova@upce.cz
0000-0003-0704-5722

Memory and storytelling. The path from parental memories to a nation-building myth for children

Abstract: This paper focuses on how October 28—Czechoslovak Independence Day—is presented in children's sections and supplements in newspapers of inter-war Czechoslovakia. Examination of various types of texts intended for children reveals several basic interpretations of this important day. The paper aims to describe the characteristics taken on by the formation of a nation-building myth for children, which transforms the collective memory of parents into a historical memory serving to create and strengthen national identity.

One of the most intensively celebrated national holidays in modern Czech history was doubtlessly October 28, commemorating the declaration of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The era of the most significant celebrations only lasted not quite 20 years during the existence of the "First Republic." Back then, the holiday, whose interpretation and celebration had an unequivocal state-building and nation-building nature, became a place of memory with specific symbolic significance. In their book *Sláva republice!*, Dagmar Hájková and Miroslav Michela examine the history of the October 28 holiday in detail. Their thesis is that the national holiday with celebrations of a demonstrative nature was also meant to answer the need for an appropriate substitute for clerical holidays[1].

Examining the holiday issues of the most prominent inter-war Czechoslovak papers[2] provides a relatively clear picture of the holiday and its celebration. October 28 was celebrated as a day of freedom regained when a united nation returned with general joy to its historical roots. According to the usual interpretation of the time, these begin with the Premyslids, the first Czech ruling dynasty, and the Hussites, a religious reformation movement of a national character, and are underscored by the national revival in the nineteenth century. At the same time, the nation's liberation fulfills the prophecy of John Amos Comenius that "governance of its own affairs"[3] will once again be in the hands of the Czech nation. Commemoration of this glorious day also served to celebrate all those who played a part in bringing it about, such as the first Czech president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and other political representatives, as well as the Czechoslovak Legionnaires as a military force fighting for independence abroad.

1 D. Hájková, M. Michela, "Oslavy 28. října," [in:] *Sláva republice!: oficiální svátky a oslavy v meziválečném Československu*, ed. D. Hájková, Prague 2018, p. 75–135. Further historical context of the holiday, including its conflicting perception by historians and journalists, see E. Hannová, "Československo z různých perspektiv," [in:] *Češi o Češích*, E. Hannová, Prague 2018, p. 150–201.

2 This text was written in connection with the chapter "Největší den. Konstrukce komemorace 28. října na stránkách meziválečného českého tisku," in the collective monograph *Cestami Mnémosyné: Paměť a identita v moderních českých dějinách*. This chapter deals with the question of how the image of October 28, which forms the collective memory of an historical moment, is created on the pages of the most prominent First Republic dailies. K. Korábková, "Největší den. Konstrukce komemorace 28. října na stránkách meziválečného českého tisku," [in:] *Cestami Mnémosyné : paměť a identita v moderních dějinách*, ed. A. Kudláč, Pardubice 2021. p. 81–117.

3 In the context of the First Republic, Comenius's quote "I believe that rule of that which is yours shall return to you again, oh Czech people!", from the work *Kšaft umírající matky Jednoty bratrské* from the year 1650 was interpreted as a fulfilled prophecy of a great national figure. For more on the historical and patriotic role of this proclamation, see L. Hampl, "Proroctví Jana Ámose Komenského pro český národ uskutečňované jako jeho dědictví v současnosti," *Siedlce Comeniological Research Bulletin*, 2018, No 5, p. 169–186.

Remembrance of 28 October 1918 as a day when a united nation collectively undertook a noble bloodless revolution, along with an assessment of years gone by, is transformed on days of significant anniversaries and later under the pressure of the end of the 1930s, into an imperative need to care for democracy and the nation.

Children's sections or supplements of daily papers represent a special place for the formation of the commemoration of October 28, for in them, two different types of memory meet, or rather are transformed. One type is borne by adults who experienced these events, while children bear the other with only second-hand knowledge of the famous day. With Maurice Halbachs, who differentiates collective memory based on direct experience and historical memory, the essence of which is intermediation,[4] we can say that children's sections are a transition between collective memory and historical memory.

Jan Assmann thinks similarly in differentiating communicative memory based on experience and cultural memory, which is a myth-forming affair. But Assmann defines communicative memory as everyday memory, while in his view, cultural memory is formed by ceremonial communication of holidays and creates symbols, thus becoming a foundation for identity[5]. In the case of the October 28 holiday, as those who remember events, adults recount their memory to children, for whom, however, it now has the nature of a historical tale or myth.

While the position of adult witnesses remains stable as the years pass, every year, new children begin attending school, for whom 28 October 1918 is ever more distant. So that the celebration is comprehensible even for children and serves to hand down the memories of adults, it is vital to include children in the celebration, which in our case is something the children's sections of daily papers also strive to do. A key moment in the celebrations becomes bringing memories into the present, which, according to Assmann, "takes place by interpreting tradition."[6] Hence, if a state-building myth is to be comprehensible and living for new generations, too, children need to be exposed to factual transfer and revival of memory – presentification – from infancy.

Children's sections and supplements in daily papers are not places for the formation of a child's primary historical memory—they are more of an

4 Cf. M. Halbwachs, *Kolektivní paměť*, Prague 2009, p. 93–135.

5 J. Assmann, *Kultura a paměť*, Prague 2001, p. 44–53. Assmann's term "communicative memory" simultaneously notes generationally dependent communication about an event that becomes a process of creating the collective memory of direct participants.

6 Ibid, p. 21

awareness-raising complement to what children learn in school;[7] nevertheless, their holiday texts are highly formative for the reasons stated above.

Daily press for children

The children's sections and supplements we will examine are specific historical sources. In the printed matter of the First Republic, it became extant during the first half of the 1920s. In some dailies, it takes on a relatively permanent form in a separate weekend, usually Sunday supplements; elsewhere, it changes over the years from sections to supplements of various sizes and names. The contents usually depended on the editorial staff members, and we find serialized fiction, short entertaining or instructive texts, creative manuals, Esperanto corners, crosswords, tips regarding interesting literature, or letters from readers.

The specific printed matter we shall focus on follows, based on political parallelism, the basic structure of the First Republic press, characteristic in its partiality.[8] The largest political party during the First Republic, the Agrarian Party,[9] owned the *Venkov* daily paper, which, from 1924 onward, published a supplement entitled "Dětská zahrádka" [Children's Garden] as a cut-out. The Czech National Social Party[10] published *České slovo*, the best-selling daily paper of the day. From 1923, it featured a children's supplement entitled "Klíčení" [Sprouting], and from 1927, a supplement entitled "Slovíčko" [A Word] edited by Jarmila Nováková.

The daily paper of the Czechoslovak Social Democracy Party was *Právo lidu*, characterized by its social orientation. It, too, contained children's supplements: from 1922, it was "Dětská besídka" [Children's Chat]; from 1925, the "Dětský svět" [Children's World] supplement, which in 1928 was transformed into the supplement "O dětech a pro děti" [About Children and For Children]. In 1933,

7 A cursory examination of history and social studies textbooks shows that children were informed about the historical events of 28 October 1918, where the narrative of this day includes restoration of freedom, general jubilation, destructions of the symbols of hated Austria, singing of patriotic songs, and decoration of towns and cities. Occasionally Comenius's "prophecy" is mentioned, and in some social studies textbooks we find emphasis on solidarity and unity. See, for example, M. Gebauerová, A. Reitler, A. Jirák, *Dějepis pro školy měšťanské. Díl III. (Pro třetí třídu škol měšťanských)*, Prague 1925, p. 96, 98; K. Zahradník, *Dějepis pro měšťanské školy: pro třetí třídu. III, Novověké dějiny*, Prague 1936, p. 74; J. Ledr, J. Horčička, *Občanská výchova a nauka ve škole národní. Díl II., pro střední stupeň (4.-5. školní rok)*, Prague 1926, p. 37; J. Paur, *Cesta: učebnice dějepisu pro měšťanské školy. Díl 3*, Prague 1937, p. 147–148.

8 For more details on the interwar Czech press, see, for example, P. Bednařík, J. Jirák, B. Köpplová, *Dějiny českých médií: od počátku do současnosti,* Prague 2019, p. 151–188.

9 The Republican Party of the Czechoslovak Countryside and later the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants.

10 In this case "national socialism" has no relation to Nazism. The Czechoslovak National Socialist Party to which we are referring was a leftist patriotic party supporting President T. G. Masaryk.

it was replaced by the "Dětská besídka" section and a year later by the "Našim dětem" [For Our Children] section. Finally, starting in 1937, a supplement was published again under the name "Haló, děti!" [Hello, Children!].

Other important First Republic political parties did not have permanent supplements or sections for children in their flagship publications. The Czechoslovak National Democratic Party published *Národní listy*, which tended to feature only Christmas supplements; in the *Lidové listy* of the Czechoslovak People's Party, no regular children's section could be found. *Rudé právo*, published by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, also had no special area for children, plus it clearly distances itself from the anniversary under examination.

The spectrum of the most important daily papers of the First Republic also includes *Lidové noviny*, which was not bound to any specific political party but sympathized with those close to President T. G. Masaryk. In *Lidové noviny,* we find occasional sections entitled "Dětský koutek" [Children's Corner] or "Dětský koutek na neděli" [Sunday Children's Corner], and from 1936 a separate supplement entitled "Lidové noviny dětem" [*Lidové noviny* for Children] was published, edited by Václav Řezáč.

On the day of the holiday, the appearance of individual sections and supplements[11] varied based on their usual, non-holiday appearance.[12] In some cases, for example, frequently in the supplements of *České slovo*, the first pages of children's sections on the holiday day were richly decorated and illustrated with national symbols;[13] sometimes they contained celebratory poetry, other times arbitrary non-thematic texts.[14] Subsequent pages had a similar appearance. In connection with October 28, children's sections featured various types of texts: miniature stories/pictures, explanatory texts, fairy tales, recollections, poems, song lyrics, dramatic performances, letters from readers, riddles, and crossword puzzles. The authors of these texts cannot always be clearly determined, but in some supplements, we keep on finding the same names, usually those of permanent section editors.

11 The research intention of this text is also influenced by the calendar, which it was usually necessary to search only for the anniversary dates themselves, but also for weekend editions nearest the anniversary. At the same time, in some cases, due to availability of sources, it is known whether no specimen of the supplement exists or whether it was published at all.

12 Following the evolution of writing about the topic of October 28 in children's sections is not entirely relevant, because the occurrence of thematic texts sometimes fluctuates quite a bit. One can notice common motifs as well as differing emphasis, or common characteristics of anniversary issues, the manner in which the anniversary is spoken about, what authors are employed to work with children, etc. Overall, it is quite an extensive topic and its comprehensive description is outside the ability of this study.

13 E.g. M. Reichmannová, "O zajíčku – dobrákovi," *Klíčení, Dětská příloha Českého Slova*, 24.10.1926, No 43, n.p.

14 See, for example, *Klíčení, Dětská příloha Českého Slova*, 28.10.1922, Vol I, No 43, p. 157.

Poetry for the holiday

Among the most frequent texts relating to October 28 were poems whose names were usually variations on the same theme: October 28, Regarding October 28, Regarding Freedom Day, Great Day, and names also feature words like jubilee, song, glorious day...[15] Very occasionally nationalist poems from nineteenth-century authors were printed, usually in the form of a short extract, which sometimes didn't even contain the name of the poem, for example from Svatopluk Čech or Josef Václav Sládek[16]. But most frequently, new texts were written for that specific year by various authors whose names sometimes appear repeatedly. Many poems were signed merely with an abbreviation; however, it is impossible to determine their authors today.

Poetry written for October 28 uses the conventional motifs of a holiday. Some poems begin with the weather, a sunny day in the middle of autumn,[17] or the beauty of autumn nature corresponding to the favorable change in the nation's situation;[18] they write about the end of three hundred years of servitude,[19] liberation, and defeat of enemies.[20] The central motif of poems is freedom.

The poem's text is often stylized as a dialogue in which the child asks their parents or grandparents what is going on and why people are cheering, or the lyrical speaker asks the children whether they understand why the day is so glorious. Questions are not directed only to children or parents; some poems are apostrophes to the flag, freedom, homeland, and republic. The moment of explanation of the sense of the anniversary usually appears in poems when a question is posed at the beginning about what is actually being celebrated. Otherwise, the lyrical form is more common, underscoring the emotion of the holiday, the cheering and enthusiasm stemming from freedom, followed by the resolve to defend it. In poems, the form of dialogue, greeting to children,

15 Poetry about October 28, not only for children, was created in immense amounts. It tended toward stereotype and was accused of having various defects See, for example, a critical and quite ironic article by František Hanzelka in *Přítomnost*. F. Hanzelka, "Poezie 28. října," *Přítomnost*, 29.10.1930, p. 674.

16 S. Čech, "Je leckde volnost [...]," *Klíčení*, 28.10.1925, nestr.; J. V. Sládek, "Modlitba Čechů za svobodu," *Dětská zahrádka*, 28.10.1927, Vol.4, No 43, p. 171.

17 According to the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute, 28 October 1918 was cold and overcast with rain showers. Czech Hydrometeorological Institute. *Počasí v době vzniku ČSR před 101 lety. Tisková zpráva.* [online] https://www.chmi.cz/files/portal/docs/tiskove_zpravy/2019/TZ_Pocasi_pred_101_lety_2019.pdf [cit. 04.09.2023]

18 "Z podzimních červánků zrodil se Veliký Den," *Slovíčko,* 27.10.1935, No 43, p. 1; Z. Vykypělová-Rufferová, "Velký den svobody," *Slovíčko*, 25.10.1936, No 46, p. 1; J. Sládek-Zelenohorský, "K 28. říjnu," *Dětský svět*, 24.10.1926, No 43, n.p.

19 K. Kalláb, "Svátek republiky," *Lidové noviny*, 26.10.1930, p. 12.

20 J. Kubička-Týnský, "Ku dni svobody," *Dětská zahrádka*, Vol.2, No 43, p. 169; H. Sedláček, "Vpřed," *Večerník Práva lidu*, 27.10.1928, p. 5.

or declaration usually contributes to greater comprehensibility – in some texts without this stylization, no indication would differentiate it from celebratory poetry in those parts of newspapers intended for adult readers.

Poems usually have three or four verses, where after the initial description of events or commencement of dialogue, the motif of freedom arrives, connected either with questions of its acquisition or its celebration, so that, in conclusion, the intent to hold on to freedom is expressed, including at the cost of fighting for it. Less frequently, one can see more specific motifs, such as a more prominent theme of fatherland.[21] Emphasis on tradition and the legacy of forebears, as well as the motif of nation and love for one's native land, represent a typical codified link between holiday and agrarian or rural themes.

Some poems are written from a child's perspective. They deal with specific celebratory situations – for example, a schoolboy wielding a flag[22] – and develop their broader context, for example, connecting the flag with the courage to defend the homeland. There are also fictional situations, such as the thoughts of a little boy imagining what would happen if, on the day of the holiday, he met President T. G. Masaryk, as is the case in Rudolf Těsnohlídek's poem "*Dva dětské pozdravy*" [Two Children's Greetings][23]. After an introductory situation, the poem transforms into an expression of respect and love for the president, using his nickname *tatíček* [daddy].[24] This appears frequently in children's poetry and emphasizes a relationship of trust in the president-founder, who comes to personify the abstract forms of love for one's country. In 1937, after T. G. Masaryk had already died, some poems continued to recall him as the central figure of celebrations, which, though now dead, will continue to live on in our hearts.[25]

In some poems stylized into the form of a child's expression, the lyrical speaker asks what he can give the republic for its birthday when he himself has nothing and finally concludes that his little heart is full of love for his country.[26]

Explanation of facts

In children's sections and supplements, we find relatively few texts whose primary task is to retell the events of October 28 from the perspective of facts

21 J. Borotínský, "Písnička k 28. říjnu," *Dětská zahrádka*, 28.10.1926, Vol.34, No 44, p. 173.

22 H. Sedláček, "Vpřed," *Večerník Práva lidu*, 27.10.1928, p. 5.

23 R. Těsnohlídek, "Dva dětské pozdravy," *Lidové noviny*, 28.10.1923, p. 17.

24 The expression *tatíček* is slightly different from its more common synonym *tatínek*, and is mostly connected with the Moravian region. It has connotations of common folk and rural closeness, which give this form of address a friendly purity and confidentiality. In English translation it is usual to use the expression "father".

25 M. Hemzáčková, "Lánský hřbitůvek," *Slovíčko*, 24.10.1937, p. 3.

26 V. Poláček, "K svátku," *Slovíčko*, 28.10.1933, p. 2.

as a historical event. A likely reason may be that schools played the leading role in explaining the holiday's significance.

One of the most remarkable explanatory texts is an article entitled "Dědeček vnoučatům" [Grandpa to His Grandchildren] by Jan Herben, printed on Sunday, 28 October 1928 in *Lidové noviny*.[27] J. Herben addresses schoolchildren and tells them about the importance of what actually happened on 28 October 1918. As he describes the situation in Prague and the joy of people in the streets, he switches to a child's perspective: something was happening, but children didn't know what. Nevertheless, they joined in the overall revelry. After describing the mood, the author begins to concentrate on the situation of the Czech nation, which was liberating itself. J. Herben writes about the Austrian empire, mentions the results of the World War, and the resistance to the suppression of freedoms. He then writes about 300 years of despair and about how the nation finally resisted. He recalls historical traditions, for example, Jan Hus and Jan Žižka, while contrasting poverty after the war with the joyous first day of freedom. In conclusion, he addresses the children again, telling them that one day they will understand this very well and that they can become good citizens.[28]

We can find a similar explanatory article in, for example, "Dětská zahrádka" in *Venkov* on Friday, 23 October 1925.[29] The author, R. Hladíková, starts relatively objectively: she writes that every nation has some important days commemorating the past and that, in comparison with other nations, Czechs tend to have primarily sad days. However, that is not the case with October 28, which was like a spring day in the middle of autumn. The text, which up to then had a light, explanatory tone, suddenly has a sentimental paragraph: "That was the day for which our subjugated forebears had waited for centuries, that was the day paid for by much suffering, many lives, much blood... [...]". R. Hladíková then builds upon the theme of work, varied yet collective. And then comes the appeal: "Adults prepared October 28; you, young people, must preserve it!" The importance of October 28 must be constantly reemphasized and not be downplayed because, at that moment, the nation would not be worthy of freedom. But celebration and reminiscence are not enough; preserving freedom is necessary, as our forebears did, especially the peasants, who are an appropriate example for children. One must keep trying, even if others do not, and laugh at those who do. If every child is courageous, devoted, and honest in their work, they can become a true "hero of work." As we can see, the explanation does not remain alone; it is accompanied by pathos and a call supported

27 J. Herben, "Dědeček vnoučatům," *Lidové noviny*, 28 Oct 1928, p. 33.

28 Ibid.

29 R. Hladíková, "Den, na který nesmíme zapomenouti," *Dětská zahrádka*, 23.10.1925, Vol.2, No 43, p. 169.

by addressing them "Czech children, peasant children!", which broadens its national and political context.[30]

Nevertheless, clarification of the events of October 28 for child readers could also take a more objective form, as evidenced by a short text signed "Strýček [Uncle] Bohdan" and printed on the front page of "Klíčení" on 24 October 1926.[31] Under an illustration of the Czech lion, the Slovak double cross, the Moravian eagle, linden trees, and the Prague Castle, upon which the sun shines from behind clouds, we find a short text. It explains the role of the national holiday, about the revolution that rid the Czechoslovaks of Habsburg rule, it writes about the fulfillment of the prophecy of J. A. Comenius, it emphasizes 300 years of life under subjugation before the arrival of October 28 as one of the most important days the nation has. From the state holiday, it goes on to the national holiday while also talking about the trio of T. G. Masaryk, Eduard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, who helped save the nation. The nation will never forget their deed.[32]

Similar texts based on brief explanations of the facts are rare. More often, this information is given either within a text of a more entreating nature, as was the case above, or as part of a short story, or a reminiscence, or in the limited space of a poem. Mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and occasionally even random adults play the role of explainer. A decisive moment is when a child, asking questions, learns about T. G. Masaryk. As soon as the protagonists of the text hear about the deeds of the president-liberator, they feel great emotion. All it takes is to see the kind face of an older, wise man in a picture while the child learns that this man saved the nation, brought peace, and ended the war.[33]

The motif of war is an essential tool to give some of these short texts a more profound emotional charge. Most often, it is done in the context of wartime poverty and hunger. Children in the texts are frequently ragged, have nothing to eat, are younger, pale, think friends or siblings, and are afraid that the child in question will soon die because, for example, it does not have the milk it needs.[34] At the same time, these children often experience the fear that loved ones who were drafted will die. In one of the texts where the author reminisces how he perceived the war at the age of thirteen, he writes how boys were terrified by news that in the Balkans, they are drafted as young as the age of sixteen.[35]

30 Ibid.

31 Strýček Bohdan, "28. říjen," *Klíčení*, 24.10.1926, No 43, n.p.

32 Ibid.

33 Also L. Vilímek Zličanský, "28. října," *Dětský svět*, 26.10.1925, No 26, n.p.

34 L. Vilímek, "Veliký den," *Dětský svět*, 23.10.1927, n.p.

This theme is present most prominently in the supplements of the socially democratic *Právo lidu*, although mentions of the hunger and poverty of the wartime years can be found elsewhere, too.

35 L. Vilímek, "Vzpomínka k 28 říjnu," *Dětský svět*, 24.10.1926, No 43, n.p.

In such cases, the subsequent contrast between wartime fear and poverty and the joy of liberation day takes on exceptional force. In addition, if the perspective of a child protagonist is emphasized, this provides an easy way for a young reader to feel the emotion the text employs. Another interesting fact is that while in poetry, 28 October 1918 is usually imagined as sunny, in prose with a hungry child protagonist, the weather is grey, ugly, and cold. This gives the hope brought by the war's end even more significant impact.

Texts emphasizing Austro-Hungarian rule over the Czech lands in connection with the war operate similarly to a child's feelings. For example, they involve the thoughts of a child who has to pray for the emperor at school, though he knows that he's the reason for the war and hunger and that his father will perhaps die somewhere. The child feels an apparent contradiction and has an intuitive aversion to monarchy.[36]

Texts about the life of a child in a political context are few. They work with motifs and environments that a child knows intimately but contain different accents. For example, in "Dětská zahrádka" of 25 October 1924, we find a micro-story by František Homolka, "28. říjen Vendy Roškotova" [Venda Roškotov's October 28th].[37] Spurred by thoughts about the wicked emperor similar to those above, the main child protagonist stabs his image with a knife. Horrified by his own actions, he faints, is interrogated by the police and the school, and is destined to have his report card marked with "immoral" for two whole years. The narrative ends with a sunny October 28th, when the boy is vindicated[38]. The text illustrates remarkably how even a little schoolboy could experience Austro-Hungarian pressure. The purpose of this is to remind little readers that the political circumstances that were changed by October 28 really affected everyone, which is why the holiday is for all, including children. The role of a child's intuitive grasp of political context, which can then grow into consequent awareness, is also shown to be important. An example of such a text is a short vignette entitled "Jak Toník zakrýval rakouské orly" [How Toník Covered Austrian Eagles] from "Dětská zahrádka", 28 October 1927, in which a childhood prank involving painting over the Austrian eagle in a textbook turns into a conscious manifestation of patriotism and an act of resistance through which the child participates in national affairs that are seemingly reserved for adults only.[39]

36 L. Vilímek, "Veliký den," *Dětský svět*, 23.10.1927, n.p.

37 F. Homolka, "28. říjen Vendy Roškotova," *Dětská zahrádka*, 25.10.1924, No 35, p. 137–138.

38 Ibid, p. 138.

39 "Jak Toník zakrýval rakouské orly," *Dětská zahrádka*, 28 Oct 1927, Vol.169.

Fairy-tale motifs

Texts explaining the nature of the holiday include fairy tales. A classic example could be a later chapter, banned under the Communist regime, from *Povídání o pejskovi a kočičce* [About Doggie and Pussycat], "Jak pejsek s kočičkou slavili 28. říjen" [How Doggie and Pussycat Celebrated October 28]. This short story by Josef Čapek was originally published in *Lidové noviny* in 1928 and employs animal protagonists to explain the nature of the holiday to children[40].

České slovo brings a more interesting merger of fact and fairy-tale. In a similar manner as where for *Právo lidu*, emphasis on a wartime context is typical; for České slovo, it is playing with fairy tales. One of the most notable stories is "Vysvobozená země" by Teta [Aunt] Marta[41].

In this fairy tale, the wicked sorcerer Habisburk, with the help of a two-headed monster, tyrannizes a brave nation until a brave boy named Tomáš is born and grows up and, with the help of other similarly courageous companions, defeats the evil sorcerer. Though the text is written as a fairy tale, all allusions to real historical inspirations are incredibly transparent, plus the text ends with the leading question: "Children, have you already heard this story?"[42]

A similar text, "Dětem k 28. říjnu" [For Children on October 28] is signed a year later in the "Dětský koutek" section of *České slovo* by Strýček [Uncle] Václav[43]. The text begins with questions about whether children know the story is about a princess imprisoned in a castle by a dragon and then freed by a brave prince. Uncle Václav explains that the princess was our nation and the terrible dragon was the "ruling Habsburg-Lorraine family"[44]. The princess was waiting to be freed until Austria-Hungary decided to battle the brave Serbian nation, which led to the World War. That was when the Czech nation knew that it was the right time to free the princess nation. Courageous "daddy" Masaryk did this, so Uncle Václav called on children to love their president. The chosen vocabulary, with expressions like jail or bonds of slavery, evaluates the past quite explicitly, even though it uses fairy-tale motifs.

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40 J. Čapek, "Pro ty nejmenší," *Lidové noviny*, 28. 10. 1928, p. 34.

41 This kind of signature is typical for *České slovo* and its purpose is to elicit in young readers that they know the author.

42 teta Marta. "Vysvobozená země," *Klíčení*, 28.10.1923, p. 15.

43 strýček Václav, "Dětem k 28. říjnu," *České slovo*, 28.10.1924, p. 12.

44 A similar motif, though not with a princess, but a rather a little queen, can also be found elsewhere:

"for three hundred long years
a black and yellow dragon
imprisoned the little queen [...]". The little queen was the Czech Nation, who wanted freedom to return to her glorious family. But instead she would hear a German owl, which foretold doom. Until a Czech youth, Váša, slayed the dragon and freed mother Bohemia. See J. Kubička, "Pohádka 28. října," *Klíčení*, 28.10.1927, p. 18.

A fairy tale and October 28 are also linked quite remarkably in an unsigned text entitled "Panu presidentovi" [For The President] from "Slovíčko" on 28 October 2929[45]. It is a dialogue between children and parents that explains what October 28 was all about. Ultimately, the children say they will keep telling this fairy tale. The label of fairy-tale points out how remote the events of 1918 were for children; for them, it was no longer a memory but a historical narrative. At the same time, because they did not live through such dramatic times, for them, the narrative is imbued with a sense of adventure and drama, thanks to which it is more of a myth than a chapter of history.

The motif of a pledge

One tool used to support the holiday experience was dramatic images. These sometimes featured fairy-tale motifs,[46] while other times they were more allegorical, featuring personifications of the Republic receiving gifts for its birthday[47] or Freedom, Work, and Unity, to which villagers pledged to be faithful under a linden, the national tree.[48]

Pledges and promises are inseparable from holiday texts in children's sections and supplements. Aside from usually calls at the conclusion of texts asking children to work for the Republic, which begins with fulfilling their scholastic duties, we also encounter examples where a child makes a similar pledge of its own volition. Such a promise is usually given a performative nature because children make promises publicly and talk about making them with their classmates or at least tell someone else about their resolve, strengthening the promise's obligatory nature. This usually occurs in story texts but can also be found as a dramatic sketch,[49] whereby the child takes on a role and the effect of stating the pledge is increased.

A notable example of a child's promise on the occasion of the anniversary of the Republic is a story from "Dětská zahrádka" from 1926 entitled "Jak oslavil Prokop svátek naší samostatnosti"[50] [How Prokop Celebrated Our Independence Day]. It introduces a boy, Prokop, who lost his father at Zborov.

45 *Panu presidentovi*, *Slovíčko,* 28.10.1929, p. 2.

46 See for example F. Mrkvička, "Květ štěstí," *Slovíčko*, 27.10.1935, p. 2. In the story, while grandma is telling a fairy-tale, a young boy goes off to find a magic flower of happiness to bring prosperity to the Republic.

47 R. Hladíková, "Dary. Slavnostní výstup k 28. říjnu," *Dětská zahrádka*, 27.10.1928, p. 11–12.

48 "Tři družky. Dramatický výstup pro děti ke dni 28. října," *Dětská zahrádka*, 28.10.1927, Vol.4, No 43, p. 169.

49 J. M., "Dětská scéna k 28. říjnu," *Slovíčko*, 23.10.1932, p. 4.

50 R. Hladíková, "Jak oslavil Prokop svátek naší samostatnosti," *Dětská zahrádka*, 28.10.1926, Vol.3, No 44, p. 173–174.

He knew about the "heroes of Zborov," Legionnaires; he thought the world of his deceased father; he was a serious and good boy who thought about many things, which is why he and a friend also came up with the best way to celebrate the holiday. He tells his entire class and other people to come to the school on October 28 and makes a relatively long speech to them. In it, he compares his legacy from his deceased father – a farm – and the legacy left by all those who fell fighting for freedom – the independence of the Republic – and pledges:

> "As I value and take joy from my family farm that has been left to me and on which I shall faithfully and meticulously work so that not an inch shall fall into the hands of another, so I promise you all, my parents, my teacher, and entire town, the entire Republic, that I shall also be faithful to another estate left to me by my father, our independence, our freedom, I shall protect it so that not even an inch of rights is lost, I shall stand by it during all times, at all ages, I shall behave so that I shall honor it, regardless of what happens to me in life, I shall never, nowhere, and in no way betray it."[51]

Those present weep with emotion, and other boys begin making the same promises.[52]

The strong emphasis on "native soil" and forebears' legacy is typically agrarian. The comprehension of the nation as a parallel to a family farm turns caring for the Republic into a virtually family affair, hence personal and unavoidable.

In other similar texts, children usually pledge to fulfill their duties or decide to compete for top marks among themselves at school,[53] or at least think up a celebration for October 28, with which they then surprise their parents and fellow citizens.[54] The patriotic and educational aspect of the texts is magnified by the voluntary nature of the pledge the children make. This is not an activity instigated by adults but rather a complete and accurate awakening of patriotic feeling and responsibility, which naturally follows from the intensity of understanding the holiday's significance.

Responses from children

This, of course, begs the question of how children themselves reacted to these stimuli. Because newspapers included letters from children, we also have

51 Ibid, p. 174.

52 Ibid.

53 R. Hladíková, "Prokopova oslava 28. října," *Dětská zahrádka*, 23.10.1931, Vol.8, No 43, p. 169.

54 rh, "Oslava 28. října," *Dětská zahrádka*, 26.10.1929, Vol.6, No 43, p. 169–170.

information from children about how the holiday was celebrated at school, as well as texts sent to sections and supplements, evidently not organized in any way.

One set of texts that could belong among those that were created in an organized manner is entitled "Strážnické děti k 28. říjnu 1923" [The Children of Strážnice on 28 October 1923] from *Lidové noviny*.[55] These texts by the pupils of a girls' school are mainly about the president. They emphasize the "daddy" theme and the children's love and gratitude for him.

In 1928 *Lidové noviny* motivated its young readers with a contest in "Dětský koutek" entitled "Jak nejlépe oslavím 28. října" [How I Will Best Celebrate October 28].[56] For example, Libuše Šmahová, a Grade 5 pupil in Klobouky u Brna, writes that she would like to revolutionize her heart to eliminate everything terrible. She would also be very happy if the president and other liberators would come to Klobouky so she could come to shake their hands and thank them for liberation.

In contrast, Váša Kysilka from Brno, Lerchova 2, writes that the best way he can celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Republic is to study. Otherwise, he will participate in the celebrations in Brno, and the thing he is looking forward to the most is the military parade. He would like everyone in the Republic to continue having a good life and take joy in freedom. He also adds that during the celebrations, he wants to remember all those who helped liberate the Republic, especially the president.

Another child letter-writer, Václav Eitler, a Grade 4 pupil in Klatovy, has a different plan than others. In the morning, right after breakfast, he goes to church, where he says a prayer for the Legionnaires and fallen soldiers, and then sets out to school with a little flag to celebrate at school. After lunch, he will play something merry with his puppet theatre, do his homework, and after taking a walk and finishing his supper, he will have his older brother tell him something about T. G. Masaryk. Then, he will say a prayer for T. G. Masaryk. He ends with a question for the editor: If he thinks that if he succeeds in doing all this, he will sleep well.

In 1935, Darina Vyplelová, a Grade 1 pupil at Tyrš School v Brno-Židenice, wrote to "Slovíčko" about a different kind of celebration. The little author describes that at their school, he'd prefer to do something on October 28 instead of talking. They're preparing to raise money to train 1000 pilots, who, during a gala gathering, will engage in a discussion on the topic of "It was hard to fight for freedom, but it is even harder to defend it" over pictures from national history. She writes that fathers have lots of worries regarding defense, and if it

55 "Strážnické děti k 28. říjnu 1923. Psaly a kreslily žákyně dívčí obecné školy ve Strážnici," *Lidové noviny*, 28.10.1923, p. 17.

56 "Soutěž Dětského koutku: Jak nejlépe oslavím 28. října," *Lidové noviny*, 28.10.1928, p. 34.

is necessary to help them, children should exercise and be strong and healthy and could also engage in some sort of fund-raising.[57]

These and other letters (if they are truly authentic, for example, written without parental guidance) show that children really had some relationship to the holiday. Perhaps a relationship to the pathos and color of the celebrations, perhaps more or less conscious emulation of what the children were told: if, for example, the teacher said that we should have a revolution in our heats, I'll have a revolution just like various child protagonists.

One can also sense the excitement from the printed texts from the celebrations, which must have been significant, easy to feel, and attractive for children. At the same time, however, a feeling of solidarity with the broader social context is present, evidenced, for example, by prayers for Legionnaires and soldiers, which, in the entire set of texts from children and for children, is an original act of celebration.[58]

In conclusion

If we compare schemata contained in fictional responses from children, for example, in poems stylized into testimony from schoolchildren, and in real responses, we see that, to a great extent, the guidance given to children really did work. In texts stylized as children's reflections on the holiday, children get guidance in understanding the anniversary and even what emotions they should experience. They encountered examples of specific words expected on the day of the holiday and descriptions of desirable emotions and contexts that served to support emotional experience. However, this does not mean that all children merely copied expected expressions of joy and gratitude and accepted them as their own. A segment of texts in which the little writers touch upon wartime circumstances, such as Legionnaires and fallen soldiers, which clearly connect with the topic of the holiday, in particular, differ from stereotypical expressions.

One can surmise that these were most likely children or grandchildren or other relatives of Legionnaires, fallen soldiers, and prisoners of war who had the opportunity in a home environment to perceive a contextually broader interpretation and relate to it emotionally. In their responses to the holiday, these children then include more original aspects such as the aforementioned prayer for Legionnaires and fallen soldiers, or a map of the Legionnaires' journey

57 D. Vyplelová, "Milí kamarádi!," *Slovíčko*, 27.10.1935, No 43, n.p.

58 Outside of children's sections we occasionally also find some text that discusses whether the October 28 is not too remote for children. But it usually considers young people rather than children – most likely also because children are more malleable and much more sensitive to stimuli to their imagination and experience. E.g. "Mladá republika mladým lidem!," *Večerník práva lidu*, 27 Oct 1934, p. 1.

through Siberia,[59] or work directly with parents' reminiscences, as in the case of a description of news of independence that came to an army hospital based on a father's letter.[60]

This, too, is why October 28 is a holiday not only for adults but also for children. For it is their story and their past, which is stored in the stories and experiences of their families. Mothers were afraid, fathers and grandfathers fought. The emotional proximity of a historical event is very easy for children to understand, and thanks to that, along with clearly defined imperatives (be good, be honest, and be conscientious), it is comprehensible.

Overall, it can be said that in their sections and supplements, children primarily receive guidance on how to feel during the holiday. They should be grateful, feel love for their country and its liberators, and celebrate and feel happy. Narratives with child protagonists, often built on a contrast between old and new circumstances, allow children to connect the celebrations with an emotional experience. This experience then makes it possible for them to remember and reproduce the experiences.

The narrative written for children is not that different from the one written for adults. In the case of texts for children, the call to work for one's future is much more prominent and is evident right from the very first celebrations after the war, while in texts for adults, it did not gain prominence until the 1930s. This call is then transformed into the creation of promises and pledges, which children express out of love for their country and which lead them to responsibility and hard work – after all, hard work and a sense of duty are depicted as one of the main characteristics of a proper citizen. Children are also often told about the past of wartime because they have not experienced it first-hand. Hence, it is all the more in contrast with the post-war present.

Another important moment is the use of tools whose purpose is to elicit the impression that the text is authentic, such as the use of a child protagonist, an older memory of an adult, or an older and explaining narrator in story texts.

What, then, is the nation-forming myth for children? It is a myth with a clear protagonist, "daddy" Masaryk, who many other brave men helped to get rid of the wicked emperor who caused war, poverty, strife, and the death of many people. The pleasant and kind protagonist, T. G. Masaryk, was instrumental in bringing freedom and ensuring everyone's lives would improve. Though only a few texts explain what that freedom is (we find, for example, that it is a question of equal access to education[61]), it is something of great value for

59 "Slovíčko čtenářů," *Slovíčko*, 28.10.1933, p. 8.

60 O. Rauniger, "V den 28. října 1918. Podle tatínkova dopisu," *Lidové noviny*, 27.10.1929, p. 35.

61 See for example teta Jarmila. *Naše pošta*. Slovíčko 27.10.1935, No 43, p. 3.

which it is necessary to fight and defend it because, without it, the nation will be badly off. The best everyone can do to ensure this is to try to be a good person and work for one's country, which children can do – by being pleasing, courageous, and doing their duty.

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